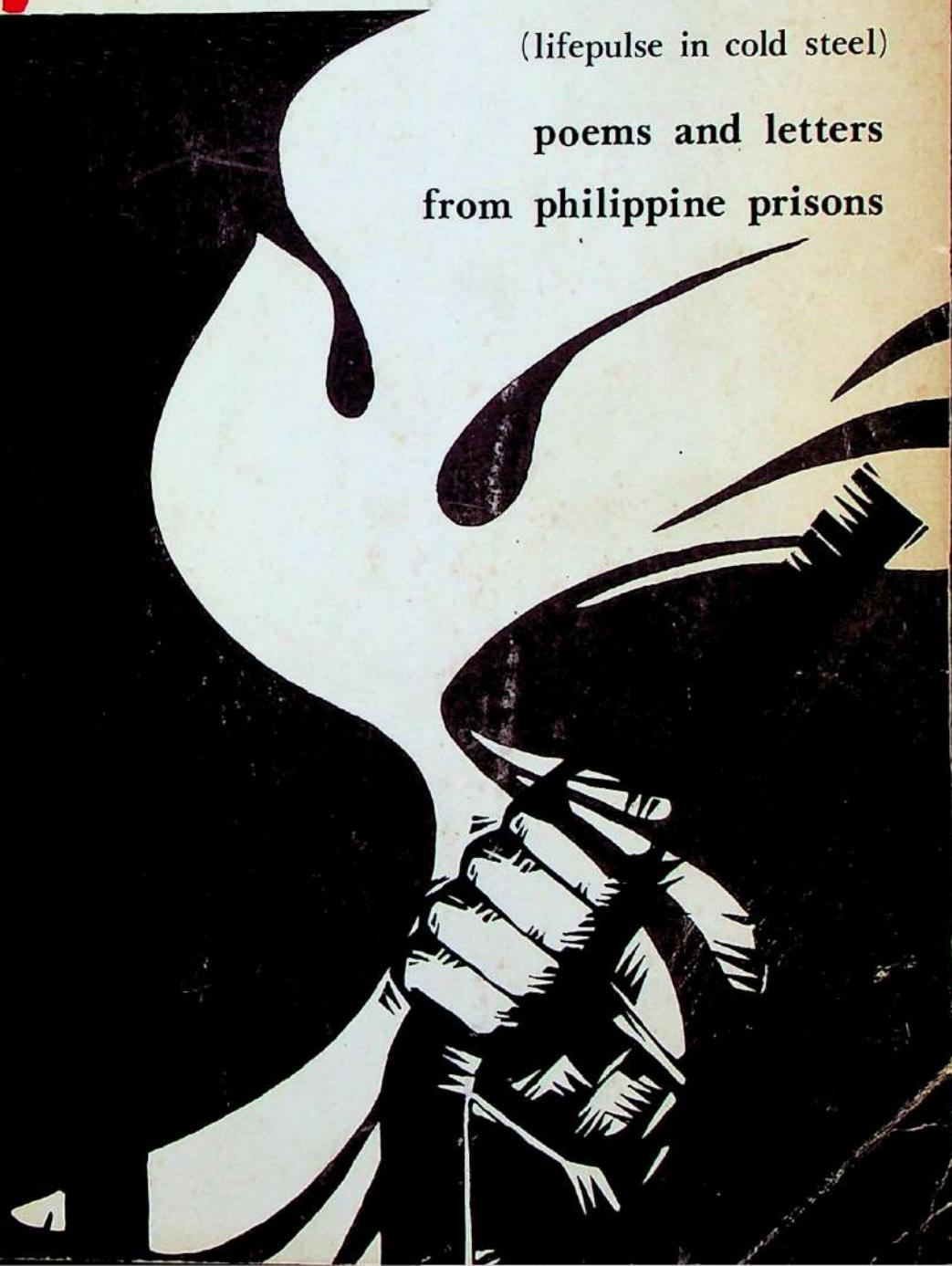


pintiq

(lifepulse in cold steel)

poems and letters
from philippine prisons



ASSOCIATION OF PROGRESSIVE FILIPINOS
P.O. BOX 314, P.A.T.
QUÉBEC, ~~and~~



pintig

SA MALAMIG NA BAKAL
(lifepulse in cold steel)

poems and letters
from Philippine prisons

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baqnis may
matalagas
pilit
na lilikas

prison song
1978



FOREWORD

*Ibon mang may laying lumipad
Kulungin mo at pumipiglas
Bayan pa kayang sakdal dilag
Ang dimagnasang maka-alpas*

(Even birds endowed with wings to fly
When caged struggle to be free.
How much more will a fair country
Not aspire to be liberated.)

from *Ang Bayan Kong Pilipinas*
(My Country, the Philippines.)

These words, from one of the Philippines' best loved revolutionary songs (dating back to the early struggle against colonialism) express in simple but concise terms the underlying reasons behind this book.

*Like birds on the wings of song they soar free
from behind cell bars
from behind the steel doors of solitary confinement
from the muffled rooms of 'safehouses'.
from those wracked in painful inquisition and lonely
isolation,
from fallen bodies in tangled heaps, that gave their all, and
more.*

PINTIG SA MALAMIG NA BAKAL

(Lifepulse in Cold Steel)

POEMS AND LETTERS FROM PHILIPPINE PRISONS

*Denies the myth of prison as the charnelhouse of the spirit.
Negates the frenzied attempt to shackle and muzzle.
Shatters the illusion of the benumbed freewill broken into
silent acceptance by walls and wires, bars and guards.*



PINTIG SA MALAMIG NA BAKAL

(*Lifepulse in Cold Steel*)

POEMS AND LETTERS FROM PHILIPPINE PRISONS

*The lifebeat surges in urgent, ceaseless pulses
bending the steel; shattering the steel.*

PINTIG SA MALAMIG NA BAKAL

(*Lifepulse in Cold Steel*)

POEMS AND LETTERS FROM PHILIPPINE PRISONS

Indomitable will stronger than cold, set steel.

The contents of this volume are a revelation:

*of the simple joys of community life in detention centers,
of the gnawing frustration of being cut off from the larger community
of friends and loved ones,
of the undiminished will for greater community, undaunted by
barbed wires and prison walls, torture, and even death
of enduring faith in ultimate freedom.*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the inspiration and active participation

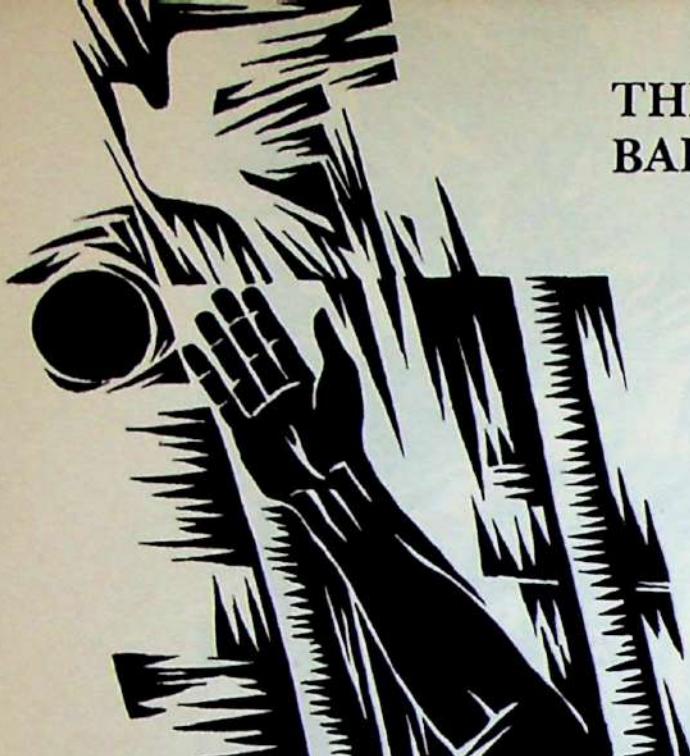
of those in detention centers,

of those in their final resting places:

in memorial parks, paupers' graves, burial dumps,

in unknown sites on jungle floors, mountain heights and fields.

These are their materials, their documents, their lifepulse.



THROUGH THE BARS DARKLY

Prison
Reflections
on Captivity
and Liberation

Introduction by E. de la Torre

Dear Ely,

Walls and barbed wire are rather easy take-off points for writing on captivity and liberation, themselves quite familiar themes of our times and theology. I guess it is reasonable to expect three years and 10 months of prison life to yield some reflections. Except, I'm not sure they can be / should be "theological".

Some bible texts do come alive when read behind bars. The Messiaha mission in Luke 4,18 announcing freedom to captives reminds me of the many times we anxiously scanned release lists for names that were not there, or strained to hear radio announcements that never came. Church people who visit are an occasion for a reverse perception of Matthew 25 — we've gotten used to thinking of visiting prisoners as a saving act, but not quite of being in prison ourselves! Still, this type of theologizing doesn't seem adequate or necessary.

I remember struggling over this question with Ology Tayag — the contradiction between the need to deal with life in direct, descriptive and analytic, terms (scientifically, a Marxist would say) and the indirect, evocative language of what we usually call theology. Another poet-activist friend's insight into poetry proved helpful — There are times, she said, that are so pregnant with meaning and feeling that bare reportage results in a poem. There are also times that need to be related to other symbols and images to reveal their poetry.

Perhaps that is enough for our purposes. To reflect on prison and the struggle for freedom in their own terms, their own reason and passion. Then, to relate these to symbols and texts that a particular people (a church) collectively remember.

PRISONERS, POLITICAL AND CRIMINAL

Prison separates us from one community and introduces us to another — not just fellow political prisoners, but also those we call non-political, or lawless or criminal.

Martial law regimes try to deny the distinction, claiming that there are no political prisoners, only criminals. Sure enough, subversion, sedition and rebellion are listed as crimes in the penal code along with theft, robbery and homicide. Our reaction is to protest: "We are not criminals!" We point out differences, starting with very visible ones. Most criminals are tattooed, except those called *cuerna*. (Some soldiers respond that we too have tattoos, only we carry them on our brains!) And there are deeper differences.

But there are insights to be gained in reflecting on our unity with criminal prisoners before emphasizing distinctions. I don't mean the romantic notion of all men in chains being brothers, or some similar quotation. What we have in common is to have broken the law, or at least disregarded it.

For most Christians, breaking the "law" is associated with sin. Paul's pretty harsh remarks on the law tend to be interpreted narrowly, restricted to Jewish law. I have experienced this attitude not just within myself but among friends who, for all their sympathy, place great value in proving that I haven't really broken the law.

Of course we do give battle to our prosecutors on every legal point, knowing that most if not all of their evidence is illegally taken. But granting that we have broken the law, what does that mean?

What is the law, anyway, which we are supposed to have broken? Or the court which will provide formal excuse to detain us? What is this prison whose walls mark the boundaries of our lives? Or the soldiers and police who arrest, torture and guard us?

They are all but parts of one apparatus — the state, charged with maintaining peace and order, with upholding the law. But there is growing insight even among churches that only too often, the state seeks to maintain an existing disorder, a system that exploits and oppresses people.

This isn't a casual connection, for the origin and existence of the state is tied up with the rise of classes and class struggle, and classes point to the existence of exploitation. This is quite obvious in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country like the Philippines. The implications for a society that is building socialism (and classes do exist during that process) would need another time.

This link between the law (the state) and the system it protects provides the bond between political and criminal prisoners. In our struggle to oppose and change the system, political dissenters are accused of crime, of breaking laws. In the breaking of laws by "common criminals", we see political dissent, in a spontaneous and distorted form.

It would do us much good to draw some parallels between this corrective insight and the as yet unachieved "balancing" between personal sin and "sin of the world" in our theology. To live in class societies and to be "law-abiding", as against the poet's cry: "Against the tyrant (and the system he maintains), to rebel is holiness!"

WHO IS GUILTY? WHO IS INNOCENT?

The label "political prisoners" describes a variety of people. There are those we can best call victims — people who don't have clear political convictions, but who have been sucked into prison anyway by the indiscriminately expanding military machine. There are those who criticize some aspects of the system or the whole of it, but haven't decided on definite alternatives. Others not only have chosen alternatives, but have struggled to gain political power in order to succeed.

There are church people whose attitude toward political prisoners reminds me of the traditional Feast of the Holy Innocents. They pour out their sympathies and indignation when the victim of illegal arrest, torture and indefinite detention is "innocent" of political views. Or, if he has political beliefs, he should not have acted on them against the law; not UG, they say, not underground. I tease them on this, pointing out that Christ had "connections" and was warned in time. He "sidestepped", but the innocents got massacred. They usually are.

But seriously, we need to struggle against this one-sided celebration of innocence. And not just the pure, naive kind. What is more widespread among church people

is the belief that while we should be critical of some aspects or even of the whole of a system, we should draw back from choosing alternatives and even more from struggling effectively to realize them. Somehow, this is considered a loss of "innocence", of what we may call political virginity.

But can we really dissociate ourselves from definite choices? Avoid sharing the "guilt" of any choice? Is there a pure, innocent position that can criticize all systems from a supra-historical, un-incarnate sphere?

This is where "theology" often reinforces our illusions. Instead of "being like the rest of men", accepting historical and social definition, we deceive ourselves and get scandalized all over at incarnation.

WE ARE ALL PRISONERS, WE ARE ALL FREE

This a-historical thinking leads us to talk of absolutes — captivity or liberation, to be imprisoned or to be free. The truth is that being captive and being free are two aspects of a single process.

When some Tondo foreshoreland leaders and *basilyo* activists got released, we celebrated their freedom. A week after, one of the women-leaders visited us. She ruefully described the second adjustment her stomach had to make. Before she got detained, she had gotten used to drinking coffee (or hot water) to calm her stomach, because she could eat rice only once a day. There was not enough for three meals for her children. Inside prison, even with only four pesos government budget, there was too much rice for her and she had stomach pains for weeks as her body adjusted. Now she had similar pains as her body missed the three feedings. There are more such stories that justify one activist-prisoner's outburst: "We are all prisoners, only some prisons are smaller." Not to talk of being under martial law.

And yet we are also free, yes, even in prison. I don't want to yield to the usual platitudes about our spirit being free, or a fellow prisoner-poet's insight that our guards are more prisoner than us. No, we must not separate freedom from its material conditions. The same slumdwellers and factory workers who gripe about how "imprisoned" they are outside always end their litany of complaint with a shared truth: "It is better to be out of prison than in. Even if our cells shelter us better from the typhoon and even if our food improves!"

Where does our freedom essentially lie? In our decision to struggle as a community, for our own immediate welfare, for our release from prison. For our attempts to maintain our links with the people's struggles outside these walls that seek to separate us from them. That seek to "rehabilitate" us into being "practical" and thinking of ourselves, and withdrawing into the narrow cell of our personal interests.

I think I have to end here because there is too much to say. Anyway, the other prisoners' letters and poems will take care of what's unsaid. Looking over what I have written, I realize that I still wound up without much "theology". Perhaps this is just a reaction to too much God-talk that doesn't speak to our life, here and now.

Last week, our new ordination class asked me to share some thoughts on

priesthood. A quick review of my life made me realize that four years of my ten year-old priesthood has been spent in prison! I thought for a while, there must be some theology in that ! Anyway, I like to end this with something I wrote them: There are no perfectly identical paths, and I do not claim that service to the people and incarnation in their struggle necessarily leads to prison. But it did lead me to captivity. Is it foolish to believe, and hope, that the same service and the same incarnation point the way to our liberation?

**IN FAITH AND IN STRUGGLE,
FATHER ED**



go not gently
into the night;
rage
rage against
the dying
of the light

1 VOICES
 FROM
 PRISON

BICUTAN SUMMER

Now the heat descends upon us
In this accursed of all seasons
Turning even slower the passage
Of time thru this limited space.
The sun plods across the skies,
The nights freeze a suspended yawn.

Soon this is parched earth.
The sturdy weeds cling harshly
To the erode adobe hills.
Everything shrinks, everything coils
Locked in an uneasy calm
In this taut atmosphere.

Then movements shake loose
And ripple within these four walls.
A rustle of dried leaves roils into a howl.
The chirps of house *mayas*¹ explode
In the still afternoon.

Can there be doubt as to the end of it all?
Summer must roll.
The *habagat*² stirs in its very womb
And break it will soon
With its lashing winds and rains.

If we sit and contemplate like old men,
Watch the lingering smiles.
Above us the lake birds wing to the east.
We look beyond the northern walls,
Laguna de Bay bristles with fishermen's lamps.
And further beyond, behold the greater promise:
The Sierra Madre slithers,
Etched purple against a reddening horizon.

MACARIU TIU
Camp Bicutan

¹ small rice birds

² southwest monsoon

For Freedom, Justice and Truth

No man has the right to degrade a fellow human being. Yet I am a witness to this debasement suffered by some of my co-detainees. Their families have had to subsist on the charity of relatives and friends. When God made man unto His image, He bestowed on man a measure of dignity and integrity. When a man loses this, he becomes an animal. This is intolerable . . .

I remember that oftentimes I would preach to my children the need to stand or fall on one's principles. I now find myself in such a situation. During my incarceration, I had come to realize the unimportance and transitoriness of material wealth. I began to see that I could best prepare my children to assume their roles in society by inculcating in them a set of values which would be more lasting. That the joy and satisfaction of goodness can never be matched by the goods of this world. That where there is love, there should be no fear. That love and concern for one's fellow man must be a way of life to strive for. And I felt that the most priceless and enduring legacy I could leave my family was my willingness to make a sacrifice for my fellow men, for the cause of freedom, justice and the truth.

EUGENIO LOPEZ, JR.
from a letter to Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile
December 9, 1974.

DETENTION

Detention is more than stone walls,
barbed wires and iron bars;
guard towers and armed guards;
jailers and jailed;
and seemingly senseless rules and regulations.

Detention is boredom and loneliness;
loss of privacy and regimentation;
frustration and impotence;
periods of hope followed by hopelessness,
like stormy waves that can drown a man.

FORMER SENATOR JOSE W. DIOKNO



Christian Commitment

The experience of suffering and the message of hope are deeply engraved in our hearts. Our suffering is concrete and hope for us is a vision of a truly new society and the new life.

Friend, I am with you for socially relevant and active religion. It is encouraging to note that the Christian Churches nowadays have started to be so.

We detainees here need religious teachings, not just mechanical religious services. I am sure everybody here wants to go to heaven and fears hell (whatever that is!). From childhood, we've been hearing much concerning Jesus and God, but these beliefs seem to be abstract and have no meaning to society and man.

a detainee from Mindanao
From a letter to a foreign missionary
April 22, 1977.

... to be a Christian one must be prepared to be misunderstood, to be maligned and to be branded a "subversive". While working with the farmers of Abra, I found out that the moment tenants voice out their just grievances and demands, they are often met with harassment and threats by the the oppressive forces – the landlords. Tenants are pressured by the landlords to withdraw from legitimate farmers' organizations. Otherwise they are branded as "subversives."

But then as Christians are we not supposed to be ready for these things? The meaning of Christ's words comes alive to me now when He said: "For my name's sake, you will suffer persecution, you will be thrown out of the synagogues and to prison."

As for my involvement in "subversive" activities, let me be judged by my motives and by Christian commitment to serve people more fully, rather than what other people think I am or am not ...

FR. MANNY LAHOZ
Camp Olivas, December 25, 1974
From a letter to fellow Christians

MY DAUGHTERS

My daughters shall not
Grow up beautiful
But they will inherit
The wealth of my story
Neither will they be happy
For the hours of their days
Shall be counted
By ten times the troubles I now bear
But they will not weep
Nay, theirs shall be a countenance
Of firm defiance

AGUSTIN PAGUSARA, JR.
Youth Rehabilitation Center
Fort Bonifacio



Too High A Price

I hope you have already been notified of the alleged violations of P.D. 90 I have been charged with — I certainly am still in the dark about these. Anyway, from what I was able to glean from my conversations with Roly Abadilla*, the military feels that for me to be released, I have to at least temper the editorial policy of my paper — which would be a blatant infringement on the freedom of expression they so hypocritically proclaim exists under martial law. Since I cannot in good conscience accept these terms, I am still under preventive detention.

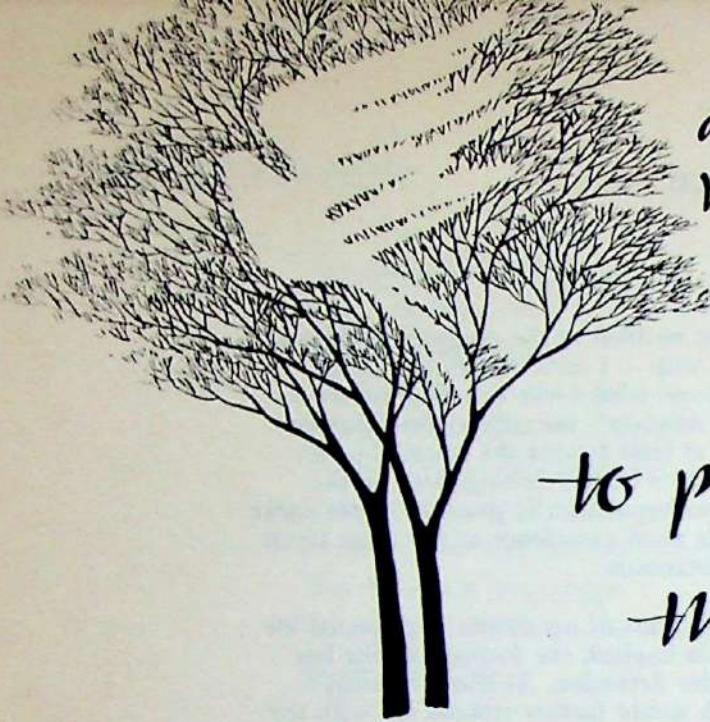
It would be better for me, in terms of my future professional life (and from what Roly Abadilla implied, the fortunes of the law office) if I stayed in preventive detention. At least I wouldn't be publishing anything which would further embroil me with the present regime.

Maybe this is why I am so calm about all these. I know that I am committed to whatever policies I have laid down as well as the course of action I had enumerated in my last editorial. To back off now would be an abandonment of principles I believe in and be a tarnish on my integrity as an individual. I do not believe I could live with myself then, less than this loss of self-esteem would be loss of face both in Diliman and beyond. These would be too high a price to pay for a release which is only temporary.

DITTO SARMIENTO, then UP Philippine Collegian editor, from a letter to his father, a member of the University of the Philippines (UP) Board of Regents.

February 12, 1976.

*Col. Rolando Abadilla of the Metropolitan Command (Metrocom) of the Philippine Constabulary.



happy
are those
who dream
dreams
and are
willing
to pay the price
to make
their dreams
come true

RICARDO FILIO, 21

(killed March 17, 1976)

The riotous colors marbling the clouds in sunset
And the somber gradations of early evening fascinate me now.
I can sit for hours watching what had delighted
Your heart, this magic that lightened your wearied
Steps after long walks tracing the source of Agusan River.

I pick tiny flowers and I wonder at the worlds you saw I could not.
What unseen patterns held you rapt before a monkey orchid,
Vague bell with pursed lip and neutral smell?
Or was it a new color shade or combination of glossy yellow
And splotched hints of sepia?
Were you intrigued by its marmalade dust, divining
The chemistry of its delicate survival in such foliage?
Meditating upon the knowledge
That it wilted the day after it bloomed?

You twirled it softly between thumb and forefinger,
Precious jungle jewel in a hand that never faltered with a
Knife in a demon's breast!
The rifle slung over your shoulder, long unkempt hair,
Unshod calloused feet and tattered clothes:
What countenance ever betrays true being?
To him alone who has a gentle soul beauty occurs without seeking.

I am alert now to moon moods that dictate our night marches.
A twig breaks somewhere, fallen from a low-hanging branch.
The dewy brush of fern on my wet shoulder landmarks a footpath.
The crickets are louder than usual tonight.
I can never discern the lust in a flying squirrel's croak.
But the cicadas celebrate in mad joy their short-lived appearance.

If I close my eyes Gambolian whispers in my ears in summer,
Glinting silver, pure brook song.
When rains threaten I imagine waterfalls
Rushing in its canyoned banks
Mighty crests racing thunderclaps down the plains.

These keep on, comrade.
Siberian winds, hot days, monsoons follow
One after the other, always returning.
May vanishes, leaving a tugging regret.
How you awaited any new season
And its promise of new colors, sounds and smells
They never escape your eager innocence.

Oh, would that your familiar smile resurrect
Too soon claimed by brittle coral composing
These mountains, heaved up, you said, studying
A fossil shell, from under some primeval seas.
Cloaked since it greens, light, dark or from
Mt. Dopamai looking south, blue as the Pacific, this
Virgin ground is now drenched in blood and more blood
That the mountain children may look up to the sky.

This spot keeps faith with your form and essence:
Eroded hill, windswept, sunbeaten, rainsoaked,
A row of trees with flameblossoms ravaging the night.

FELIPE GRANROJO
1977
PC Stockade, Davao City

soldier in the watchtower

Soldier in the watchtower
Pores over a comic book
Glances up once in a while
Sees the swallows soaring high
He looks down his cage
And meets a prisoner eye to eye.

MACARIO TIU
October 1977
Bicutan



From Former Senator Benigno Aquino's Letters

TO THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL

Sirs, I know you to be honourable men. But the one unalterable fact is that you are the subordinates of the President. You may decide to preserve my life, but he can choose to send me to death. Some people suggest that I beg for mercy. But this I cannot in conscience do. I would rather die on my feet with honour, than live on bended knees in shame.

My friends and relatives have been harassed. Some have been detained. The witnesses I intend to call are all afraid. I want to save all from further agony.

I have therefore decided not to participate in these proceedings: first, because this ritual is an unconscionable mockery; and second, because every part of my being — my heart and mind and soul — yes, every part of my being is against any form of dictatorship. I agree we must have public order and national discipline if the country is to move forward. But peace and order without freedom is nothing more than slavery. Discipline without justice is merely another name for oppression. I believe we can have lasting peace and prosperity only if we build a social order based on freedom and justice. My non-participation is therefore an act of protest against the structures of injustice that brought us here. It is also an act of faith in the ultimate victory of right over wrong, of good over evil. In all humility, I say it is a rare privilege to share with the Motherland her bondage, her anguish, her every pain and suffering.

August, 1973.

TO A FRIEND "SOC" RODRIGO ON HIS HUNGER STRIKE

If we want our people to follow, I propose, we must cease arguing and start acting, doing what a freeman must do to assert his rights and to defend his freedoms. Action, not words. Selfless example, not ideas. The time for talking is past!

For my part, I've decided to act and set the example. If I fail, at least, it is not for lack of trying. I think it was you who said during our bull sessions in Bldg. No. 3 two years ago;

"Tis better to try and to fail; rather than to fail to try and forever experience the inestimable loss of what might have been."

Yes, Soc, I do not want to face my children and their generation in humiliation and shame for having failed to try and thereby allowing a tyranny to entrench itself.

I want to thank you for your spiritual guidance. The faith you rekindled in me sustained me through the dark nights. I remember you telling me: Everywhere, a greater joy is preceded by a greater suffering. I remember you, telling me that God does not sleep, and that if we must be true to him, we should follow the example of His redeemer Son.

April 6, 1975

TO PRESIDENT MARCOS

For your military subordinates to acquit me is to declare you — their commander-in-chief — guilty. But for them to condemn me is to affirm their loyalty to you. For your military tribunal to acquit me is to hold you out as a ruthless tyrant who had me detained without any lawful cause for five long years. But for them to convict me, as they must, is to justify this long period of solitary confinement.

I believe that in your mind and heart, you have always known that my trial before such a military tribunal would be an unmitigated shame and a mockery.

Your issuance of PD 1165, in which you provide for appeal to the Supreme Court in case of conviction by the military tribunal does not remedy this final defect.

For in my case the possibility of acquittal at the first and most crucial stage is not only remote but impossible. How can there be due process of law or equal protection of the laws, under these circumstances?

My lawyers have assured me that it is an established legal doctrine that when a defendant is denied due process at the very outset, the entire proceeding against him becomes incurably tainted.

That is why I am pressing this appeal for a reconsideration of your denial of my basic human right to a fair trial, which, in a larger sense, also involves the right of all Filipinos to due process of law.

July 1, 1977.

TO THE SUPREME COURT ON THE DEATH SENTENCE BY MUSKETRY ISSUED BY THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL

A time comes in a man's life when he must take a stand and make a painful decision: to willingly die for his principles or surrender.

I have opted to die for my principles because my cause transcends my individual self and freedom. I am for a basic human right — the right of every citizen to a fair and an impartial trial by a Court of Law.

I urge you in the name of God and our people, to throw the full weight of your collective moral influence to restore the independence of the judiciary, the last bulwark of our freedom.

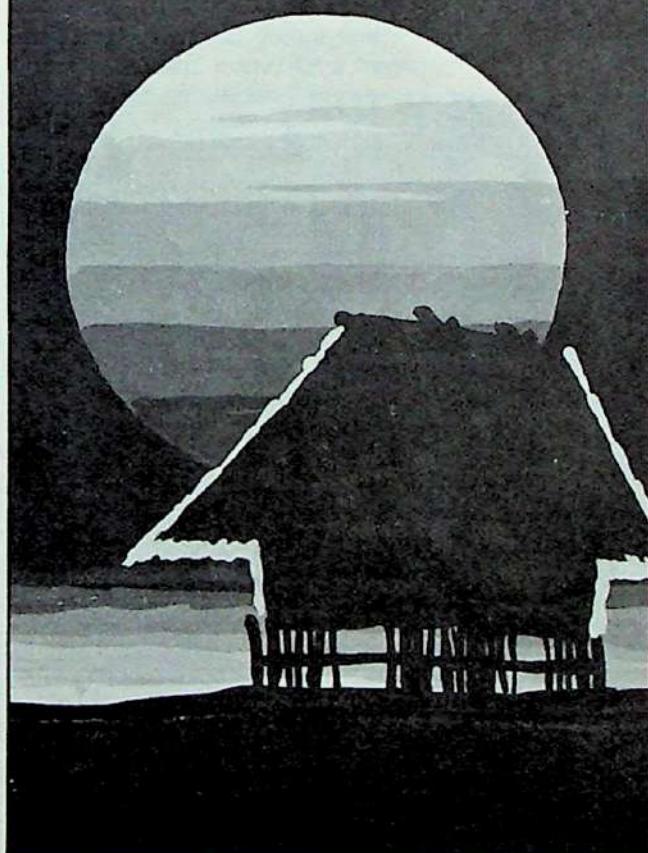
For the last four years, Mr. Marcos has been coercing me to defend myself before a kangaroo court of his own creation, composed of military officers directly under his control and supervision and whose careers he can advance, abort or destroy, on the very same charges which he himself, one full year before martial rule, described as "overwhelming."

My single, simple and consistent demand has been to be tried by an independent, authoritative and impartial court as due to any citizen of a free Republic.

I am innocent of the charges levelled against me, but I would rather be shot by a firing squad than go through the motions of defending myself before a drumhead court martial and thus lend credibility to a farce and a mockery of justice.

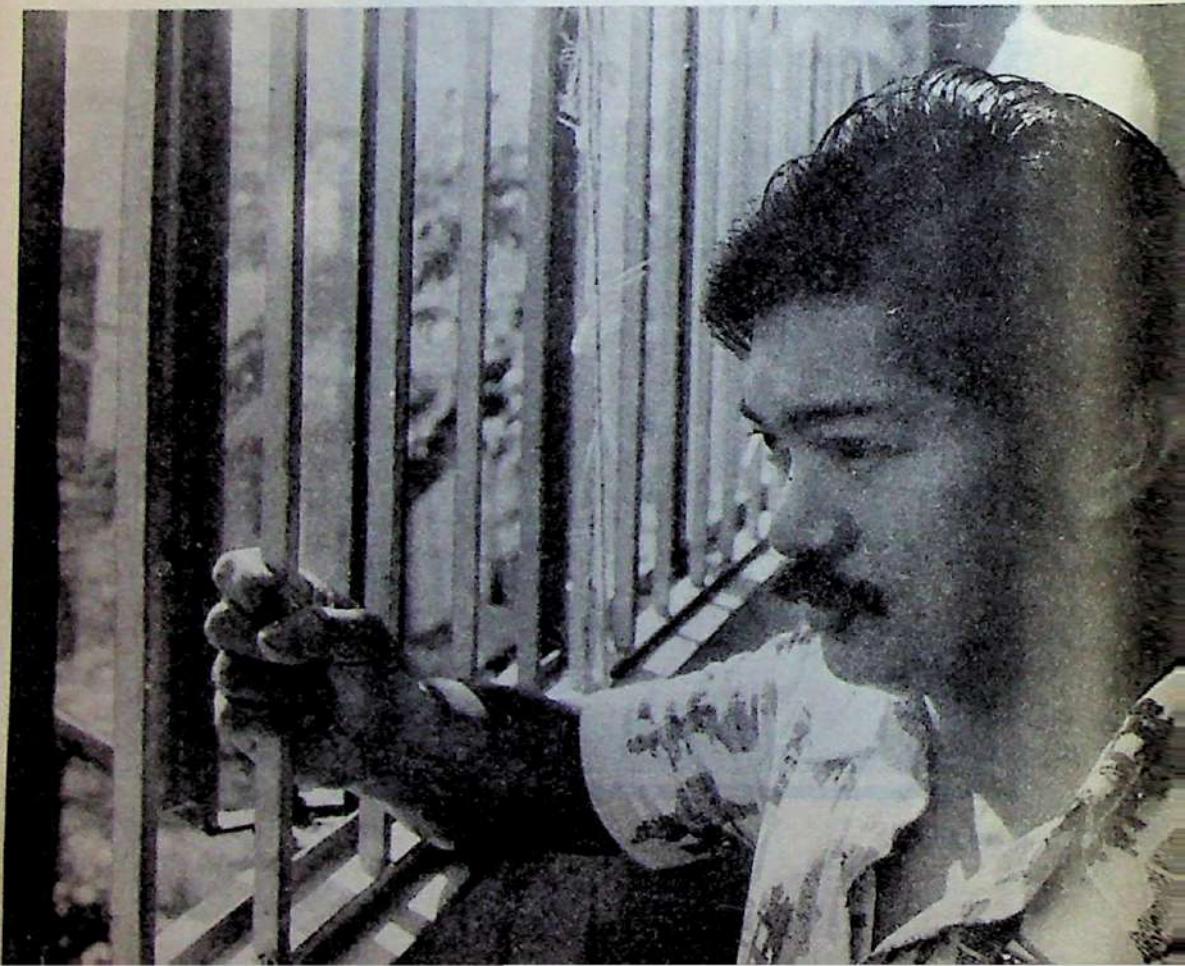
November 25, 1977.

*the day
we stop
burning
with love
people
will die
of the cold*



2 POEMS OF FREEDOM TAKE TO THE SKY

poems of
edgar maranan



Neonwatch Through the Bars

The cities glimmer up, a splay of baubles
And mercury burst plugging in for life.
vaporlight is kilometers from this prison
Casement, it bounces against the nightluff
Scudding across a late gouache stretch of
Sky. Then a fallout metallic on my eye
As I stand here grasping these iron grids
As I plumb the depths of a darker dusk.
This room recalls a cold planet, or a moon
When half its face is the pith of black
And half is scorched by the nearness of
the sun.

The cell's cramp forces beyond, like a will,
My eyes into the nightsoup, even like a hawk
Sagely winging a course on the maddening
Whirligig where frantic men now straddle,
Puppet-like, upon the limen of their truths.
The cities juice up their totems then, tonic
Electric for halidoms spruced as for a feast.
Computers gigo on, graph sensors chart the
Ebb and flow, the flow, of committee dreams,
The keyboard clacks justly keeping time with
Symphonic pop fed into the fluorescent rooms.
Marble lobbies, great lifts, atriums of glass
Have their daylight share, coldness of white
So that the deadest masonry will at times put on
the forbidding ambience of the grave cathedrals.

That is the city known across the barrier of light
To me, my one curious sense, my sight, and through
A barbed curtain of iron and the shackled darkness.
But I am merely chained, so to speak, to regimen
And a metal bunk. Otherwise, I am beyond the wall.

This poem is part of a winning anthology, "Foliage and Tiger Fire and other Poems" which won the 2nd prize, English Poetry Division in the 1977 Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature. The author, formerly an instructor of Political Science in U.P., was also awarded first prize in Philippine poetry this year by Dr. Lucrecia Kasilag, president of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines. Maranan was released December, 1978.

grassfire

It only took seconds, the end
Of fieldgrass teeming: it was
a spark
On the hillsides, a firetongue
That began as a tease to the cogon
maddened by summer.
Gusts swept in, swishing through
The blades: then the fury
Became unquenchable fire
Leaping up to the trees.

Black and white were the billows
Taking the place of clouds,
as flames
Spindled and swooshed across
the fields
Turning carbon desolate,
a blighted land
More wasted, serer than before.

The raging curse smouldered
All in its path, until a mutual
farewell
Crackled between grass and thatch;
Charred, in no time, was the stone-
wall
Bounding the world where I stood.

And the grassfire sputtered out,
yet I
Continued to feel the whole season's
heat
Upon my face, and in my eyes
Where I stood inside the cell.

APOY SA TALAHIB

*Ilang sandali lamang at nagwakas
Ang pagtabal ng talahib, isang diklap
Sa mga burol, diklap na tumukso
Sa damong pinagpuoyos ng tag-araw.
Humugos ang hangi't malutong na sumuyod
Sa pagitan ng mga talim, tila poot
Na di masubhan ang pagliyab hanggang
Pati kahuyan ay magningas.*

*Paalimbukay ang puti't itim na usok
Na humahalili sa ulap, samantalang palaki
At palagablab ang apoy sa bukid na nagiging
Karbon, lupang walang pala'y lalo pang
Napapagas.*

*Saan man sumuling, ang sumpa ng apoy
Ay nanunupok, hanggang magsanib
Ang sirit na paalam ng talahib at pawid,
Hanggang mag-uling and sementong pader
Na sa aki'y nakapaligid.*

*At humupa rin ang apoy, ngunit
Damang-dama ko pa ang init niyon
Sa aking mukha, sa aking mata,
Sa loob ng karsel.*

To A Woman Held Prisoner In Chile

It is the dark days, sign
Of the encompassing vulture
And anaconda coiling,
guilefully through the land.

A German shepherd stalks your prison cavern
With swastika legs spreading out,
Obedient to the private language of the guards.
Soon, the bestial soldier is thrust
Into you, brave flower of Santiago.
Perhaps, you have not screamed
As a victim would, bled
So much as a martyr before the lions.
Perhaps you have simply gritted
Your teeth and clenched your fists,
Thinking of comrades and the flowers
Of the Andes, in unspoken communion
With Chileans on mountains and plains
Believed with them that these dogs
Must have an end, these geniuses
Of the *falanga*¹, prod and truncheon..

It is the dark days, terror
Reveals your captors' canine teeth.
Frothing, many times have they taken you, O mother
Of the land and daughter to freedom,
Taken by all manners of dogs
Into all chasms of darkness!
It is the dark days, brave *companera*²,
But your struggle yearns to go on!

Oh, flower of Santiago!
As the petals fall,
Grow your thistles with the bloodsap
You have given to the violated earth.

¹ a vicious torture used by the Chilean military

² female comrade

the man in the tower

What are your hands busy on
In the mosquito-buzzing dark?

Surely not a mosquito bite
But still the flesh, a deeper
itch.
Yet who can blame you
For your lusts and your urges,

Who watches from a cramped tower
Who is made to broil under the sun?

I cannot figure out your lover
In the mosquito-buzzing dark.

Surely,
Not a woman who may gently
Open up a closed mind.
What else may you both
 unearth
But the trite ways of a quickie

The routine of fingers and hands
The wild agony of good old flesh?

I am, and am not, caged in
 by the dark.
I hope you get what I mean:
A captive mind is what
The man in the tower is!

The sign of the iron
Is upon my brow, yet
My will is ever so alive . . .

While you are blind
To the blueness of sky
While you are deaf
To the poem of freedom.

ANG TAO SA TORE

Ano ang sinasalat mo sa malamok
Na karimlan?
Tiyak kong hindi pantal,
Kaya nga la'y ibayong kati.
At sino ang makasisi
Sa pagnanasa mo't pamamalisawsaw:

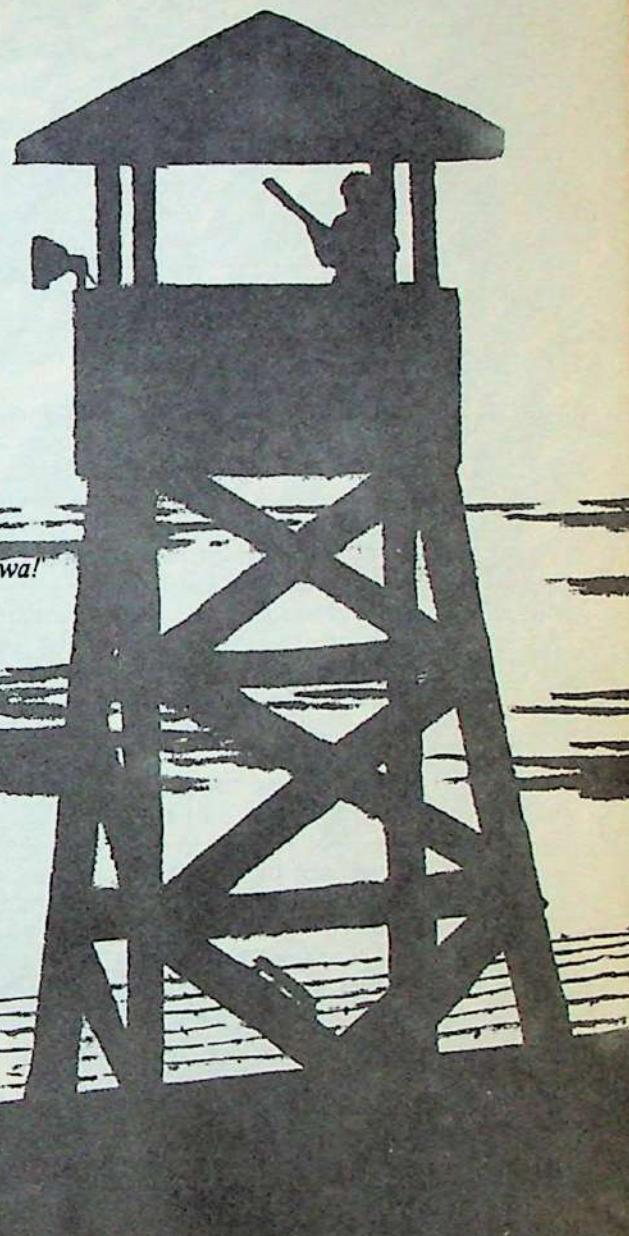
Ikaw na tanod sa tore mong masikip
Ikaw na ibinibilad sa liyab ng araw?

Hindi ko na maaninag ang iyong kamuok
Tiyak kong hindi taong
Mapagpalawak sa pikpik na isipan
Sa iyo'y ano pa nga ang maasahan
Kundi ang kasiningan ng bilisang aliw,

Tagisan ng mahaharot na daliri't kamay
Sumpitan sa dilim ng mga ngusong baliw?

Hindi ako ang piit, hindi ako ang kulob,
Ng karimlan.
Pilitin mong unawain:
~~Bilanggong utak ang sa aki'y nakamatyag!~~
At rehas man ang sagisag
Sa aking noo, di tulad mo'y buhay ang diwa!

Samantalang silaw ka sa bughaw na langit
Samantalang bingi ka sa awit na malaya.



TO A WOMAN POET*

DYING IMMORTAL

yesterday I had a talk
with an old man
who had your eyes —
the same laughing squint
hiding a watchfulness
that catches even hints
of rainbows.

— poem to her comrade

The fronds, without being told, danced in crosses
On a deathground of proud trees and humble hills
And the birds knew when to chirp their elegies.
Even the rocks seemed to be renewing themselves
Angrily, where they had been chipped off
By the violence of lead warring against earth.
Rains poured in January and spirited away
Your blood into the roots of quiet bamboo
And into the headwaters of the lowland brook.
The earth must have felt wonder: This warm body
Has slumped so beautifully, clutching its own
As though in a prophecy of bittersweet reunion.
You had written of lilies in the free undergrowth
Unfolding like the remembered eyes of your love,
Eyes more constant than the glimmer of fireflies
Lilies like torches in a dark season of monsoons.
It may not be so strange, after all, that memories
Of our moment of dying over your unreal death
Persist to haunt us; it was only a second of grief,
And we small need, oh! a brave cycle of lifetimes
To feel your hands in ours, fully hold your spirit
As we follow trails where you planted your flowers.

* The woman poet referred to is Lorena Barros, a former student activist and the founder of the first militant feminist organization in the country. She was herself a political prisoner at Canlubang and Ipil. She escaped from prison in 1974 and was killed in an encounter by the military in March, 1976.

SA ISANG MAKATANG BABAI NA YUMAO, AT WALANG HANGGAN

*kahapon, aking nakausap
ang isang matandang
tulad ng sa iyo ang mata –
naniiningkit habang tumatawa
may lihim na katalasang
makahuhuli ng kahit bahid
ng mga bahaghari*

– tula sa kanyang kasama

*Di man pinagsabiha'y hugis-krus na nagsayaw
Ang nangingipuspos na mga dahon ng niyog
Sa libingang may tanod na puno't burol.
Maging ang bato ay napahumindig, kung saan
Tinipyas ng tinggang namuhii sa iyong lupa.
Dumagsa ang ulang Enero, itinakas nito
Ang dugo mo't inipon sa ugat ng kawayan,
Inilagak sa bukal na ang tungo'y kapatagan.
Nagtaka ang lupa, marahil: kay-init ng
Iyong katawan! At anong payapang nakahandusay . . .
Yumakap sa damo, tinik, luwad, bulaklak
Waring itinakda ang pag-aalay sa gubat!
Sumulat ka noon tungkol sa mga liryo:
Kawangis kaya'y mga mata ng mahal mo
Na nakatutok saanman abutan ka ng dilim?
Matang ang ningas ay higit pa sa altiaptap
Liryong sulo mo sa kadawagang hinabagat.
Hindi nakapagtatakang kami pa'y dimadalaw
Ng mga sandaling nag-ulat noon ng pagpanaw:
Saglit ding kamatayan, saglit ding pagkapugto
At ngayo'y kailangang nammamin habambahay
Ang dampi man lamang ng nakadaop mong kamay
Ang rikit ng tinula mong pag-ibig sa lahat
Habang aming tinutunton ang pinagtamnan mo
ng mga bulaklak.*



VILLANELLE, FROM A PRISON WINDOW

Of triumph the lakebirds sing as they fly
Shafts from the sun on their fervid wing.
My poems of freedom take to the sky.

This lake is a spring where deep hopes lie,
Borne too by songs of the flock coming in.
Of triumph the lakebirds sing as they fly.

That time of youth with a world to defy:
Oh, brave memories these creatures bring!
My poems of freedom take to the sky.

When mountains are palled and coldly sigh,
Winds ever rise: and behold! the clearing . . .
Of triumph the lakebirds sing as they fly.

Then I see heaven: like a god on high
My spirits soar. And my dreams begin.
My poems of freedom take to the sky.

Off with the deathshroud on earth, all cry:
Who yearns for that heaven, unbound him!
Of triumph the lakebirds sing as they fly,
My poems of freedom take to the sky.



KUMAKAMPAY LAGI ANG TULA KONG MALAYA

*May hatid na tagumpay ang ibon sa lawa
Sa maliksing pakpak ay tilamsik ng araw
Kumakampay lagi ang tula kong malaya.*

*Balon ng pag-aso and lawang mapagpala
At sa huning marinig, sa kawang matanaw
May hatid na tagumpay ang ibon sa lawa.*

*Awitan ng langkay ay nagpapagunita
Sa aking kabataang may ibig ihiyaw
Kumakampay lagi ang tula kong malaya.*

*Kung hapong ang siyera ay maulap at luksa
Sa bugso ng hangin, sa langit lumitaw
May hatid na tagumpay ang ibon sa lawa.*

*Kalawaka'y tanaw ko: anaki'y bathala
Ang aking kalooban sa rilag na saklaw
Kumakampay lagi ang tula kong malaya.*

*Hawiin ang lambong sa kabunduka't lupa!
Alpasan ang sa langit ay ibig sumungaw
May hatid na tagumpay ang ibon sa lawa
Kumakampay lagi ang tula kong malaya.*



They took you away from the loveliest
Place of rains, rivers and bamboo
And dreams that know no bounds,

From the heaven-shrouded fields,
Where life was pleasant from sun
To sun: bright east and gloaming west . . .

They took you away from a woman
Who had songs for a child about to be.
When you left, red were her eyes and spirit:

Grief welled up, but courage flowed
Into her clenched fists, as she recalled
Your farewells and your instructions.

From the fields where bravery is joy
They took you away, from those beloved
That your brain may dry up in a dungeon.

But you have become a legend to me:
Revealing yourself, you are not one to count
The lonely stars through a tin ceiling!

YOU ARE NOT ONE

TO COUNT

THE LONELY STARS

THROUGH

A TIN CEILING



Iwinalay ka nila sa sakdal rilag
Na tagpuan ng ulan, batis, kawayan.
At walang sinlayang pangangarap,

Sa napapayungan ng langit na parang
Na umaaliwalas magmula pa sa umaga
Hanggang madahilig ang araw sa kanluran

At iwinalay ka sa magiliw mong asawa
Na noo'y umaawit sa anak mong darating,
Naiwan mong mata't diwa'y pumupula

Sa magkasanib na pighati at giting
Sa pagbalong ng luha't pagkuyom ng kamay
Sa pamamaalam mo at sa iyong habilin.

Doon, sa bukiring may lugod ang tapang
Doon ka inagaw sa lahat ng mahal mo
Upang utak mo'y tuyuin sa batong kulungan.

Nguni't alamat kang ginugunita ko.
Nakausap kita: di ikaw ang taong magbibilang
Ng mga ulilang tala sa kisameng yero!

DI IKAW ANG TAONG

MAGBIBILANG

NG MGA ULILANG

TALA

SA KISAMENG YERO

LANGAY-LANGAYAN

*Pumaspas na puti mula sa lawa:
Isandaang ibon na ang pakpak
Ay singsigla ng Kalayaan!*

*Isandaang palaso, tuwang-tuwa
Tinatawid ang bughaw na lawak
At kaulayaw ang amihan.*

*Ibon ng mga bilanggo sa mundo!
Masdan ang langkay na magkakawing:
Nagbubuklod sa kalawakan.*

*Ibong may hatid na awit sa tao!
Kung ulap ma'y pakaaakyatin
Bundok at lawa'y lalaktawan*

*Anuman ang layo ay liliparin
Saan man ang laya ay mararating.*

LOOKING AT THE LAKEBIRDS FROM WITHIN PRISON WALLS

A glint of white from the lake:
One hundred birds wing off
With joy, like the joy of freedom.

One hundred arrows spry in flight
Across the blue vastness
Trysting with the winds.

The world's prisoners look up at you!
Ah, they see the flock linking up,
Becoming one in the sky.

You have given us your songs!
To soar up and through the clouds:

Vault across mountains and lakes,

Daring to bridge the distance of fear
Daring to reach the heaven of freedom.



3 YOU CAN IMPRISON
 A REVOLUTIONARY
 BUT NOT
 A REVOLUTION

poems by Jose Maria Sison

A black and white woodcut-style illustration. In the center, a woman's face is shown in profile, looking upwards with her mouth slightly open as if singing. She has long dark hair. Her head is surrounded by the dense foliage of several large trees, their leaves forming a circular pattern around her. The style is graphic and organic.

a tree
is
born
a tree dies;
the forest
lives
forever

A COOL BREEZE

A cool breeze blows into prison
It refreshes the body and warms the soul.
It caresses, kisses and whispers,
"In prison, there is worthy struggle."

The breeze carries the scent of the red flowers,
It is part of the great irresistible wind
of struggle sweeping all the islands.
Everywhere the message is to fight and win.

(14 December 1977)

the woman and the strange eagle

The sea roars mightily around us,
Urging us to let a new life bud.
The woman on our boat is in travail,
Our vigorous rowing must be of avail,
We can ride on the giant waves.

Yet a strange eagle shuts out the sun.
Its talons of steel drip with blood;
Its wings stir the wind and darken the skies;
It has diamantine devouring eyes;
Shreds of flesh are in its razor bite.

But look, it has a wound of its own.
Hurry up, aim the sharpened arrow
And bend our strong *narra** bow.
We despise the eagle's accursed shadow
Cast on the woman and the boat.

We shall not drift in darkness.
We know our seas and islands well.
Our will is firm and we know the way.
We can prevail against this bird of prey.
As our neighbors have done in the fray.

The landward east wind is in our favor;
We cannot get lost in our labor.
Look at how the red sail is blown
And how the red lamp glows in gathering storm.
We shall surely reach our port.

The child of darkness and the tempest,
The child of this suffering woman.
Shall be born in a strong house
Well-lighted and firm in the ground.
Her pangs shall be her joy without bounds.

From the rockspring, we shall fetch
Water that is purest and sweetest
To bathe the child and slake the mother's thirst.
We shall give her honey and fruits
So her milk shall be rich and abundant.

In the brightness of day, we shall gather
The reddest of roses and all fragrant flowers
And fill the natal room with them.
It shall be a day we can never forget,
A joyous day of victory for all our kindred.

(5 March 1978)

* is a sturdy tree from which the best native lumber is derived

A FURNACE

When it was December,
I compared my cell.
By midnight to a freezer
And by midday to an oven.

Now that it is summer
I compare it to hell,
But because of its cuteness,
I also call it a furnace.

Tis a seething furnace
For tempering steel
And purifying gold,
Tis a comforting metaphor.

(15 March 1978)

AGAINST THE MONSTER ON THE LAND

For centuries the monster on the land
Has gorged himself with flesh and blood.
Now he wields a brittle rusty sword
And still casts a spell with a cross.

We go with the children of wrath
And prepare a trap across his path
A net of vine holding a carpet of leaves
Covers the pit full of bamboo spears.

When he stumbles in the hungry hole
And raves and writhes among the poles,
He shall see the children of the soil
Casting upon him buckets of flaming oil.

The night shall flee from the flames.
These shall rage until the break of day
And merge with the glory of the sun.
The monster shall have been gone.

His sword shall break by a hammer blow
On a rock from which a sweet spring flows.
The fragments of the swords we shall gather
To fashion new things by the hammer.

The children of the soil shall be freed
Of yoke and terror in their county.
They shall stand against any monster
And win by wit and engulfing number.

The festival of the children of the soil
Is the festival of all children of toil.
We joyously sing and dance with them
As the ancient monster comes to an end.

(17 March, 1978)

NOTE: If this poem and similar others written in prison bears some resemblance to the biblical apocalypse, it is perhaps because the writer has not been allowed to read anything but the Bible during his confinement.

IN THE DARK DEPTHS

The enemy wants to bury us
In the dark depths of prison
But shining gold is mined
From the dark depths of the earth
And the shining pearl is dived
From the dark depths of the sea.
We suffer but we endure
And draw up gold and pearl
From depths of character
Formed for so long in struggle.

(10 April 1978)



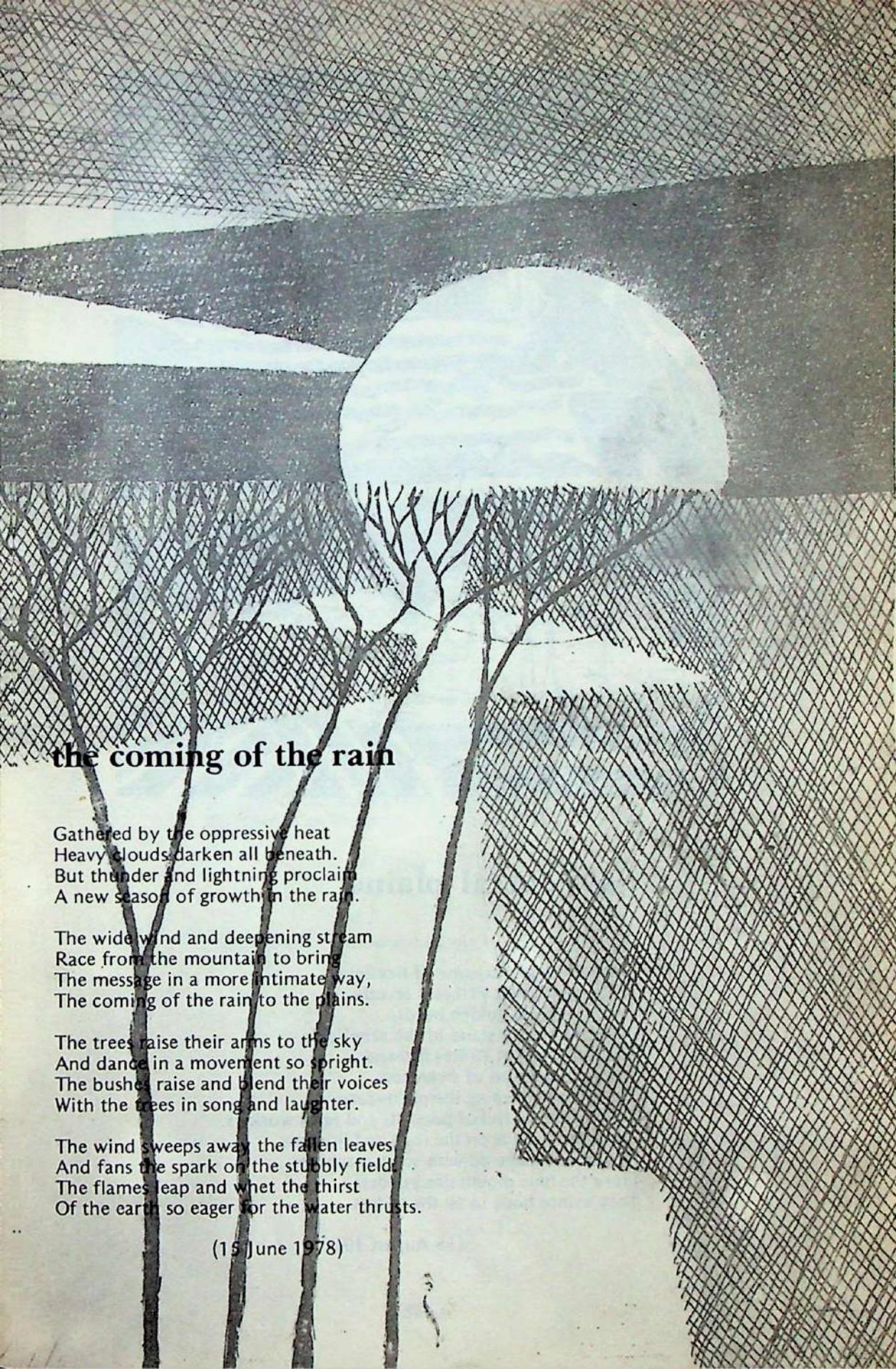
rain and sun on the mountains

When thunder and lightning are over,
Cold dark clouds seem to dissolve
The mountains into an ugly murk.
But behind the dismal sight,
Rain soaks the earth, floats detritus
And pours life into the creeks and rivers,
Amidst the howling of the winds,
The trees and bushes at the heights
Are in deepgoing nourishment.
So are the crops on the plains.

Then the sun breaks out of the gloom
To give warmth to the mountains,
To keep the roots of the woods
More firm on the ground.
The green splendor of all foliage
Shines and is celebrated
By the wild singing of the birds
And the happy antics of the beast.
In the cool breeze, the sunset shafts
The limpid thirst-quenching waters.

If there were only rain and storm,
The mountains would turn into mud.
If there were only sun and drought,
The mountains would turn into dust.
The sun is resplendent against the rain.
The rain is refreshing against the sun.
Grasping the long-term rhythm of the seasons,
Their testiness and cumulative grace,
The mountains maintain their majesty
And proclaim their mastery over calamity.

(5 July 1978)



the coming of the rain

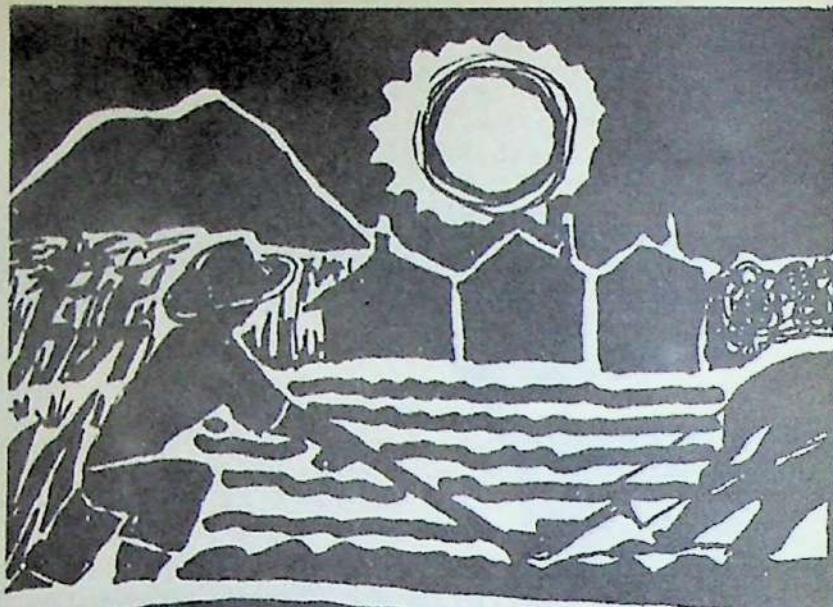
Gathered by the oppressive heat
Heavy clouds darken all beneath.
But thunder and lightning proclaim
A new season of growth in the rain.

The wide wind and deepening stream
Race from the mountain to bring
The message in a more intimate way,
The coming of the rain to the plains.

The trees raise their arms to the sky
And dance in a movement so spright.
The bushes raise and blend their voices
With the trees in song and laughter.

The wind sweeps away the fallen leaves
And fans the spark on the stubby field.
The flames leap and whet the thirst
Of the earth so eager for the water thrusts.

(15 June 1978)



the central plains

I love the green expanse of ricefields,
The sunlight that strikes it reveals
The myriads of golden beads.
I love the sturdy stand of the canefields,
The sunlight that strikes it reveals
The golden wands of sweetness,
The breeze sweeping the plains carries
The rhythm of toil of peasants and farm workers.
I love the clangor on the road and in shops
As workers make do with some machines.
I love the blue mountains yonder;
They evince hope to all the toilers.

(15 August 1978)

from a burning bush

The voice of the people thunders forth
From a burning bush in the mountain,
Unite to overthrow the rule of terror
And the three gods of exploitation.*

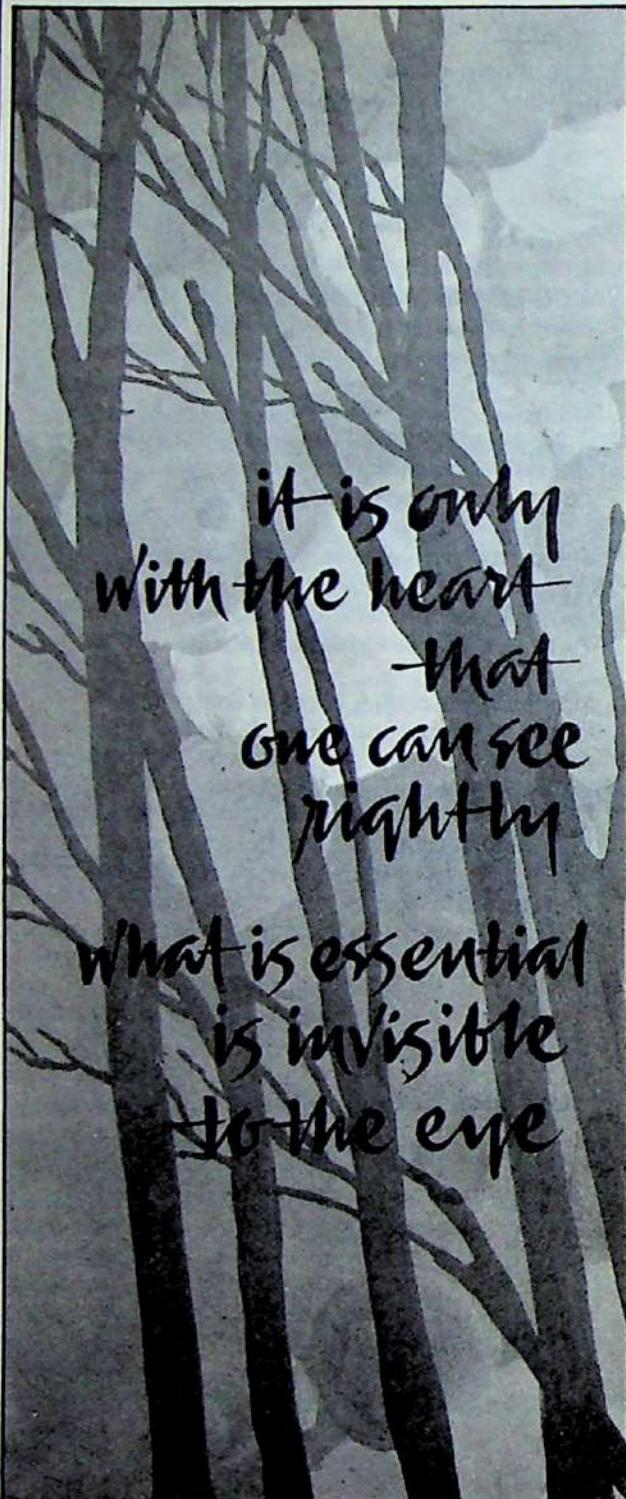
The lightning tongue of the fiery bush
Crackles and carries the flames
Over the rolling hills and meadows
To the expectant valleys and plains.

More burning bushes rage and roar,
Boldly break out into fields of flames
And send up high flying scrools
From the fields of stubble that blaze.

Lightnings smite the tower of idols.
The flying scrools enter the apertures
And invite the flames from the stubble
To close in on the roots of the tower.

(15 July 1978)

* feudalism, bureaucrat-capitalism, imperialism.



it is only
with the heart
that
one can see
rightly
what is essential
is invisible
to the eye

4 FROM PRISON WITH LOVE

letters to loved ones

For my family (wife Yvonne and daughter Lualhati), we have learned some paradoxes in life: that in isolation is solidarity, in distance is nearness, in sacrifice is joy and in difficulties is growth to maturity. Our inter-relatedness with other families similarly situated made us realize more fully a nobler basis for family unity — that of being a family for the wider family of peoples. Never in our family life has the human will to live and hope played a key role, never have we felt the solidarity that binds us with others. Unencumbered with the memories and experiences of the past, our family would now like to devote ourselves to the task of helping build human communities with and among our people and which can approximate, given the realities of our time, the best that we can hope and work for. To this end, we are eager to continue to be within the sphere of your concern, interest and above all, support.

I have had some occasion behind prison walls, to reflect on the dynamics of the thread of continuity which links us — our present to the memories and events of the past. In a broad sweep of history, we cannot but joyfully point out and celebrate the historically conditioned human mission of giving birth to that which is genuinely new. We are an integral part of that process which is passing and becoming. Our lives will have deep significance in so far as we relate ourselves to such process whose ebbs and flows are determined by people. The important thing is within our brief life time, we consciously locate ourselves fully, resolutely and creatively in the cutting edges of this historical process.

REV. CESAR TAGUBA
former political prisoner
May 23, 1977.



Letter
of a Wife
to Her
Husband

*"Prison is the sensation of being
helpless, of falling prey to uncertainties.
And the uncertainty of ever seeing you
again is one of my prison bars."*

My dearest comrade,

It is 3:45 a.m. and it is raining again. It must be raining all over now, in the city streets outside these prison walls, forming a heavy curtain in the highway, over plains of rice paddy, over valleys and hills and mountain forests. I am reminded of trudging in the rain with comrades at other times, other places. With you.

I received your letter dated almost two months ago. Communications are so slow. But at least I received it, and thank you so much. It was good and bracing for me to be so vividly reminded of the work outside.

You gave few details about the comrades — how are they? Until now sometimes I wake up in the morning a little startled I am in prison when just a few minutes ago I am with Squad Three, and we are just taking leave of Nay Lucing and Tay Pedring and most everybody else in Barrio Jacinto. I am adjusting my pack and Nay Adring comes hurrying, slips sweet potatoes, still hot, inside my pocket with an urgent whisper, "take care!" Ka Bino calls out, "Team B, get ready!" And there goes Ka Ompong and I fall in right behind him.

And we walk on to the late afternoon sun to Barrio Domingo.
And I wake up to four prison walls.

" . . . I love you", you write in your usual terse writing. "I will wait for you until you are free. I cannot help you now." It goes round and round my mind the whole day. I miss you and need you more than ever, and you cannot help me. I have to admit it is when I think of you that I am reminded most painfully that I am in prison. Prison is the sensation of being helpless, of falling prey to uncertainties. And the uncertainty of ever seeing you again is one of my prison bars.

To break my prison bars is to "pluck up one's courage and see the bright future ahead." From what do I pluck up revolutionary optimism? From the boundless enthusiasm of our Red fighters to learn new things, the openness and frank affection of the masses for us, their hatred for this system. I have trust in you, that you have learned well and wisely from our experiences. I learn from your calmness and decisiveness, my comrade, the active way you get the better of any situation.

Yes, there are no absolute sureties, we are still learning, there will be accidents — yet this is all the preparation for the future that we can do. It is presumptuous to ask for absolutes, even if I think I am asking for only one small absolute, and that is to see you alive when I am free! Thus my lesson in materialism here in prison.

"There is only one way now I can make my love for you felt, and that is to persevere in developing our forces, to persevere in the cause which united us in the first place." And yes, how strong I feel when I am reminded of the fact that you are outside in the field gathering up strength into one gigantic force that will one day topple this arrogant enemy. How boldly proud, how utterly defiant I feel!

And then we have our child. He is beginning to make sounds with his tongue, learning to recognize dogs and birds, clucking his tongue in anticipation at cereal-feeding time. He is such a great comfort. Because of him, the future is something much more solid to work for: "We are planting the tree so our children can enjoy the shade."

But I cannot help feeling sometimes that he is also a temptation to "lie-low" because I'm beginning to feel I want to watch him grow. A temptation to be less daring in making revolutionary demands of myself. Those of us who are mothers (here in prison) often discuss this, unburdening ourselves to each other.

Before, there was this common guilt that our children won't have a "normal" upbringing, deprived of the continuous guidance of mothers and fathers. You can just imagine how painfully Auntie Letty paints this in my mind, accusing me of being "irresponsible".

But I am sure of at least one thing: Only a revolution guided by conscious elements can fundamentally change this oppressive system. This is our highest responsibility, to make a revolution, and all other responsibilities are subordinate.

Do I put it too clearly? But it is an everyday, ceaseless struggle in each of us, may be more so to us mothers.

Tell me, did you have just the hint of a fear that I might change, forget the revolution, when I get out of prison? Or at least, that it crossed your mind and lingered for a while or two before your trust in me took over? I wouldn't be surprised at all if you did — remoulding is a constant struggle and the enemy fully intends one's will to be broken by prison.

But do not worry. I still want to do many things for the revolution, a hundred, a thousand things. To teach you and learn from you and from each other.

It is still raining, and it's already 5:30 a.m. I remember how the rain feels to us out there. One starts out feeling cold and damp, marching a bit desultorily as the cold seeps into your bones. The damp seeps into your backpack making it heavier, and you are momentarily dismayed that the water is going to wet all of your clothes. But sometime later you do not mind the cold anymore — instead there is exhilaration, a feeling that since everything is already wet, you can't get any wetter and colder. You know that as you go on walking in the cold, you will soon feel warm. Your body refuses to believe this at first but as you go on walking it is convinced. The warmth is something the cold cannot take away. Especially warm is the thought that when you reach the next barrio, the masses will provide you dry clothes to change into . . .

I love you.

YOUR COMRADE AND WIFE

Letter of Father to Young Son

"In the final analysis, there are only two choices.... one is a future of mere personal advancement without any thoughts of the well-being of the majority of our people; the other is a future where one advances with the collective progress of the overwhelming majority. The latter is what I wish for you."

Dear Son,

Warmest greetings on your third birthday! May you have many more so that you will be able to read this letter when you are old enough to fully understand.

You were just a five-month old baby when I was separated from you and your mother. That day, you were in a tantrum, refusing to be put down from my arms. There had been "fire", many comrades had been apprehended by the enemy. I had to go out, prepare our transfer to another house, and warn other comrades and friends who might get "burned". The "fire" was threatening to grow bigger and we had to act. And here you were, refusing to let go.

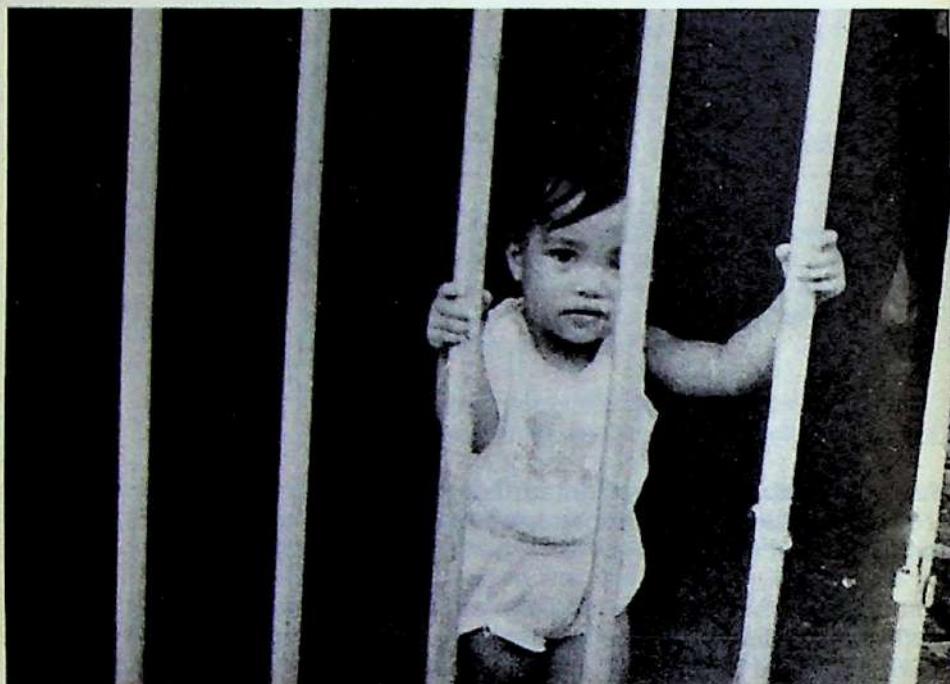
You know what I did? I raised my voice and slapped you on the thigh. "You're getting spoiled," I said and put you down. Then you sobbed and soon hollered. I laughed and told your mother you were a real person now, knowing how to crave for love and knowing how to get hurt, too.

That late afternoon, I caught a last glimpse of you suckling your mother's breast as I went out of the door

It was after more than a year in prison that I received news about you, a bit of news but enough to dispel some of my worries: the two of you were safe together with comrades in the movement! But no sooner had the anxiety left me then came another piece of news that you almost fell into enemy hands were it not for the timely help of the barrio folks who brought you across the river in the dead of night.

* Parents in prison often write letters to their young children to be read when they grow up.

The last piece of news I received is that you are not with your mother anymore. The situation was very fluid, you had to be always on the move, sometimes to new distant places. You began to grow sickly and tense as a result of frequently adjusting to new situations.



Your mother was right in leaving you under the care of your new parents. The situation is so unstable and she has to adjust while performing her duties for the revolution.

The revolution . . . Yes, it was the revolution that brought your mother and me together, and united us in the cause of laying the foundation for a future without exploitation and oppression of man by man. If it so happened that your mother and I are now far apart and that you are not by our side for a long time now, we spare no efforts to ensure that we are not eventually alienated from each other in the spirit of the revolution.

Your new parents did not think twice taking you in. In fact, it was they who insisted on being your guardians as long as necessity dictated your separation from your mother. Their concern comes as no surprise for, more than anything else, we are bound by a common cause. We have the same wishes for you — that you be brought up and taught in the service of the people and the revolution.

I am more than grateful that your mother was a fellow revolutionary when I met her. She has undergone severe trials, has learned to find her bearings especially in difficult times, and is constantly tempered in the heat of the struggle. I am very happy that though she has not seen you for quite a time, she has kept in touch with your development in her own small way.

Like any ordinary father, I have all the wishes for your bright future. But each parent has his own view of what a "bright future" should be. In the final analysis, there are only two choices — one is a future of mere personal advancement without any thought of the well-being of the majority of our people; the other is a future where one advances with the collective progress of the overwhelming majority. The latter is what I wish for you. It is also what I hope you will choose when the time comes for you to decide.

Every age has its own challenges to those who are committed to change. When you grow up, you will have your own test, perhaps heavier and more severe than what your mother and I are facing. Perhaps, it is your generation that will give fulfillment and bear witness to this stage of change that we, your parents, are involved in. Or it may be that you will face the challenges of an entirely new stage. In any case, let us face them and join in the struggle.

Not a few times has the question nagged my thoughts: will we see each other and be together once more? Like other comrades in prison, I have prepared myself for any eventuality that might befall each of us.

But prison is not a graveyard of the dead. It is also an arena of struggle. We revolutionary prisoners are waging struggles unremittingly not only to free our bodies from captivity but also to rid ourselves of the chains that the enemy always attempts to fetter our minds with.

Hope still lives that we will see each other . . . and be together once more. And not inside prison.

TATAY

Letter of a Daughter to Father

*"Why can't we live in mutual respect
and deep affection despite our
differences?"*

Dearest Papa,

I tried to postpone this dreadful moment of truth. For it pains me deeply to acknowledge that you have chosen to place insurmountable obstacles along the path of rekindling our past intimacy. I was and still am determined to preserve and develop our relationship, not only out of deep parental affection but also a firm belief, as I had told you earlier, that you are actually a friend in the present struggle of our people for national freedom and democracy.

Papa, please help me to understand your seeming callousness over my situation. I am seven months pregnant, a grieving widow and detained in solitary confinement in a small windowless room in this army camp. Yet, you refuse to visit me even just to commiserate with my harsh plight. In your stead, you sent an emissary who is full of legal gobbledegook that I cannot understand, but with your terse message that you had already done your fatherly duty by me with the hiring of my defense counsel. How you can be that cruel is beyond me. Perhaps you resented my outright refusal to cooperate with the military in executing its brutal suppression campaign against a unit of the New People's Army at Tagkawayan, Quezon, at the time of my capture in an encounter three months ago. But why should you take this rebuff as my personal affront against you. Just because the Zone Commander, your close personal friend, had sought your mediation in convincing me to collaborate? You should have taken into consideration the fact that I was in a state of shock then, having witnessed the martyrdom of my husband, Noel, whom you had refused to acknowledge because of his worker origin. When you saw me two days after his death, I was still wearing the same dress which I used to drench the blood off his face while softly calling his name and embracing and begging him to answer. I treasure this unwashed dress for it bears the blood of a man who had died in the service of his fellowmen.

While you were intent on helping your friend secure his medal and promotion, you neglected to respond to my great need to be comforted in my gravest hour of bereavement. Did your friend tell you that his men peppered our hut with bullets? That it was truly a miracle that I survived without a scratch no thanks to his brave soldiers? Did he also tell you that his men had forced me to walk for hours without rest and with my hands tied behind my back over tortuous mountain trails? That I collapsed and nearly had an abortion? Did he finally tell you that his men did not allow me to clear Noel's body before it was unceremoniously thrown into a makeshift grave? You should ask him these questions. For their answers reveal more about the true nature of the present fascist regime more than I can explain in one day.

That meeting of ours was supposed to have been our reunion after more than three years of not seeing each other. Instead, it turned into an ugly confrontation. I was expecting you to relent when you returned in the afternoon. But when you repeated the proposal, I did not control my anger and raised the ghost of Mama to compel you to stop. It was unfortunate that this skeleton in the closet was raised. You did not deserve it. After you left in a huff, I went into a fit of uncontrollable weeping. Your friend must have enjoyed our spectacle tremendously.

Papa, you, more than anyone else, ought to know that I do stand firmly on my principles. You have often complained that I had inherited your obstinacy on questions of principles. Thus, your present attitude of pitting our political differences, on the one hand, against our personal relationship, on the other, as mutually exclusive opposites, is liable to leave me with no alternative except to resolutely abide by my principles irrespective of what this may do to our relationship later. That you are willing to forget your pregnant daughter in prison as long as she remains steadfast in her commitment to the revolutionary movement of our people, is a choice you have to make or have made. This I told your legalist emissary. I must tell you, however, that no amount of moral coercion and otherwise can make me kowtow to your wish that I abandon our people's struggle.

But why should we insist on giving each other a choice when we can live in mutual respect and deep affection despite our differences? We have a basic unity for we do not belong objectively in the ranks of the oppressors. Our differences should be threshed out through persuasion, in recognition of our respective rights and not on the basis of parent-daughter relationship. I am, after all, a full grown woman now and about to become a mother.

Besides, Papa, I cannot forget how you disproved my unfounded fears when I went underground immediately after the imposition of martial rule. While I was frantically sending you one letter after another in an effort to cushion the impact of my decision, you were proudly informing my uncles of my determination to translate my idealism into action by fearlessly resisting the regime. As a lawyer, you said in that occasion that what appalled you most about martial rule was the specter of a man arrogating unto himself absolute powers over the lives of forty-four million Filipinos, issuing laws and decrees right and left like a "foolish monarch who believes that he has been bestowed with a mandate from heaven." When I heard this story I, too, was most proud for such an opinion is a welcome development from that authoritarian father who often riled and went into fiery diatribe everytime I participated in the rallies and demonstrations during the early seventies.

You should understand, Papa, that I owe much of what I have become from you. I was reared strictly on the Christian ethic of service to one's fellowmen. You also taught me about honesty, integrity and incorruptibility. It was a must for me then to keep repeating the golden rule everytime I was caught taking advantage of my playmates or brothers. Are you surprised then that I extremely abhor the exploitation of man by man? Should you wonder why I insist on equality and the right of every man to the same opportunity as the others?

In two months' time, I shall be giving birth. I hope it will be a boy so that I can name him Noel Roberto, in honor of the two men who have affected me

most. When he is old enough, I shall tell him often about his martyred father and his Christian grandfather. I promise to give him what each of you and Noel has given me: the loftiness of ideals and the necessity to practice them.

With all my love,

YOUR PRECIOUS ANGEL



Letter to a Foreign Friend

"To think that people from other lands would support our cause! This is not simple friendship but a deeper kind of international solidarity and unity."

October 18, 1978.

Dear Marlene,

In the later part of September our population suddenly rose from 60 to 104. There had been two waves of arrests last month. The first was a "preventive measure" occurring on the first and second weeks, and the second on September 21, the sixth anniversary of the declaration of martial law. On that day, police and intelligence units picked up people at random at the Rizal Park and the downtown area to forestall any lightning guerrilla rallies that might be held.

This has become a regular affair. Everytime an important date approaches, expect "preventives" to swamp Bicutan, and on the day itself the "subversive-looking" by-standers, promenaders and pedestrians are rounded up by the police and unceremoniously locked up. It can be very funny, only, you're in prison!

Perhaps, recognizing that it has acted arbitrarily, the military began releasing the new detainees on the first week or so of their detention. But only in trickles, involving one or at most three people at a time. Sometimes, we would have four to five sendoffs a week, singing our songs out loud, clinched by the advice "*Dito sa Bicutan, ay huwag nang uulit!*" (Don't come back to Bicutan!)

Only a dozen or so of the new detainees remain with us now. If nobody works for their release — following up papers, pestering the authorities, etc. — some of them will stay much longer in prison, their cases buried in a lot of bureaucratic nonsense.

As our number has increased, the water problem has gone from bad to worse. The pumps that supply our camps have all gone kaput; meanwhile the firetruck is out of order or gas, so you can just imagine our situation. Sometimes we even don't have drinking water!

We have already written numerous letters of complaint and our relatives have sent several delegations to the Office of Detainee Affairs, but the solution is still out of sight. And Bicutan is the show-case prison in the Philippines!

Right now, conjunctivitis (sore eyes) is raging in camp. Outside the epidemic has reportedly waned, but here it is still peaking. It may take a longer time before it disappears, as one does not develop immunity from it, and with the unsanitary conditions, one is likely to get reinfected. The camp dispensary meanwhile has not done anything. We have to buy our own medicine.

Look at the things I'm complaining about! Jesus, in the provinces, the situation is much, much worse. Not only are the conditions atrocious — from building and beddings to food and water — but the detainees are also subjected to various forms of maltreatment. The abuses range from beatings to forced labor.

But then, Bicutan is a model prison, although I am sure we, political prisoners, are not exactly models! We can even get away with criticism of certain camp rules and regulations that are patently unjust. Several factors have allowed for this to happen. In the past and up to the present, we have shown readiness to fight for our rights. The various rights and privileges that we are enjoying now are the products of a long series of prison struggles, including several hunger strikes (one lasting 72 days), and in one instance, putting up barricades.

Bicutan is also near Manila, so we can always "publicize" our complaints, such as torture/maltreatment, poor prison conditions, etc. Making noise has proven to be an effective weapon, as this creates an embarrassment to the government, desperate as it is for recognition and "good image."

Well, locally, the cause of political prisoners has been given another boost with the emergence of KAPATID, short for *Kapatiran para sa Pagpapalaya at Amnestiya ng mga Detenido*. (Association for the Release and Amnesty of Detainees) This was organized by the relatives of "b-pols",* and new as it is, it has already made its presence felt. These past two months it has been holding symposia and exhibits of our products in several Manila colleges which have set aside a "Detainees Week".

All these activities are in pursuit of the campaign for general amnesty and also for the immediate release of "b-pols" on the priority list that has been drawn up based on humanitarian grounds. KAPATID has been collecting signatures for the petition addressed to President and Prime Minister (!) Marcos for amnesty. The students have been enthusiastic signers.

Internationally of course the cause of human rights in the Philippines and of the "b-pols" has long been taken up by such prestigious organizations as Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists and the International Red Cross. Their support has greatly advanced human rights in our country. AI has mobilized the widest support of humanitarian-minded people in Europe and the U.S. Indeed, the publicity, protests, petitions and letter-writing campaigns of these organizations and individuals have generated sufficient pressure to lessen torture cases, at least in Metro Manila. There have been releases also that could be directly attributed to their pressure.

In working for humanitarian causes, many people have become politicized. This is also true abroad. Some individuals and groups have gone beyond merely humanitarian to active support to the causes for which the prisoners have been detained in the first place. There are those supporting the workers and urban

* colloquial for political prisoners [*bilanggong pulitikal*]

poor; some are active anti-martial law campaigners. The most advanced have formed support groups for the national democratic struggle itself!

Aware of these developments locally and abroad, we cannot but remain high in morale. There is already an international-wide support for human rights. Now there is taking shape a similar support for the Philippine revolution. To think that people from other lands would support our cause! This is not simple friendship, but a deeper kind of international solidarity and unity!

I guess I have said enough for one letter. I shall tell you more of camp life and share with you ideas and opinions in my next letters.

By the way, thank you very much for the money you sent. This will go a long way to help ease the financial difficulties of my family. My wife sends you her warm regards.

How else can you help? I suggest that you keep in touch with any Philippine support group in your area or else form one and in coordination with others, devise ways and means to advance further the cause of human rights in the Philippines and the national democratic revolution.

Mabuhay ka!

Sincerely yours,

LBS



In these times of extreme repression, of deepest value to us are our committed Christian brothers whose priestly vocations have not become cloaks within which to hide from the stark realities of Philippine society and the violent onslaughts of a repressive regime but rather whose vocations have become the very reason for commitment that have driven them into our midst seeking no special rights nor privileges save that of sharing with us in the service of the people in their hour of trial and crucifixion.

**From a statement on Father de la Torre
and his co-detainees**

5 IN THE INCARNATE WORD

poems and letters of Fr. Ed



To Hunger and Thirst for Justice

I have never been this hungry before
pain burning my guts, searing my back.

Food is doubly delicious
*tuyo*¹ or crispy *pata*²
corn soup and *sinigang*³
*turu-turo*⁴ meals and banquets.

To starve after justice
to ache for it, like food, frantic for life itself.

How long can men live without eating
two weeks or more, they say.
But would such be living?
Too weak to rise from sleep
to read bible and newspaper
to write with meaning and beauty
to share and master the earth
to sing in the sun?

How long can men live without justice?
Can we ask them to wait again
while we ponderously weigh issues
which are complex, we say, and take time
which cannot be rushed
because we fear to be one-sided
etcetera?

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice
for they shall be satisfied.

But when, oh Lord and how?

FR. EDICIO DE LA TORRE
Camp Olivas, Pampanga

¹ small dried salted fish, a staple food of the poor

² pigs trotter (softened and deep fried)

³ sour stew, a Philippine favorite

⁴ literally "point-point", meaning dishes at hawker-style small eateries where one points to one's choice from the pots or serving plates

why are
filipinos
equatters
in their own
country?



(untitled poem)

There are smaller prisons
for those who would break down
bigger and thicker walls
not to escape
from the rest
but to open up the world
and its future
to people whose hopes
have faltered in the dark.
Walls break down
when people's hopes rise with the dawn
melting falsehood and tyranny
with angry noon-heat
of caring.
There are smaller prisons
and tighter bars
to keep the spark
of those who dare love
for lighting a devouring flame
that consumes rust
and purifies gold.

FR. EDICIO DE LA TORRE
Camp Olivas, Pampanga

torture

On Torture: "I rejoice . . . that my body is made to bear marks that will identify me more fully with the oppressed."

*Mga Kapatid sa pananampalataya,
Mga kapatid sa pakikibaka,**

I write, first of all to the different religious houses and Church people with whom I have dialogued these past 2½ years.

The military might harass you on the excuse that I have squealed information (as they are trying to make me do) on my friends.

Tell everyone I haven't given any name, place or event as of now. I cannot absolutely guarantee my steadfastness under more forcible measures, but rest assured that I am preparing myself spiritually for torture and even death.

The dictatorship's forces have arrested me. Up to now they are trying to extract information from me and from other prisoners so they can fulfil the "legal" requirements to convict me.

They assure me that they will follow the Church-Military agreement (which they have already violated during my arrest) and will treat me courteously.

I haven't been tortured till now. Other prisoners arrested in this last series of raids (around 22 in all) are not so lucky. At least one of them, Reynaldo Ilao, a worker, got a "massage" that left him with bloodied eyes, cut brows and a possible broken rib. A second older man has a bandaged swollen foot. A third walks with noticeable limp. I don't think these are natural disabilities.

* Brothers and sisters in faith
Brothers and Sisters in the struggle

A little bit of what might be happening reached me on the night of the 14th. I was half-asleep in bed when an interrogator came in and asked me two questions. I answered a bit sleepily. He punched me in the stomach. I screamed, "My God!" and doubled over in pain. He followed with a blow to the back of my head. My scream drew attention. My assailant told the others. "The father has ulcers." He left with a parting jeer. "Why does he call on God? I thought he was a Party member.

The pattern is becoming clear. Officially and to the best of their ability, they will treat churchmen well. But "communists, radicals, subversives, etc." — they are not supposed to have rights. If priests are beaten, well, it's because he is a radical.

I think the church should refuse to be party to this hypocrisy and discrimination. If we believe that torture is wrong (and even Marcos denies that it happens), then it is wrong not just on church people but on all. Otherwise we fall into the trap of the dictatorship that classifies people into Yes men and "subversives," and denies all basic freedom to those it suspects.

In the different interviews I have had (ranging from 5 minutes to 8 or more hours) — I tried to explain without much success I fear, the reasons for my involvement. Most of them, however are not interested in reasons, they want betrayal of information on friends, contacts, allies.

I told them what I have tried to live for and what I hope I am ready to die for: not just a genuinely free and democratic Philippines, but also an authentically radical Christianity.

I said that Christianity — both institutionally and theologically — has hitherto been either outrightly with the established oppressors or has contented itself with a middle-of-the-road position. What a growing minority is searching for, however, is a position that is radically committed to liberation both as an expression of and as a path to radical Christianity.

There are risks in this "pilgrimage." There are consequences, including torture and death in the hands of those who would make Christianity a justification for state violence against "communist, subversives, atheist, etc."

I think, however, that in situations of injustice and oppression (which even my interrogators admit still exist), the path to justice and freedom is not easy or pleasant.

I rejoice, in fact, that my body is made to bear marks that will identify me more fully with the oppressed. The word can become more literally flesh and blood.

Sometimes, fear sweeps over me. I recall Rev. Cesar Taguba who was transferred from camp to camp and passed Olivas, too. He was forced to drink his own urine, was given truth serum and underwent other hardships. I remember Ronnie Hilao, Liliosa Hilao's brother, who was bloodied and beaten up here before he was brought for further "treatment" to 5th CSU, Crame. In snatches of communication with other prisoners, I gathered that at least 2 of them got electric shocks on their genitals. In fact, when one of them saw the wounds healing on my wrists (from hand-cuffs), his spontaneous question was — "Electric wires?"

I got even more worried when Col. Aure of 5th CSU told me they were going to take me. I know of at least 2 cases of 5th CSU-NISA torture. And after 5th CSU-NISA, ISAFP will want to have their turn. Up to now Ric Dantes bears in his body and literally in his heart the effects of their efficiency.

But somehow the fear leaves me when I think of the many more who have remained steadfast under suffering and even unto death. Even death becomes a chance to find out the answer to a very personal, theologico-ideological question of what resurrection really is.

I don't want to be morbid, however. I don't think the dictatorship is ready to torture me or kill me yet, at least not officially. If it happens, it will be blamed on personal over-zealousness or excused as a mistake. "But, I assure you it will never happen."

Or perhaps they will say : "He's too unreasonable." But I ask you — Is it unreasonable to refuse to betray friends and allies? Is it unreasonable to give them information they will use to stab me with?

If they have evidence, and they claim to have more than enough, then let them dispense with the hypocrisy and charge me, convict me, and punish me.

All I ask, and this is the final reason for this letter, is that I be allowed to speak (without benefit of interpreters, mediators, etc.) to people who are very real to me, so that I can attempt, even if I falter, to turn over to them the questions and initial answers of our continuing passionate search for justice, truth and freedom.

In the struggle,

FR. ED
Z-2
Camp Olivas
December 18, 1974.

P.S. I do not know when precisely it will start, but sometime after this I will go on a hunger strike to protest the torture and indefinite detention of political prisoners.

Celebrating Eucharist in Prison

Celebrating the Eucharist in Prison: "Despite the caution that I shouldn't give a sermon (being a detainee), I had to express my anguish at celebrating a sacrament of brotherhood and unity in the midst of conflict – between captors and captives."

Dear Archbishop Sin,

A Blessed Christmas!

I have just come from midnight mass. The authorities at Camp Olivas allowed Fr. Lahoz and myself to celebrate the Eucharist with the Detainees of the Intelligence Division and with some enlisted men and their families.

I'm still quite tense and raw over the experience. Despite the caution that I shouldn't give a sermon (being a detainee), I had to express my anguish at celebrating a sacrament of brotherhood and unity in the midst of conflict – between captors and captives. I told them that Christmas should make us face up to reality – flesh and blood, our concrete situation.

I told them I didn't want to further heighten the conflict and tension, but neither did I want to use the liturgy as a mask to prevent us from seeing the truth.

Anyway, we made it through with some goodwill to spare, and the 30 or more recent prisoners who have hitherto been incommunicado had a short reunion after mass.

In the midst of the greetings, some jarring notes refuse to escape notice – our guitarist's shoulder was black and blue (from beating, I presume). One or two people complained of what felt like broken ribs. Another was limping on a bandaged foot which was burned with a flat iron.

I have read your stand against torture. Please try to bring these cases to justice.

I do not want to spoil your Christmas joy by bringing up these ugly realities. I only offer them as a help to the ongoing incarnation of our reflections.

There is another reason for this letter, and I feel it too urgent to wait till morning. Some of my visitors told me that you once said, "This Fr. de la Torre never came to me while he was underground, but now that he is caught, he runs to me for help." I was told that you also called me a "Maoist."

I presume that you have been hearing a lot about me, especially from the military (who, I hear, are preparing a systematic smear campaign against me). So I feel the need to write to you as a Church leader, so that I can make up for the lack of communication.

I'm sorry for not coming to you this past year. I never even thought of doing so since I presumed you wouldn't jeopardize your legal status by meeting with hunted people. Besides, with the increasingly forthright stand you were taking against torture and distortion of news, I was conscious of the intelligence agencies' efforts to find "mistakes" in your behaviour.

I'll be grateful for any help you would give but please do not feel obliged. I understand the ticklish position you have been thrust into.

I feel a greater need to share with you what I have tried to make my interrogators understand — that my involvement in the underground (which I do not deny) is deeply rooted in a serious effort to wrestle with this question: "How should Christians live in a situation of injustice and oppression?"

Know that the military is concentrating on proof: that I am in the underground, a subversive, linked up with the communists (one even claimed I was a candidate member of the central committee of the CPP). I'm sure they will have enough witnesses (tortured or not) and evidences to triumphantly convict me.

But that is not the point at issue. I have tried to make them understand that this is not a simple black and white question — am I subversive or not? Do I associate with the communists or not?

I told them that my involvement, like that of many Church people, started with reformist organizations. We read the Papal encyclicals, reflected on the gospel and advocated the need for people's organizations in order to achieve social justice.

But the various frustrations and even actual violence that met such efforts at reforms made some of us consider a more radical alternative. It was a choice full of risks and questions. Our very theology of liberation was just in birth pangs.

Then came martial law. At first, I didn't think of going underground. In fact, I went to Christ the King Seminary that morning (Sept. 23). The seminarians warned me that the Metrocom had come to arrest me.

I decided to hide, but not just to escape arrest. The bigger value was to pursue the task that remains ever valid — the development of genuine organizations of the people that will enable them to participate democratically in shaping a just and free Philippines.

In this process, I had a second concern — to establish links among different groups in the underground, to arrive at points of unity while identifying differences. I worked for the establishment of a united front of different dedicated groups and individuals: Christians, Muslims, Marxists and Nationalists — all Filipinos willing to risk their lives so that others may face the future with hope.

I know this letter has tried to say so many things too hurriedly. But I feel I must reach you before too many "interpreters" intervene.

Grant me (and my companions) this much — that we have tried as honestly as we could to confront the challenge of the gospel and the challenge of our people.

We offer our words and our lives as a small contribution to our common effort to make Christ incarnate in the Philippines.

In the Incarnate Word,

(Sgd.) FR. ED DE LA TORRE
Z - 2
Camp Olivas, San Fernando
Pampanga

December 25, 1974

P.S.₁ I am starting an indefinite fast to bring attention to the torture and indefinite detention of political prisoners. Please help especially those who do not have relatives to follow-up their case.

P.S.₂ And keep cracking jokes, they sound OK even when third-hand! Perhaps I'll hear some directly from you sooner or later (better sooner).

Copy furnished: SVD
AMRSP

a declaration of faith

A Declaration of Faith: "To be a Christian is not just to denounce injustice but to seek to remove the roots of injustice."

To the Church Panel, Church-Military Liaison Committee
To the AMRSP (Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines)
To the SVD (Society of the Divine World)
To our friends and sympathizers

I hope this document will be allowed to reach you so that our side may have some hearing, too, after the military has published its charges against Fr. Lahoz and myself in the Media.

A. On the Fast to Protest Torture, and the Initial Investigation

1. There is little left to clarify here. We only want to repeat that it is not our own torture or torture that happened here in Camp Olivas that we are protesting. All we asked is that the prisoners who showed signs of torture be examined. The military has started its own investigation. We hope the Church team will soon be allowed to join.
2. There is much to reflect on. While our fast and our own imprisonment drew attention to the issue of torture, it is the documentation (names, descriptions) and the organized action of the church, both rank and file and officials, that made the government act.

This is a valuable lesson for the future continuation of the investigation in other camps. We definitely cannot fast indefinitely, and the initial moves, in fact, give us reason to break our fast; but we really don't use fasting all the time. Detailed documentation and organized action are the main prod to action.

3. A theological reflection on this issue: The resurrection of Christ, as biblical theologians have pointed out, is not just a message about life and salvation after death. It is an affirmation of the value of life before death, the value of our efforts to build a more just world — these are salvific acts.

And the human body, risen in Christ, is not to be seen as an adjunct, much less a prison to be liberated from, a mere skin to be discarded. It is sacramental, for through it we come in touch with the world and with our fellow men, and through them, with Christ.

That is why I remember with deeper insight now the words of South Korean Christians when they invoked the sacredness of the body in protesting against torture.

4. This is just one step away from concern for the many oppressed Filipinos whose bodies and spirit bear marks worse than torture. We especially remember the sugar workers who are the current focus of the AMRSP conversion.

One reason why we hope this issue of torture can be at least initially resolved is this — so the AMRSP can give undivided attention to the bigger and more desperate need of the sugar workers.

5. We asked for this investigation not in the spirit of seeking revenge and punishment for those who inflicted torture, but primarily to prevent others in the future from doing so.

Of course, the hope and courage the political prisoners received from the church's action are seeds of gratitude deeply planted in their hearts.

B. On the Charges of the Military Against Us

1. Yesterday noon, Gen. Diaz officially read to Fr. Lahoz and myself the charges. They are criminal charges: conspiracy to commit rebellion (Art. 136, Revised Penal Code), and violation of P.D. No. 33, dated Oct. 28, 1973, related to subversive literature.

Do these charges classify us now as criminal elements, rather than political prisoners?

2. The particular acts we are charged with are not written in the charges. However, the newspapers have printed some and included smear items. That is why a second issue of our fast is to allow us to answer such published charges also publicly.

3. I am very grateful to the Church and the SVD for sticking its neck out for us. As is well known, I have not been particularly "orthodox" and the church could very well have refused to go this far in its support. I do not claim this support as a right (although I hear the SVD has at least resolved the technical legality of my membership and priesthood); that's why I'm doubly grateful.

4. For this reason, the church, at least deserves an explanation from me in answer to these charges.

C. Did I participate in Underground Activities? Yes.

1. I have never denied this, either to the Church or the military. However, I also ask that you consider the particular circumstances. I was working openly and legally for reforms before martial law. When martial law was declared, I did not immediately think of hiding. I went to Christ the King Seminary, thinking of new ways to pursue open legal work in the new situation. But the METROCOM had come to arrest me, so I went into hiding. When the impressions that accumulated in those days clearly showed that reform organizations and protest activities were banned, I decided to continue organizational work underground.

2. A question I'd like to pose to the military and Marcos: The Supreme Court has officially confirmed the existence of a rebellion (upon being briefed by the military). Do you ever ask why there is a rebellion?

Can you attribute it merely to malice, hunger for power, psychological quirks, etc? Don't you realize that a big number, if not most, of those in the underground started as reformists?

D. What Specific Activities in the Underground?

1. At first, I had planned to organize among the farmers in my home province of Mindoro. But I didn't want to stop the organizational work we had begun among church people (CNL) and I was also concerned about the lack of coordination among different urban groups. I was particularly apprehensive some youth groups would launch urban armed activities on their own. So, when I was approached to help form the NDF (National Democratic Front), I readily agreed.

2. More precisely, I was a member of the Preparatory Committee (PREPCOM), for a National Democratic Front. Even before martial law, I was on record as advocating something similar. My work included contacting organizations and individuals, discussing with them their issues, relating these to a draft 10-point program of action, identifying differences (which we never forcibly resolved) and exploring possibilities of joint activities and mutual support.

3. Sometime early 1974, the chairmanship of the PREPCOM was offered to me by the incumbent head whom I knew to be a Communist Party member. I hesitated to accept because I didn't feel competent about the Muslim issue. Besides, I had a basic stand that I would perform functions in the underground but not hold fixed positions (for many reasons). However, in the process of discussion, we also clarified the nature of the PREPCOM. Although the idea of an NDF was first officially broached by the CPP, upon the response of other groups — Christians, nationalists, businessmen, Muslims, etc. — it is now an independent body. It is therefore not the same PREPCOM which used to be part of the CPP structure (under the Central Committee), but of course, there are CPP representatives in its composition.

4. About the NLC. The National Liaison Committee is a CPP body. When it suffered setbacks last October 1974, I was concerned as any PREPCOM member should be since it affected an NDF member organization. When I received a letter requesting me to help in establishing links between Manila and other regions, I agreed on the condition that I eventually turn this task over to somebody who would assume it permanently.

This aspect the military neglects to point out — the NLC position I was holding is PROVISIONAL, is temporary.

5. To perform this function, I asked help from the Manila CPP organization, since I didn't know too many of them especially in other regions. They introduced us to Charlie Palma, and we started trying to contact different groups.

6. The account of my arrest is also distorted. I wasn't arrested while waiting for Charlie in a restaurant. The military had previously caught a courier and tortured him (flat iron on his foot). This led to Charlie's capture. He was also

tortured, and was forced to help them trap me. Their first two traps failed (they even arrested an innocent bystander). The third trap was a letter from Charlie inviting me to meet him in Luisa and Sons on Rizal Avenue, on Friday, Dec. 13, at 1.00 p.m.

When they had arrested me, I requested that they inform my religious superior. But it was only the next day (Saturday, Dec. 14) that they gave a warrant to the Church with the news that I was trapped somewhere in Pampanga. It was only on Sunday, Dec. 15 that I saw a copy of such document.

E. Now the Question is: Does the Military Accuse me of Being a Communist (to justify torture and indefinite detention)?

1. The implications would be obvious. They hope the Church will disown me. Also they use "communist" to connote malice, violence, greed for power, anti-religion, etc. (It is in this sense that Marcos is sometimes called a communist by some Filipinos).

2. I presume they have many sworn statements, affidavits, etc. — presumably from tortured prisoners (if not tortured during the formal interrogation, they were "softened up" prior to that). Are these valid proofs? Will they allow the supposed sources to be examined and investigated for torture?

3. But what is my answer?

(a) I have been called a communist before, even within Church circles (more often "Maoist"). Every priest, religious, Christian, even bishop who plunges into controversy over justice and freedom has been branded a communist — a troublemaker, wanting to turn the world upside down (Acts 17⁶).

(b) An additional reason is I was advocating serious, critical study of Marxism as a corrective to hysterical phobia current among Christians, so we can use what's worthwhile to incarnate our faith better in concrete social problems and struggle. This includes dialogue in word and deed.

(c) Since martial law, especially, many Filipinos I know, including Christians, are having a different perception of what a communist is — usually young, full of high ideals, impatient with hypocrisy, indignant at injustice and above all, striving to serve the people wholly and entirely in the most effective possible way.

(d) Because of these considerations, when I am called a communist, I have mixed reactions. Since I know the evil meaning they attach to it, I don't want to be called one. But since I and many Filipinos have a different notion of it, I don't mind being called one, especially now that some communists I know have shown me how to live for the people and die for the people (I do not want, however, to romanticize, much less canonize all of them).

(e) But to set the record straight, not just for my sake but especially for the sake of those Christians with whom I have worked and struggled, let my words, work and witness (even my weaknesses) be taken in support of these beliefs:

* that to be a Christian in the Philippines today, is to oppose tyranny and dictatorship, especially when it distorts truth and tortures people.

* that to be a Christian is not just to denounce injustice but to seek to remove

the roots of injustice. This calls for the development of people's own power through free organizations.

* that to be a Christian includes (I do not want to generalize this point) entering into dialogue right now with these men of good will who struggle for the liberation of the many. Some of them might consciously reject God in their beliefs, but Mt. 25 tells us that some surprises are in store for those who try to live and die as Christ did — totally given to the service of the least of our brothers.

F. If I am Released to the Church's Custody, Will I Go Underground Again?

1. If, as the military says, people's organizations (not just government-sponsored ones) are allowed under martial law, I will work with open and legal organizations for reform, initially related to the Church.
2. Frustrations and setbacks as experienced by others who have tried to organize since martial law will not be reason for me to go underground.
3. If some who initially work with me decide that reforms under the present society are impossible and decide to go underground, I will have serious talks with them. If their reasons are solid and they are decided, anyway, I won't prevent them.

Q. — Would this make me a subversive?

4. If the military moves to arrest me for reasons I know to be malicious and unfounded, I will try to defend myself. But if they will not listen to reason, I might go into hiding again.

But there's no point in anticipating this. After all, I'm not even out of prison yet.

G. A Final Comment: In this document, I have consciously avoided mentioning any name or anything that would implicate anyone, legal or in hiding. I know the underground has the same general basic loyalty to its members. That's why I seriously register doubts as to the voluntariness of supposed statements by prisoners seeking to implicate me.

(Sgd) ED DE LA TORRE, SVD.

January, 1975.

6 HE WHO NO LONGER WIELDS THE PEN

letters of journalist

Satur Ocampo

*they have not
silenced
a just man
just because
they have
killed him*



aspirations of detainees

"We do not aspire for mere adjustments (though we are not opposed to them generally); we aspire for genuine and thoroughgoing changes in social structures and their concomitant values."

Mr. Apolonio Batalla
Columnist-Editorial Writer
BULLETIN TODAY
Intramuros, Manila

Dear Pol,

Your column yesterday (June 25) entitled "Some Men of Conviction" struck me as a very serious piece. Hopefully, it would provoke deep thinking among those who, though engulfed by the frenetic daily struggle for personal advancement, are deep in their hearts with the future of our country and people.

I would like to express my personal appreciation for this piece. It would, to some extent, correct misconceptions created by reactionary propaganda that dissidents or "subversives" are a menace to society. For you to say that we, dissidents facing trial or in detention without trial, are "men of conviction" and "highly motivated individuals . . . interested in improving the lives of the people" is to say enough. But it is not quite accurate.

We are not simply interested in improving the lives of our people as "reformists" of many hues avow; we are dedicated to the eradication of the evil conditions that perpetrate suffering and impoverishment of our people. We do not aspire for mere adjustments (though we are not opposed to them generally); we aspire for genuine and thoroughgoing changes in social structures and their concomitant values.

Which brings us to another point in your column. You stated that ". . . simply because there is a hard core in the dissident movement presents a threat (to political stability); it offers an alternative, which while outlawed can win minds . . . a seed that can germinate depending on the conditions." I beg to disagree. It is not the presence of a "hard core" that is the essential threat to political stability, but the concrete conditions of social inequalities and the exploitation and suppression arising therefrom that breed instability. A "hard core" can be wiped out at any given time, but new ones with vast following will arise because the conditions remain for dissidence to persist.

Such is the truth in the Philippines, as it is in every other part of the world where national liberation struggles are taking place. You cited Luis M. Taruc and others, "who defied the government and fomented a rebellion many years ago (yes, more than three decades ago). While you point out that Taruc and company have rejoined the "peaceful society", you are "not inclined to believe that they have junked the conviction to work in some way for the benefit of the poor in this country." I read here clearly that you do concede that what Taruc and company had fought for but fell short of achieving still has not been achieved to this day. Which proves the point I brought up in the preceding paragraph of this note. Which also explains why some dissidents are now in prison and many more are in the hills and plains.

A "tactical measure" as you say must be directed at "winning the minds of those who compose the hard core of the subversive elements," to be effective, must be more than just empty gestures or haphazardly implemented "reforms."

Any such measure must start from a genuine desire to cure the ills that breed dissidence and not merely to eliminate the "hard core." It follows then that such measure must perforce be directed at creating the conditions for the eradication of the roots of dissidence. President/Prime Minister Marcos has often called for the "extirpation" of the roots of rebellion. Were it that he could be as forceful in pushing through acts that would make good his exhortations!

You ask what the failings in the system are that we see; and knowing what we think, how the government can act in "refutation of their conviction."

At this point, we grant President/Prime Minister Marcos credit for trying his best, but at the same time we raise doubts as to for whom he is trying his best. We doubt that it is for the Filipino people primarily; we are inclined to believe that his regime essentially serves the interests of foreigners — principally U.S. imperialists — and their local cohorts.

For how explain the President's persistent adherence to an economic policy opening wide the country's natural and human resources to unbridled exploitation by foreign capital, amid the rhetoric of "nationalism", "national sovereignty," "independence" and "self-reliance"? How explain the dying out of independent Filipino capitalists and their absorption as either junior partners or employees of giant foreign firms? How explain the minuscule, nay insulting, ₱1 increase in the daily minimum wage and the continued outlawing of workers' strikes against the every-rising rates of profits of multinational companies in the Philippines? How explain the rise of new oligarchs in business and industry over the past five years in the face of exhortations for "democratization of wealth"? How explain the deepening debt incubus where the poor peasants are falling under the "land reform", "Masagana 99", "Samahang Nayon" and other government programs supposedly aimed at improving their lives? How explain the suppression of the people's political rights (trampled upon in the IBP elections) and the gross violation of the human rights of political detainees, the urban poor, workers and the peasants despite the government's repeated avowals of adherence to the observance of internationally recognized human rights?

I could raise many more questions, but for the purpose of this note (which I assume could not get into print in your column space) I hope the above are sufficient to provide you with an insight into how I, one of the imprisoned dissidents/"subversives", think.

As for the other question you raise — how can the government act in refutation of our convictions — the answer may be that the government, as it is now constituted and run, cannot make any convincing refutation. Just take the Interim Batasang Pambansa, supposedly a major phalanx of the “new” governmental system, what hope do you repose in it? Weren’t those horseflies that swarmed upon the IBP delegates apt indicators of the essential characteristics of that body?

You were very right in stating that “we certainly cannot indulge in the illusion that our thinking is adequate to serve the national purpose” and “nor can we allow ourselves to think that what we are doing is enough to ensure political stability.” But why be consumed by the obsession with “political stability” when this is the consequence and not the basis of social stability? If you try to achieve political stability on the basis of social instability you will get nowhere. I do believe that this is the dilemma of the Marcos regime.

I hope that this little sharing of views would enhance our mutual respect and, in the end, contribute to the creation of conditions for the attainment of what you and I share most ardently — the desire to liberate our people from poverty and exploitation that mired them in gross injustice for as long as we can remember.

Very truly yours,

(sgd) SATUR OCAMPO
Political Detainee
PC-INP Jail
Camp Bicutan, Taguig
Metro Manila

June 26, 1978.



Gray - haired defense lawyer Lorenzo Tanada is surrounded by detainees in Bicutan, among them Satur Ocampo, to Tanada's left.

Prison Life

From 'a man who no longer yields the pen': "prison life - as was life in the underground and in the hills . . . is a wellspring of discoveries, a fountainhead of wisdom in the essences of life."

17 October 1978

Dear Lotty, Romini, Chelo et al,

Warmest greetings to you and all the Panorama and BT staffers and workers.

Chelo's reference to me as "a man who no longer yields the pen" - obviously reduced to such menial tasks as washing the dishes, scrubbing the floor, doing dirty kitchen work and digging garbage pits - comes with a cattle cat here but either a little checkle there. Surely, it's painful to realize that one cannot write or be writing to (but who can, here and now, on the kind of stuff he desires?). On the other hand prison life - as was life in the underground and in the hills - is a wellspring of discoveries, a fountainhead of wisdom in the essences of life. (Or, if he has kept his sense of balance, could be "hardened" (not in the rigid sense of the military) as a human being whose thinking and reflexes become far more responsive to people, places and events).

It is true prison tests the mettle of a person, his/her inner strength, and not everyone passes the test. I may boast that I passed the initial test - the "initiation" of torture and degradation (I felt it was not degradation because it gave me a complete feeling of being so much beyond the brutality and tactility of my torture). Now I'm going through the subtle, more pernicious test of indefinite detention under an atmosphere of relative physical calm and mental turmoil; one can become, if he tried enough, from to tomorrow this into next day calm and physical rigor, all for some health?

But for one whose mind has been trained to be active and which holds within the concrete transformation of ideas into actual realities, a prison is a real incubator. But any pit, or even quicksand, could be overcome if one tried hard and knew how. So I am and learn; and while I may have been temporarily bogged down, I don't feel like sinking at all.

Many thoughts do come to me in prison, and not the least of them about the daily grind of news hunting, writing, analysing, interpreting and layouting. I could imagine how you in Pano¹ and BT² go about the daily grind, and sometimes, there is a tick of yearning to be among you again. But I soon realize how many things have changed, and among them the attitudes of former newsmen colleagues toward me — now a “fallen” (but not defeated) revolutionary. Thus far no one has thought of nor dared (?) to write me a note, though I have written to some. Aside from Ernie Granada, no newsmen colleague has come around to look me up.

I did throw a dare, through notes sent to the editors of BT, TJ³ and DE⁴, for whoever may wish to look into how we political detainees (and myself specifically) are doing. No taker, till you in Pano took the initiative. And though it was an official call I relished seeing the faces and talking to press colleagues (yes, Chelo is a latecomer by my reckoning, but a very welcome one).

Do I sound like griping? I should not. I might be looking for something that is no longer there — a warm comradeship born of common weal and woe (perhaps there could not be many close friends because I wasn't much of a mixer, just an occasional “glass mate” at NPC). Perhaps I should stop thinking there is a basis for undying ties by the mere fact that one was once a journalist among and with other journalists. That one was with others who commonly cherished truth and freedom, who fought for and defended justice and democracy, and who would go on cherishing these, fighting for and defending them under whatever political clime.

Some myth must die, in the rising of reality that comradeship has to be forged on a different, deeper and more intense political and social basis. This I have found. And while other comradeships wane or die in the crucible of political and social struggle, this one grows the stronger and firmer. But as one finds vigor in a new and enduring comradeship, he seeks to expand it, to reach out to those who once were close but have now seemingly fallen off by reason of temporal fear, or by a communication gap. I hope this were the case of press colleagues I deem to be my close friends.

I end hoping you would understand this little outpouring of views and feelings. And I hope an outlet could have been provided me to exercise (as Chelo puts it) the human right, and need, to communicate. But a one-way communication is as effete as howling in the wilderness; it acquires value only when it gets a response. May I then expect one?

*Mabuhay kayong lahat!*⁵

SATUR C. OCAMPO
Political Detainee
PC-INP Jail
Bicutan, Taguig, MM

17 October, 1978.

¹ Panorama magazine

² Bulletin Today

³ Times Journal

⁴ Daily Express

⁵ Pilipino for “Long live to you all!”

The Real Tragedy

"... as a former journalist who had known you quite closely, I cannot accept your reference to me and to other national democrats as brilliant though deluded minds..."

The Editors
The Times Journal
Pasig, Metro Manila

Attn: Mr. Manuel B. Salak, Executive Editor

Gentlemen:

Your editorial of Monday, Nov. 21, 1977, entitled "Crippling blow", decries the story of Jose Ma. Sison, alleged chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines who was captured by the military on Nov. 10, 1977, as "a tragedy of misdirected efforts . . . shared by a few other bright young men who, recognizing a problem, poured their efforts into the wrong solution." Your editorial ended with the prayer that "a time will come when all the brilliant though deluded minds, and all the impassioned but misguided hearts among our race will see the folly and futility of their resistance and, hopefully of their own accord, come home to the fold where the real opportunity for service — even heroism — lies."

I would shed a tear for such utter display of naivete in an editorial supposedly coming from a core of journalists of no mean experience, expertise and — but I begin to doubt now — keen social awareness.

Pardon my reaction, gentlemen. But as a former journalist who had known you quite closely, I cannot accept your reference to me and to other national democrats as "brilliant though deluded minds" who "waste their lives holing up in the hills and trying to harass the government." For a time, indeed, I might have been deluded but by the thought that you, my former newspaper colleagues, comprehended and appreciated what I have done — leave the newspaper beat and the newsroom to directly lend a hand to our oppressed people's struggle for true freedom, justice and democracy.

The tragedy is not on the part of Jose Ma. Sison and the many of us who have taken up the people's struggle. The tragedy, rather, is on the part of those who, while in a position to observe closely and analyze the problems of our society, fail to recognize — or shall I say dare not recognize — the problems and "pour their efforts in the wrong solution." It is truly a jaundiced eye that would, after examining the "reforms" instituted by the government among the peasantry, find that the grievances that have rankled in the hearts of the people "have all but dissipated in the past five years."

Rather than deplore the "misdirected zeal" and "sad waste of that single-hearted devotion" of "radical elements of the Church," playing an "increasingly evident role . . . in the subversive movement in the country," shouldn't you wonder why such people previously so devoted to saving the soul have now taken up the mundane struggle of the poor in their daily existence? Why, indeed?

Gentlemen, does not the "folly and futility" lie in the delusion that "reforms" of the martial law government are for real and that the people's grievances have dissipated in the last five years? Does not such delusion abet the continuance, nay, the exacerbation of grievances bred by repressive social, economic and political conditions under martial rule?

Is there really an "agrarian reform program" as you cited in your editorial?

Have you, gentlemen, gone out among the peasantry by yourselves and investigated the effects of "land reform", "Samahang Nayon", "Masagana 99", "Palayang Bayan", etc. on the economic well-being of what you referred to as "erstwhile oppressed peasantry"? Have you verified, as true-blue journalists are wont to do, the glowing reports of government about a handful of rich and middle peasants raking it rich under "Masagana 99" against the vast majority of poor peasants who remain deprived of land of their own, or having become "beneficiaries" of land reform", have become mired much deeper in debt under government lending programs?

Or has the general futility of seeking the truth and, finding it, publishing it uncensored — either directly by government or indirectly by "self-regulation" — driven you to simply accept government propaganda and to the world at large?

I am inclined to believe that the general conditions of unfreedom in Philippine mass media — rather than sheer naivete — impelled the writing of such an editorial as yours of Nov. 21. This general condition of unfreedom has holed you up in the fold of the law(?) and forced you to a sort of heroism — that of perseverance in the "folly and futility" of conformism with an imposed "reform society."

It did not come as a shock to me, therefore, to learn that you — all active trade unionists prior to martial law — have sheepishly bowed to your newspaper management's brazen act to abort your plan to set up a workers' union among your fellow workers at the Times Journal.

Tragic, isn't it?

Yours for ultimate freedom,

(SGD) SATUR OCAMPO
Political Prisoner

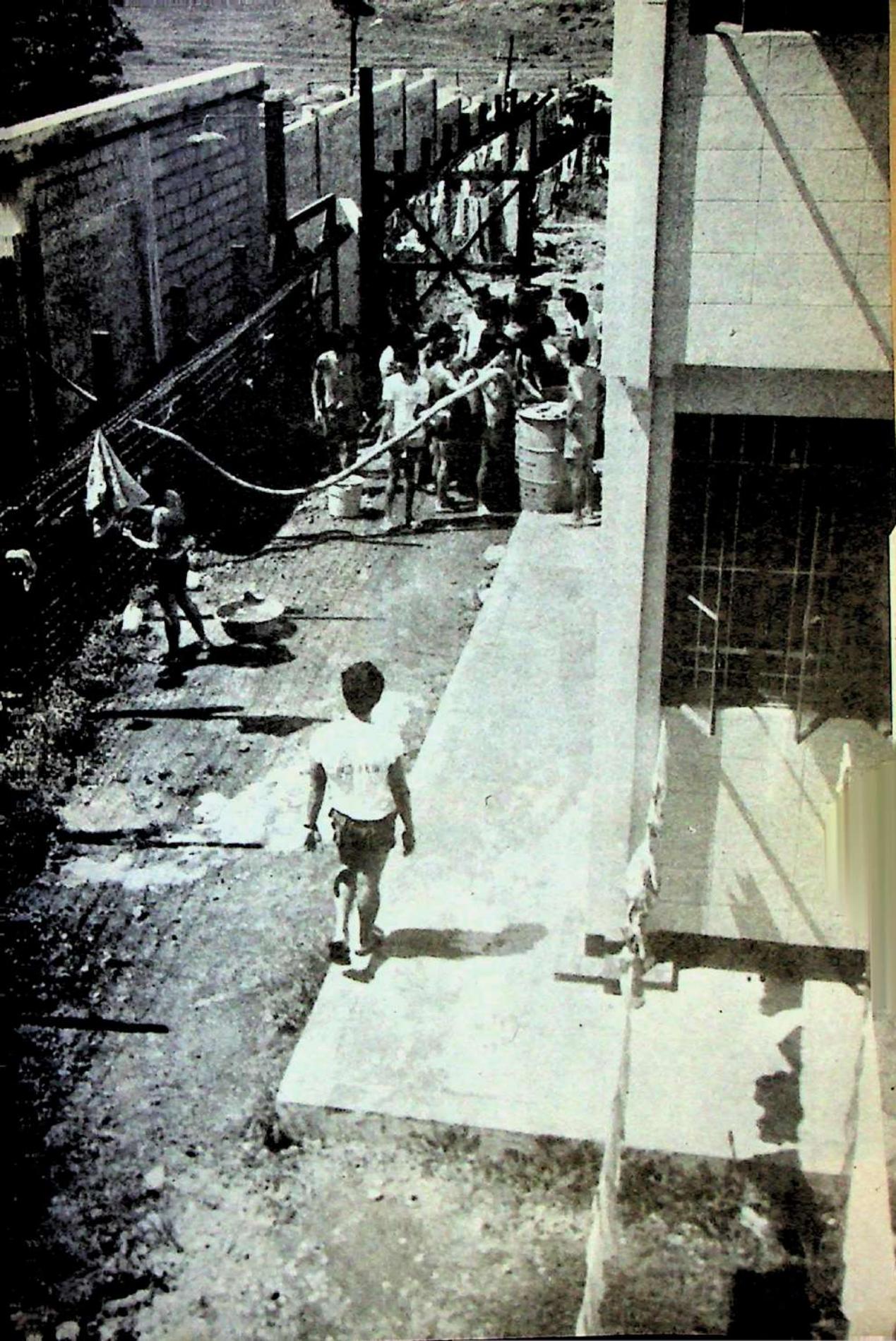
Bicutan Rehabilitation Center
Camp Bicutan, Taguig, Metro Manila

November 24, 1977.

"prison life... is a wellspring of discoveries, a fountainhead of wisdom in the essences of life."

s. ocampo







Political detainees produce handicrafts like wall plaques, pendants, cards etc. as part of their struggle for self-reliance.



Children of detainees support their parents' struggles.

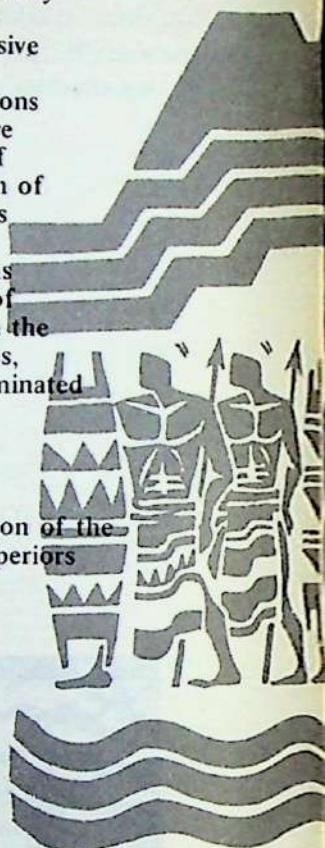
hope is release from prison



The problem of political detainees cannot be divorced from the larger but more fundamental problem of a neo-colonial Philippine society coercively maintained by a repressive regime. The economic crisis that grips the land is rooted in the very nature of a society dominated by the interests of a minority in league with the interests of foreign capital. The larger problem of an oppressive and unjust society is not an abstract but concrete one. It represents the aspirations of a majority of forty-million persons for a more authentic life as persons but which aspirations are daily thwarted by the present oppressive and unjust order of things. It is this order which breeds the protest and rebellion of men. While this dispensation remains, so long will free spirits subvert it. Likewise, the unjust and oppressive character of international relations where the few highly advanced nations monopolize the wealth of the world and exercise positions of dominance over the majority of underdeveloped ones, where the majority are in fact consigned to the position of neo-colonies, provide the basis from which rise the irreversible tide of dominated nations struggling for independence and oppressed peoples struggling for liberation.

From *Various Reports*, a publication of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines

1975.



7 WE CAN SEE THROUGH THE BARS

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE MUST DARE TO BE « CULTURAL MINORITIES » AND LIKE THEM RESIST « INTEGRATION » BY THOSE WHO WOULD PLAN FOR US WITH OUT US AAA

STATEMENT ON INDEPENDENCE DAY, JUNE 12

We, the political prisoners, express our solidarity with all the progressive and humanist sectors of our society in their unrelenting struggle to protect and advance man's precious heritage — his basic human rights. From the dark cells of state prisons and from behind the barbed-wired detention centers throughout the land, we convey to you all our warmest greetings. Your courage and determination bring us joy even during these most difficult and trying hours. Thus strengthened, we pledge to persevere in our historic task of regaining what has been lost, preserving what has been gained and advancing what has been halted in man's inexorable march through history.

History has been man's unceasing struggle to assert his humanity against all natural and man-made barriers. This struggle is as old as man himself starting from the time when he was wrestling with the forces of nature and continuing up to the present when he is on the verge of gaining complete mastery over nature. But the struggle persists because man's inhumanity to man has not ceased; one class exploits another, one nation dominates another. This exploitation and domination do not cease by themselves. It requires man's unceasing and concerted effort to bring about what we know now as human rights.

So it is in our own time and place. The people of the world today are waging a relentless struggle to preserve and advance human rights. They have suffered setbacks and difficulties but they have also won fresh victories. The prices paid are heavy if only to stress the worth of human dignity. With them, we express our solidarity, sharing their sorrows and their difficulties and rejoicing in their victories.

Our own struggle in the Philippines finds its most comprehensive expression in our struggle for our national and democratic rights. It seeks the political and economic emancipation of our people from imperialist domination and exploitation. This is so because human rights in practice can only be enjoyed when we have the political independence and the economic wherewithal to protect and preserve them. Without this, human rights would largely remain an empty phrase as we know from our recent experiences. But we can achieve these only through long and arduous efforts. We must pay the price knowing it is worth it.

We, the political prisoners, have exercised man's basic right to work for a just and prosperous society. We have sought basic reforms and changes to substantiate and advance human rights in this country. But the present dispensation has seen it fit to imprison us, depriving us of our personal liberty because of our political beliefs and convictions. This is a gross violation of human rights and is patently unjust.

We, therefore, call on all those who treasure man's precious heritage to work for the restoration of civil liberties in our country. We call on our people to resist further encroachments on human rights and to wage concerted efforts to protect and promote human dignity and decency. The tasks we have set before us will not be easy as it has not been for all those who have gone before us. But they have succeeded as surely as we will succeed for nothing can stop man's struggle for his full humanity.

In solidarity, let us march to victory!

POLITICAL PRISONERS

June 12, 1975.

STATEMENT ISSUED TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

"The genuine spirit underlying any concept of amnesty is the cognizance of an individual or a group of individuals' honest pursuit of a political belief and a government's willingness to forgive and forget all acts and omissions for the greater good - national unity."

We Filipino political prisoners, would like to bring to the attention of your organization our miserable plight of prolonged and indefinite incarceration under the Marcos martial law regime. In spite of two amnesty declarations and other similar pronouncements made to assure us of our freedom, we are still languishing in prison. We are aware of the planned visit of your organization in the country. We know your specific purpose is to look into our plight as political prisoners. In spite of the restrictions and other forms of repression employed to suppress information, as prisoners of conscience, we feel we could do much by bringing our true situation out in the open thus enabling not only your organization but the whole world to know what is going on inside the different prisons of the Marcos martial law regime. We also have full trust and confidence that your organization conceived and organized in accordance with the principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could take positive and decisive steps in bringing about solutions favorable to us.

In February of 1973, in line with its previously declared policy of "national reconciliation" the Marcos regime offered amnesty for all political dissenters in its avowed pursuit of "national unity" and affording everyone a chance in rebuilding society. This was followed by a subsequent declaration made on December 1974, so as to include even ranking leaders which were before excluded in the previous declaration. Wanting to avail of the opportunity being offered by the government all political prisoners in good faith made written applications for amnesty in the hope that the Marcos martial law regime would make good its promise.

Time however provided us with the conclusive proof that the amnesty offers made by the Marcos regime were nothing but cheap propaganda gimmicks used to fool the Filipino people, and the whole world into believing that the present regime has changed its repressive character. After nearly three years since the first amnesty applications were filed no genuine political prisoner has ever been released through amnesty. The amnesty applications were either rejected or simply left to rot in government stockrooms. The widely publicized government releases made through amnesty were nothing but stage-managed surrenders of government controlled "dissidents". It is only in this country where there is an amnesty with strings attached. The genuine spirit underlying any concept of amnesty is the cognizance of an individual or a group of individuals' honest pursuit of a political belief and a government's willingness to forgive and forget all acts and omissions for the greater good - national unity.

To the Marcos martial law regime, however, is a distorted understanding of amnesty. It means the creation of several amnesty commissions which in reality are but sophisticated tactical interrogation teams. Its main purpose instead of favorably acting on amnesty applications is to lure or legally coerce applicants into writing or signing self-incriminating and damaging statements. This is usually done through the method of summoning an applicant to a "summary hearing". In the hearing incriminating documents and dossiers are presented to determine his involvement or participation. The anomalous practice then of advising the applicant to admit guilt so his application for amnesty could be facilitated is made thus using the promise of freedom to lure applicants into self-incrimination. Another practice is to invite applicants to "debriefing centers" and make them write their history of participation in the movement in their own hand-writing and signature. This is supposed to be done, the personnel will say, to facilitate your release.

These questionable actions clearly indicate that the amnesty offer was in reality a calculated legal technique employed to directly or indirectly obtain incriminating admissions of guilt from amnesty applicants thus laying the groundwork for their prosecution and eventual conviction, thus finding a convenient basis for the continued incarceration of political prisoners without any charges. Despite the advanced methods of torture employed by the Marcos regime it has miserably failed to fish out admissions from the majority of political prisoners, depriving them of the chance to build airtight cases for a successful conviction. It has therefore utilized amnesty offers in the most treacherous manner to obtain these much needed admissions of guilt.

It is not therefore surprising for all of us, Filipino political prisoners, that within a short period of time the Marcos martial law regime will openly reject our amnesty application. It is also expected, as a necessary consequence, that if and when the proper political climate warrants, military trials will be held with the sole purpose of using all incriminating evidences taken during the

so-called amnesty hearings so successful convictions could be made thus completing a diabolical scheme of action.

We believe that your organization could greatly help us by exerting pressure on the Marcos martial law regime to make good his word and start making genuine amnesty releases. We also know that whatever could be the turn of events insofar as our freedom is concerned you will let the world know of our true situation as prisoners of conscience and continue helping us in our struggle to build a just society.

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

November, 1975.

STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY (DECEMBER 10)

"Much as the high walls and barbed wires of prison are concrete evidences of the deprivation of our liberty, the harsh strictures and prescriptions of the fascist dictatorship make the whole country a veritable prison for the unprivileged and poor masses of our people."

We, the political prisoners in the Philippines, greet the observance of International Human Rights Day with just pride and hearty commendations for all those who unflinchingly carry on the struggle for justice, freedom and democracy all over the world. At the same time, we denounce the continued gross violations of human rights by the fascist dictatorship in the Philippines, as we denounce those violations perpetrated in other similarly oppressed nations.

We hail the zealous work of international organizations — notably the Amnesty International, the United Nations Human Rights Commission, and the International Red Cross — to uphold human rights, in the face of formidable odds encountered in certain nations ruled by fascist, racist and other oppressive regimes.

We hail the perseverance in struggle of people under dictatorships to defend and assert their inalienable rights to life, liberty and happiness. Countless lives are sacrificed in this struggle, multitudes fall victims to heinous methods of suppression and torture. Impelled by justice, the struggles for national liberation and against all forms of oppression are gaining considerable grounds despite the intensified reactionary force and terror used against them.

In the Philippines, we hail our countrymen who persevere in resisting the Marcos fascist dictatorship by various means. At the same time, we raise our voices in protest of the continued violations with impunity by this regime of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which the Philippine government is a signatory.

We denounce the continued arbitrary arrests and indefinite detention without charges or trial of hundreds of political oppositionists and ordinary citizens.

We denounce the continued use of torture on political detainees to force them to admit crimes imputed to them and to implicate others.

We denounce the intermittent harassments of political prisoners and their families, the abject physical conditions in military stockades and detention centers, and the use of "safehouses" as places of torture and detention.

We denounce the dissembling of the Marcos fascist dictatorship before the people of the Philippines and the whole world by glossing over violations of human rights and foisting itself up as a "humane", "compassionate" and "just" regime.

Not so long ago, over the protests of various sectors against the torture of a number of political prisoners who had courageously exposed their harrowing experiences, President Marcos self-righteously declared that "no one, but no one had been tortured". This barefaced denial impelled the Amnesty International (AI) and the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP) to make careful and detailed investigations.

The results are two well-documented reports on several instances of torture — including the flagrant use of electric shock, water cure, truth serum, beatings and molestation of women prisoners. The reports have been printed and distributed separately by AI and AMRSP. The AI said that torture is used in the Philippines "freely and with extreme cruelty, often over long periods".

The Marcos martial law regime was forced to own some of the tortures but still it attempted to pass them off as "isolated cases". It then vowed punishment for those responsible for the tortures, which has yet to be fulfilled.

Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile, in a press interview during the recent anniversary of the Department of National Defense, tried to deprecate the AI and its report by imputing bias. He claimed that AI representatives interviewed only "hard-core subversives" in detention who he added, naturally tried to blacken the image of the Marcos regime. Enrile crowed that we political prisoners are treated very well, that we enjoy "privileges" like visits by relatives, access to reading materials and the right to cook our own food.

The truth, however, is that almost without exception political prisoners are tortured immediately after arrest and held incommunicado for varying lengths of time. As regards "privileges" enjoyed by us, these have had to be won by ourselves through struggle — through collective petitions and, failing these,

through mass protest actions, principally hunger strikes. In such mass actions, we have been staunchly supported by our relatives and various civic and religious organizations.

Despite the declared assurances by the government of protection of our human rights, we political prisoners continue to be tortured and harassed. Visiting privileges and such basic rights as fresh air and sunning are often arbitrarily curtailed. Many of us are thrown into isolated detention and denied fresh air and sunning and visitors for several months, while others are arbitrarily transferred from one detention center to another, making it difficult for their families to closely look after their welfare.

For us, political prisoners, every day is a struggle against both brutal and subtle harassments. We are determined to fight for and defend our rights. We are also aware that, far more than we suffer the hardships and indignities of imprisonment because of our political ideals, our countrymen outside prison and military stockades suffer brutal oppression and suppression.

Civil liberties remain curtailed; the mass media remains under state control though censorship is practiced with subtlety; workers are banned from striking for just wages and improved working conditions in the face of eroded real wages; the peasants are harassed by military operations and oppressed by impositions of a hoax land reform program and its attendant programs that are drying up their incomes; students and professors are restricted in the expression of their political views and in their rights to self-organization on campus; and the national capitalists are squeezed out of business by foreign monopoly capitalists protected and induced by the fascist dictatorship to take over control of lucrative commercial and industrial enterprises.

Much as the high walls and barbed wires of prison are concrete evidences of the deprivation of our liberty, the harsh strictures and prescriptions of the fascist dictatorship make the whole country a veritable prison for the unprivileged and poor masses of our people.

But this systematic oppression and suppression by force and terror cannot stay for long. The Filipino people are now fighting back, with firmer and bolder actions, such as public demonstrations and rallies and widespread pamphleteering. The more courageous and enlightened join the armed struggle waged by the New People's Army and the Moro National Liberation Front. Wider and wider support is extended to the freedom fighters in the countryside.

With the support of all those who value and fight for justice and freedom, we are confident our struggle in the Philippines shall triumph. Certainly, right shall prevail over wrong, good over evil, light over darkness, freedom over slavery, and liberation over oppression.

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE PHILIPPINES
December 10, 1976.

STATEMENT ON THE REFERENDUM

Boycott of the Dec. 17 "referendum" of the Marcos martial law regime is the only correct position to take for Filipinos who abide by the principles of justice and democracy.

Participation in the "referendum" — even if it were to vote "No" — would already mean acquiescence to or approval of the way Mr. Marcos is ruling the country. It would mean falling victim to the scheme of the regime to put up an appearance of "popular mandate" to all the machinations aimed at perpetuating and consolidating power in the hands of one man.

From the very first "referendum-plebiscite" of Jan. 17, 1973 to this fifth charade on Dec. 17, the Marcos martial law regime has sought to achieve two goals: first, to clothe with legitimacy all its machinations to change the Philippine constitution and restructure the government around a virtually dictatorial President/Prime Minister; and second, to institutionalize a substitute for popular elections that it can very assuredly manipulate to suit its purpose for the moment.

The "referendum" thus has become the chief instrument through which Mr. Marcos and his cronies play their dirty game of politics at the expense of the Filipino people. They lay down the rules of the game — who should participate and how, what should be discussed, how it should be discussed and for how long — so that the result is predictable — no, assured.

By repeatedly holding "referenda," Mr. Marcos seeks to convince the outside world growing critical of his regime that there is an "untrammeled process of casting our secret ballot" (as he sought to project in his Human Rights Day statement last Dec. 10), and that he truly enjoys popular endorsement of all he does under martial law, including the violation of human rights of political prisoners and of the people. At the same time, Mr. Marcos seeks to inure the people's mind to accept the "referendum" as a valid venue for the exercise of their political right.

It is on these essential objectives of the "referendum," not on the simplistic question heavily laden with interpretations that the people are asked to vote on "yes" or "no," where we must base our position.

We must not allow the Marcos martial law regime to beguile us into believing that he truly wishes to find out how the people feel about the way he has been ruling the country. Or that he would abide by the people's will. In the first place, regardless of the people's will Mr. Marcos will go on doing what would advance his and his cronies' selfish interests. Secondly, for as long as martial law and the dictatorial regime stays there could be no true expression of the people's will via the ballot.

The only one benefiting out of a "referendum" is the Marcos martial law regime. For every "referendum," the people's freedom is that much more circumscribed and their sovereign will that much more twisted.

Only boycott would work in the best interest of the people.

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

December, 1976

STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

For us female Filipino political prisoners who have been subjected to extreme oppression and injustice, March 8, Women's Day, has a profound significance. We take this day as an opportunity to declare our solidarity with all women in the world, especially the women of the working class in their historic struggle against all forms of oppression and injustice, especially those committed against women.

Deprived of our freedom, denied of our basic human rights and severely tortured, we female political prisoners in Camp Bicutan join the struggle for the liberation of all women through our own struggle for the restoration of our freedom and basic human rights and for the redress of the injustices committed against us.

In the past year, two successive hunger strikes were launched by all political prisoners at Camp Bicutan. In both cases, the release of female political detainees were the main issue.

In the first hunger strike, which took place soon after Camp Bicutan was opened, 118 political prisoners struck for 15 days (June 14 to 28) for the release of two nursing mothers, Ms. Mila Astorga-Garcia and Ms. Amarylis Hilao-Enriquez were released.

In the second hunger strike which lasted for thirteen days (October 1 to 13), the Camp Bicutan political prisoners demanded among others the release of female political detainees whose husbands were also under detention. The strikers pressed for the implementation of a declared policy of the Department of National Defense (DND) to release either one of married couples who are both detained. Among these female political prisoners who were subsequently released were Ms. Jean Cacayorin-Tayag and Ms. Zenaida Delica-Luneta.

In September 1976 three female political prisoners (Ms. Maria Elena Ang, Ms. Lualhati Roque-Baylosis and Ms. Eugenia Magpantay) dared to publicly come forward and denounce the severe torture and acts of lasciviousness committed against them by their military captors. They even faced their torturers and identified them.

Earlier in the year other female political prisoners had also exposed and denounced their experiences of torture under the military. Among them were Ms. Erlinda Taruc-Co, Ms. Josefina Hilao and Ms. Violeta Sevandal-Hilao, presently detained at Camp Bicutan. At the same time torture accounts of other female detainees who have been released were also exposed and denounced including that of Liliosa Hilao who died in the hands of her torturers in 1973.

To date, however, there has been no development heard so far from the government side regarding the complaints on the torture of female political prisoners, even those officially filed with military authorities. In fact, last January 23, 1977 another female political prisoner confined in a hospital for gunshot (unarmed, she was shot by government soldiers) was tortured to death in her hospital room. Ms. Purificacion Pedro died, like Liliosa Hilao, while her sister was just nearby,

barred from entering her room.

With utter disregard for humanitarian considerations, the military continues to detain female political prisoners even though their husbands are prisoners here at Bicutan. They are Ms. Erlinda Taruc-Co, wife of Leoncio Co, Ms. Sevandal-Hilao, wife of Wenifredo Hilao and Ms. Iluminada Papa, wife of Jose Kitching. Another female political prisoner, Ms. Josefina Hilao, who was only 17 when she was arrested three years ago, continues to remain in prison despite her tender age.

So much still remains to be done in the struggle of the female political prisoners not only in Camp Bicutan but also in other detention centers in the Philippines for them to regain their freedom and basic human rights and to redress the injustices committed against them. So much remains to be done in the struggle for the liberation of women all over the world against oppression and injustices.

Today we, female political prisoners in Camp Bicutan, express our firm solidarity with women everywhere who are in the forefront of the struggle. We have great faith in this struggle. We believe that the progressive winds of change will continually blow towards fundamental changes leading to the liberation of women as part of the liberation of the people, not only in the context of Philippine society, but also in all societies where oppression and injustice prevail today.

FEMALE POLITICAL PRISONERS
Camp Bicutan
Taguig, Metro Manila

March, 1977.

(SIGNED:)

ILUMINADA PAPA
JOSEFINA HILAO
EUGENIA MAGPANTAY
LINDA TARUC-CO

MARIA ELENA ANG
NELIA SANCHO
VIOLETA SEVANDAL-HILAO

STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY (MAY 1)

"Almost all of us have been arrested and detained for precisely seeking redress for the workers, peasants and other exploited sectors of society."

The united voice of the Filipino workers comes to us, political prisoners, this May 1, 1977 with the penetrating poignance of its challenge and the invigorating freshness of its confidence in coming victory.

For under the stifling air of martial rule for more than four years, the Filipino workers have realized more deeply the extent of their conditions of impoverishment and exploitation. They have risen up with new vigor, with new militancy. They are asserting their inherent rights. They are striking harder blows against the political and economic system that would condemn them to perpetual penury and to slow death.

We thus greet International Workers Day 1977 with great confidence in and bright expectations for the Filipino working class, as well as the working class in all countries of the world.

Under martial rule, government decrees, policies, and rules and regulations on labor have become more restrictive and more punitive. The logical consequences of their implementation have thus become more inhuman. Filipino workers are deprived of their most potent legal means for seeking redress of grievances — their right to deny their labor to the capitalist, that is, to strike. Their right to self-organization into unions and federations have been gravely curtailed if not outrightly denied. Wages have been either frozen at very low levels or adjusted to levels inversely proportional to inflationary trends so as to insure bigger profits for foreign investors and big local capitalists. The only legal channel kept open to Filipino workers to seek relief — the Department of Labor and its adjunct, the National Labor Relations Commission — has become more biased in favor of capital that its very nomenclature has become a travesty.

Under these oppressive conditions, the Filipino workers slowly but with increasing militancy have sought redress through their collective power in ever-swelling mass actions in factories, in communities and in the streets and plazas. State reaction has become harsh and quick. Arrests, tortures and indefinite detention of union leaders and workers, raids on factories and workers communities and various other forms of harassments have become more frequent. We have come to know first-hand of these developments because arrested workers have often been detained with us. Moreover, not a few of us political prisoners are either workers or of worker origin. Almost all of us have been arrested and detained for precisely seeking redress for the workers, peasants and other exploited sectors of society.

Despite the increasing severity of state armed reaction, the Filipino workers have spilled out into mass actions with greater determination to fight for their rights — both economic and political rights. They surge forward with deeper commitments to seek redress in the only way they could best act because they are fully convinced that they are right. That they are — as indeed they are — on the side of justice.

The series of workers' strikes, sit-downs, boycotts, work stoppages and other collective actions that swelled in Metro Manila and spilled over into other cities and provinces from late 1975 to mid 1976 mobilized tens of thousands of workers and sympathizers. That was the precursor of greater workers' struggles to follow under martial law. Truly, against increasing state repression, strikes continue in more and more factories. The most massive in recent months was the strike at Engineering Equipment, Inc. (EEI) that started on March 29, where the military rounded up and hauled off to a military camp (Fort Bonifacio) 600 picketing workers. The struggle of the *batilyos* (fish haulers) in Navotas is a continuing bitter struggle where the *batilyos* are fighting to retain their only means of livelihood against the government's efforts to cut them off. Many of them have been arrested, tortured and imprisoned; but they have not been subdued.

These militant struggles provide us, political prisoners, a great source of pride in the Filipino working class, the vanguard of the revolutionary classes. In the very concrete conditions of class exploitation and state repression, the Filipino working class is evolving its own methods of struggle. It is picking up lessons along the way and gathering both internal strength and external support from the rest of the Philippine social spectrum. The workers have started a new ground-swell of revolutionary struggle in the urban areas that is linked up with the democratic revolution for land and justice waged by the peasants in the countryside.

The resurgence of the workers' struggle under martial law is but the logical fruit of a fascist policy towards labor. The very fact of this resurgence is an affirmation of our belief that when the people are oppressed beyond the limit of their endurance by a state that avows to protect and promote their welfare, the people have every right to protest. And when protest goes unheeded, it is just to act decisively to remove the causes of their oppression.

The resurging workers' struggle is not only true in the Philippines. Under conditions of intensifying imperialist exploitation because of a recurring world capitalist crisis, workers in the big capitalist countries and in the countries plagued by imperialism are rising up in huge strikes, demonstrations and other public forms of protest. A common cry for justice to the worker is heard in many parts of the world. In Europe, Japan and United States, the very seats of monopoly capital, the cry is becoming more desperate.

Thus, on this historic day of May 1, 1977 we political prisoners in the Philippines salute the Filipino workers and their fellow workers all over the world who have taken up in their own hands the cause of their own liberation. We express our solidarity with them. Even if we are prevented from lending a hand directly in their actual struggles, we are one with them in the rigors of such struggles and in our ardent wishes for early victory.

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE PHILIPPINES
May 1, 1977.

OPEN LETTER TO FRIENDS OF THE FILIPINO PEOPLE

"We are fortunate that in these our times the struggle for national liberation and for an end to injustice has become a strong current all over the world."

Dear Friends:

We, political prisoners in the Philippines, send you our warmest greetings on the occasion of your Third National Conference. We wish you much success.

We deeply appreciate the fact that many groups abroad such as yours lend unstinting support to the Filipino people in our struggle for national liberation and democracy and to us Filipino political prisoners in our struggle for freedom and redress of human rights violations. We feel the warmth of your solidarity with us in our struggles and are heartened by the work you have done for us. Since these issues interest us most, permit us to specify and discuss with you some of the main issues you often raise in behalf of the Filipino people. First, the related issues of foreign aid and military bases and, second, the related issues of political prisoners and human rights violations.

Regarding the first: The Marcos martial law regime is currently negotiating for foreign (U.S.) aid in the guise of rental for continued American use of military bases in the Philippines. We hold that continued American use of military bases in the Philippines whether under the U.S. or the Philippine flag is an affront to Philippine sovereignty and is incompatible with our desire to be identified with the Third World. We strongly oppose further maintenance of U.S. bases in the Philippines. These bases only serve to signify our country's dependence and servility to a foreign country and to sanction continued violation of human rights under the present regime.

Regarding the second: There is no let up on violations of human rights in the Philippines, particularly in the case of political prisoners. In fact, recent developments show that violations of human rights have been stepped up.

Mass arrests of poor people

1. Recently, there has been a big change in the composition of political prisoners. While before, political prisoners consisted mainly of students with some professionals and a sprinkling of worker, peasant or community leaders, now, the great majority of political prisoners come from the impoverished masses, mainly aggrieved workers, harassed urban slum dwellers and beleaguered national minority tribesmen. The only "crime" of most of them is that they tried to legally and peacefully express their just grievances. A number were simply arrested as hostages or at random in order to terrify the protesting masses.

2. In Camp Bicutan there are presently 16 political prisoners who were picked up in the slum area of North Bay Boulevard, Navotas and another 16 who were picked up in the slum area of Tatalon, Quezon City. In other detention centers and military camps, hundreds of the impoverished and oppressed masses are being held in prison. We have already mentioned the detention of some 100 national minority tribesmen in Kalinga and Camp Olivas. Some 100 national minority tribesmen and their leaders are detained in Bulanao, Kalinga, Apayao and Camp Olivas PC barracks.

Most of the 16 detainees from North Bay Boulevard were picked up during a "sona" of their barrio on April 14, where, reminiscent of the Japanese occupation, all the residents were rudely aroused from sleep at 1:00 a.m. and all males were assembled in front of the municipal jail while the raiders ransacked their houses in search of "subversives" and "subversive documents." Finding none, they took away instead a number of hostages, including an old and sickly father, a husband, a cousin and a niece of the persons they were looking for. Others arrested included "batilyos" (fish haulers) and their leaders who have only been protesting government moves that threaten their means of livelihood because of the entry of Japanese capitalists in the Fish Port project at North Bay Boulevard. The rest were arrested simply at the whim of the raiding team.

Relatives, barrio residents of North Bay Boulevard and other concerned citizens have written President Marcos asking the release of those arrested. They pointed out that the incarceration of the 16 is unjust and that their families are now hungry, unable to eat three square meals a day. These appeals have, so far, been ignored.

"Squatters," workers, minorities jailed

3. The detainees from Tatalon were picked up during a similar "sona" of their barrio on April 23. The people of Tatalon have been living there for several generations now, some since the Spanish times. With no other place to go, they have been threatened with eviction several times, especially since martial law was proclaimed. The Tatalon residents have, however, kept up the struggle to protect their rights as well as their community from being demolished.

The recent arrest of Tatalon community leaders is related to the news that the military is determined to soon demolish the "squatter" houses. Many, however, have been arrested simply because a local barangay councilman, who accompanied the raiding team to point them out as "subversives," wanted to settle scores with some residents who charged him with corruption and other misdeeds.

4. Last May 1, during an anti-martial law demonstration of about 15,000 workers and slum dwellers, close to 1,000 were arrested. Up to now, hundreds are still being detained at the RECAD VI Detention Center at Camp Crame and at the Metrocom South-Sector Detention Center at Fort Bonifacio. Many of them have been tortured.

Earlier, 600 striking workers of Engineering Equipment Inc. were placed behind bars. They were only trying to peacefully seek improvements in their wages and working conditions that had remained pitiful in the last 30 years.

5. Up to now, some 100 Kalinga tribal leaders, tribesmen and tribeswomen are detained at the PC barracks in Bulanao, Kalinga-Apayao and Camp Olivas, Pampanga. These national minority tribesmen have merely expressed their

legitimate protest against government moves to drive them away from their tribal homelands to make way for the Chico River Dam project. The Kalingas have been asking for a dialogue with government and military officials to air their grievances. In response, however, the military hauled away their leaders and many tribesmen.

Residents of Tabuk, Pasil and Tanglag (Kalinga towns) in a letter-petition to Defense Secretary Enrile, reiterated their request for a dialogue with the government and at the same time expressed their grave concern over the plight of the detained hill tribesmen's families who have been starving since the arrest of the 100.

6. President Marcos has often stated, "What is the government (the New Society) for if not for the poor?" Ironically, however, it is now the poor who suffer most the brunt of martial law. The present economic and political crisis is serious. Thousands of the impoverished and oppressed masses are now starting to open up and express their discontent. In an attempt to silence the growing restlessness of the masses, the government has been hauling off many of them into prison camps. The crisis, however, only intensifies.

Torture on the rise

7. With the rash of new arrests, there is also the corresponding rash of torture cases. One such case, which generated wide publicity both locally and abroad, is that of Mrs. Trinidad Herrera, a well-known leader of some one million slumdwellers in Tondo, who was subjected to electric shock treatment and indignities by the military. There are numerous other recent cases of torture. Yet time and again President Marcos has vehemently denied that torture is widely used on political prisoners.

In Camp Bicutan alone, there are presently 54 cases of political prisoners who have been tortured. There are many more cases in the 80 or so military camps, detention centers and prisons for political prisoners throughout the archipelago. Many have been beaten with punches, karate chops, kicks, paddles or pipes, given 'water cures,' electric shock treatments etc. A number have been brought to safehouses which are regularly used by military and intelligence operatives for more intensive torture running for days up to months. Women have not been exempted from torture and have been especially subjected to sexual indignities and abuses.

So far, of so many torture cases of political prisoners, in only one case has there been redress. Even in this case (cited by two Camp Bicutan political prisoners), one PC officer and two enlisted men were just made scapegoats while so many principally accused officers were "acquitted."

8. Political prisoners who are detained at the regular prisoner camps of the martial law government are relatively lucky compared to those who up to now have been missing ever since their arrest.

Among the missing prisoners: Nenita Evangelista-Luneta, a housewife who was arrested together with her four-year-old child on June 30, 1975 (the child is also missing); Emmanuel Yap, a student arrested on February 14, 1976; Rex Edralin, arrested on March 16, 1976; Carlos Tayag, arrested on August 17, 1976; Henry Romero, a newspaperman, arrested in October 1976; Antonio Liao, arrested on February 19, 1977; Leticia Pascual Ladlad, arrested on November 28, 1975; Tita Lubi, arrested in 1975; Juan Andres Buenaventura, arrested on

June 30, 1975; Johannes Barrozo, arrested in June 1975; Manuel Ontong, arrested on November 22, 1975; Margarito Alvarez, arrested on June 12, 1976; Flora Coronacion and Orlando Fideres, arrested on October 23, 1976; Apolonia Buenaventura, was first missing on October 27, 1976 but later released on February 27, 1977 directly from the safehouse and again arrested and reported missing since April, 1977; Carlos Jacinto and his wife, missing since 1975; Oscar Sawal, arrested August 1, 1976; Emmanuel Alvarez, arrested January 6, 1976; Alfredo Mendoza, arrested October 1975; Ely Miranda, arrested October 23, 1975, and Atty. Hermon Lagman and Vic Reyes, arrested on May 11, 1977.

A long list of others being compiled by religious groups substantiates the "kidnapping" trend of political suspects by intelligence operatives. Some have been confirmed in the hands of their military and intelligence interrogators, while some of them have died like Liliosa Hilao (1973), Eugenio Flores (1975), and Purificacion Pedro (1977), just to name a few who have been "salvaged" (the term used by the military in such cases).

An uphill battle in a larger war

It is evident that we, Filipino political prisoners, determined as we are to struggle for freedom and redress of human rights violations, are faced with an uphill battle.

We realize that our struggle is but part of the wider and higher struggles of the masses of oppressed and impoverished people for justice and liberation. We realize too that the success of the struggle of political prisoners is linked with the victory of this larger and more complex struggle.

Because the struggles of Filipino prisoners in particular, and of the Filipino people in general, are just, many peoples in other countries support us. We are fortunate that in these our times the struggle for national liberation and for an end to injustice has become a strong current all over the world.

The American people have a long history of struggle for freedom and justice. They also have a long history of friendship with the Filipino people. They are thus eager to help us and they can very effectively generate mass support for the struggles of the Filipino people both in their homeland and internationally. The Friends of the Filipino People has provided an organizational expression of this support, and has so far achieved initial victories.

To you we say *Salamat* and *Mabuhay!**

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE PHILIPPINES
June 1, 1977.

* Tagalog for thanks and long life.

STATEMENT ON PHILIPPINE- AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP DAY

Struggle Against Imperialism: "On the day that the Filipino and American people triumph in this common struggle we shall hail genuine Philippine-American friendship."

The Marcos martial law regime celebrates Philippine-American Friendship Day today, July 4, a truly vicious hoax foisted on Filipinos by those who would gloss over the continuing crimes of American imperialism against the Filipino people.

We, political prisoners in the Philippines, denounce the myth of July 4. It has merely served the reactionary ruling class as a sentimental ploy to numb the people's consciousness of their tragic past and to blunt their growing awareness of imperialistic exploitation. We are ever aware that there can be no real friendship between the exploiter and exploited, between neocolonial master and servant.

The fact that the government has substituted June 12 for July 4 as our "Independence Day" does not in itself rectify a blatant anomaly in our history. If at all, it only underscores the penchant of successive Philippine governments for sham ceremonies, empty slogans, and bogus nationalism. June 12 evokes a meaningless independence and a stillborn revolution, while July 4 commemorates Philippine subservience to American interests.

The Filipino people have yet to really claim their complete freedom from oppression by an imperialist master and its fascist lackeys. They can establish a firm basis of genuine and lasting friendship with the American people only within the context of a common struggle against the regimes that oppress and exploit both of them.

Thirty-one years after July 4, 1946, what has the avowed friendship of American imperialism wrought on the Filipino people?

Our economy continues to be in shackles, kept backward and under-developed by semifeudal conditions nurtured by American monopoly capital and its critical need for cheap raw material sources. What passes for technological and industrial development is a mere profitable complement to the worldwide commerce of American imperialism's ruthless multinational corporations. Behind the glowing reports on agricultural and industrial breakthroughs, behind the oft-repeated humbug about the Philippine economic take-off, there rears the ugly truth: our country remains a fast depleting source of raw materials for the far flung empire of American big business, at the same time that it is also a cheap labor market for its rapacious subsidiaries and a mass consumer market for its overpriced goods.

Ever since the United States decided to establish its Pacific military outpost in the Philippines — almost simultaneously with its “recognition” of our independence and sovereignty — its military personnel here have perpetrated a long train of abuses and criminal offenses against Filipinos unfortunate enough to be living near the sprawling military complexes. A significant number of Filipinos have either been maltreated, injured, or murdered — victims of American military personnel under orders to protect American extraterritorial rights against “foes” and “friends” alike.

Consider the fate of destitute Filipino scavengers, killed like wild pigs which American sentries “mistook” them for. Consider the long-simmering labor practice in the bases where the Filipinos are treated as second class employees with discriminatorily lower wages, and insecurity of employment, not to cite the American military managers’ arrogant treatment of their Filipino employees. Consider the degrading body searches on our countrymen and the slanderous accusations levelled at them by a peacetime occupation army out to preserve the security of their installations and the integrity of their PX commissaries.

Two recent incidents ominously remind us of the US military’s customary viciousness towards Filipino citizens. In characteristic form, an American GI guarding a junksite unleashed his attack dog on a hapless Filipino scavenger, who was then mauled and bitten on the crotch by the American canine. A few weeks later, a US marine at Subic threw an 11 year old Filipino boy into a river, nearly drowning him.

Would we be surprised if the base authorities, banking on a most outrageous but highly successful tactic used time and again, should issue a certification that such actions were committed while “in the performance of official duties”? Would we be surprised at all if the papers again report that the culprits have not ignored summons to appear before Philippine courts, but have actually been flown out of country for reassignment?

Filipino nationalists have long sought the abrogation of the lopsided military defence and assistance treaties with the United States, as well as the dismantling of the bases. They were right then, and they certainly are right today. The grave abuses and grievous crimes committed against the Filipino people, after all, are traceable to the perpetration of agreements which make military sastraps of American commanders. The continued existence of military bases not only makes national sovereignty a fiction, but likewise deprives the Filipino people of vast territories which can be harnessed for their own national purposes.

And there lies the kernel of “friendship” of American imperialism. More than half a century after it deprived us of our revolutionary victory over Spanish colonialism, in the process slaying hundreds of thousands of Filipinos, US imperialism continues to impose itself on us as lord protector against Communism and all other imagined foes, except against the all too real evil of monopoly capital that preys on underdeveloped countries run by collaborating self-styled tyrants.

We are up, therefore, against an enemy who masquerades as a friend, an exploiter who passes himself off as our benefactor.

But the Filipino people have long ago seen through the pretensions of American imperialism. They will only gladly accept friendship on the basis of equality, dignity, and freedom. What they witness right now is simply the naked collusion

of an imperialist master and its fascist puppet in a more vicious exploitation of the Filipino people and the national patrimony.

We, Filipino political prisoners, whose rights have been grossly violated through unjust detention and torture and struggling for freedom and justice, recognize that we can never be totally victorious as long as the Philippines and its people remain shackled and oppressed. We therefore reaffirm our solidarity with the Filipino people in their historic struggle against foreign oppression and its local counterpart.

We, Filipino political prisoners, recognize that the American people, as opposed to the American government, are true friends of the Filipino people. In the early days of the American occupation in the Philippines, many sectors of the American people such as the Anti-Imperialist League, opposed the colonial intent of the American government on the Philippine Islands Today, such groups as the Friends of the Filipino People (USA) which attacks not only Martial Law but also continued American aid and American military bases in the Philippines, provide organizational form to this true friendship.

The Filipino people, on their part, shall always strive to nurture this true friendship, and a meaningful relationship with the oppressed American people, by persevering in their struggle to weaken imperialism in this part of the world, bring about genuine freedom and democracy in their country.

On the day that the Filipino and American people triumph in this common struggle we shall hail genuine Philippine-American friendship. That day of triumph is bound to come.

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

July 4, 1977.

NEED FOR NATIONAL UNITY TO END MARTIAL LAW

"There is no doubt as to the legitimacy of a united people's movement to end an abnormal state of affairs and to establish normalcy on a new basis."

Five years of martial law have been abnormal times for the Filipino people, to say the least. And at no other time than today is the people's desire most intense for political normalization and national unity.

The people demand the full exercise of their democratic rights in order to safeguard and enhance their human rights. Under five years of martial law, democratic rights have been suppressed and human rights flouted and violated.

The people demand the stabilization of economic conditions so that they can contribute meaningfully to national development. Under five years of martial law, the cost of living rose by more than three hundred per cent (300%) while the incomes/wages of the vast majority of the people rose by only a fraction of their very low bases.

The people demand an end to foreign control of the national economy to assure for themselves the maximum benefits of economic development. Under five years of martial law, foreign control has expanded vastly throughout the vital sectors of the economy: from banking and finance, to mining and manufacture, to national and foreign trade.

Under martial rule, national entrepreneurs are becoming extinct; multinationals (with a few local big capitalists as junior partners) are flourishing. Wages are pressed down while labor productivity is increased to assure maximum profits. Thus while foreign investors and their local partners rake in massive wealth, the workers are mired deeper in penury and exploitation.

The people demand genuine land reform that shall assure justice to the peasants through the free distribution of lands to tillers and the correct allocation of agricultural lands for staple production and for export crops or pastures. Under five years of martial law, "land reform" and its auxiliary programs have only buried the peasants deeper in debt even as they labor more intensively.

Genuine land reform will solve the imbalance in the development of agriculture and industry, eradicate mass poverty in the rural areas, and mitigate if not solve the problems of a growing urban poor sector.

There is every reason, therefore, for the people to demand now the end of martial law. And as they demand the end of martial law, the people are inexorably taking steps towards this end.

Over the last five years the anti-martial law movement has developed further the latent revolutionary forces in the country — social forces now asserting that they and they alone can determine the solution to the basic ills plaguing them.

The workers, among all the revolutionary classes, are finally asserting their leading role in the national struggle to end martial law and its iniquitous effects.

Valiantly resisting the suppression of their right to strike, the workers have creatively developed effective mass actions in factories and worksites to obtain for themselves higher wages and improved living and working conditions. Their series of mass actions have escalated into protest marches in the streets directed no less at the martial law regime and its oppressive policies.

Though the martial law regime has applied harsher and harsher methods to suppress the workers' protest actions, though many of the workers end up out of job, bloodied, or imprisoned, they are not relenting in their struggle. They have grasped the nature of the power of their liberation and would not let it off their hands.

In the countryside, the peasants in increasing number are resisting the regime's "land reform program" and the other programs ostensibly designed to help them. Instead, they are building up their own associations for self-help, developing methods leading to genuine agrarian reform.

In the mountain areas of Northern Luzon, Central Luzon and Mindanao, national minority groups are organizing resistance movements to preserve their livelihood and their cultures against encroachments of landgrabbers and eviction moves by the government.

The masses of urban poor are turning out by the thousands to protest the demolition of their homes, and to demand humane living conditions, steady sources of income and the lowering of consumer prices to enable them to live decently. Notwithstanding periodic harassments, arrest and imprisonment of many among them, the urban poor persevere in their just struggle.

The students have recovered from the massive witchhunt campaigns of the military in the various campuses. They are now reasserting their rights to academic freedom and protesting increased tuition fees. They are uniting once more to fight for their common cause, and are linking up with the oppressed classes and sectors whose causes they have taken up as their own.

The intellectuals, professionals, workers in the bureaucracy and other sections of the petty bourgeoisie are voicing out their protests against the suppression of their democratic rights and the worsening of the economic situation that stultify their growth.

The national capitalists, swept aside or driven out by giant multinationals and other foreign investors, are deplored their slow demise and are seeking alliance with those who would end foreign control of the economy.

The legal oppositionists, deprived of their political parties and platforms, are asserting their democratic rights to criticize the regime and to offer alternatives to it.

The progressive sector of religious organizations continues to expose military abuses and to question government policies and programs inimical to the people. Despite a systematic campaign by the regime to scuttle their activities through raids on religious houses, arrest and detention of religious personages and lay leaders, these progressive groups and individuals keep their spirits high. The poor and oppressed with whom they have found common cause are fighting side by side with them.

In all their struggles, the workers, peasants, national minorities, urban poor, students, intellectuals, professionals and bureaucrats, national capitalists, legal oppositionists and the religious are realizing the need for national unity. Since they represent the majority of Philippine society, their effective interlinking on their specific and common problems shall be truly solved.

We, political prisoners, come from these various classes and sectors of Philippine society. And we are imprisoned precisely because we have taken up the same struggles they are waging.

We, therefore, declare our solidarity with these classes and sectors in their continuing struggle to end poverty, exploitation and oppression in our country. Specifically, we support their demand to end martial law.

There is no doubt as to justness of the struggle against martial law, and against the basic social problems that martial law has abetted rather than solved. There is no doubt as to the legitimacy of a united people's movement to end an abnormal state of affairs and to establish normalcy on a new basis.

There is no doubt then that such a people's movement will succeed.

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

August 21, 1977.

STATEMENT ON DEATH VERDICT BY MILITARY TRIBUNAL NO. 2

"We denounce this charade under which Mr. Marcos would toy with justice to satisfy his personal and political vindictiveness at the expense of honorable men."

The death sentence by musketry meted out by Military Commission No. 2 on former Sen. Benigno S. Aquino Jr., Bernabe Buscayno and Victor N. Corpus did not come as a surprise to us.

But while we expected such a severe sentence to come, we were never resigned to accept it. We expected it because it was the logical consequence of a whole process of injustice. It was what should be expected from a tribunal composed of military men taking orders from a commander-in-chief who has long laid down the rules of the game of military trial.

As we had previously declared, and as the accused in the case had similarly declared, we political prisoners cannot expect justice by way of the military tribunals. Going much further, we expect no justice for as long as the process of trial, be it by military or by civilian court, falls within the all-encompassing review and final action by the martial law dictatorship.

Nonetheless, we continue to struggle to assert our rights to proper trial. We continue to call on all those who persist in upholding the majesty of what is right and just among those in the judicial establishment who would abide by due process even if it meant losing their positions. We continue to appeal to the people in whose hands basically and inalienably lies justice.

The case against Messrs. Aquino, Buscayno and Corpus is a showcase of how low the judicial process has been plunged by the martial law regime. Established tenets and rules of judicial proceedings have been warped and superseded by such noxious means as "perpetuation of testimony" of dead witnesses, admissibility of hearsay evidences, and the like. No man with a proper sense of human decency would subject himself willingly to trial under such grave travesty of justice.

We political prisoners denounce the highly irregular way Messrs. Aquino, Buscayno and Corpus have been pushed to the wall, threateningly before a firing squad. We denounce the whole procedure under which a patriotic and vigilant oppositionist like Senator Aquino, and self-effacing but militant fighters for national freedom and democracy like Messrs. Buscayno and Corpus are sought to be humiliated and condemned by a regime vainly seeking vindication for its usurpation of absolute political power.



From left to right, Bernabe Buscayno, Victor Corpus, and Benigno Aquino. (UPI photo)

Now come the apologists for the Marcos martial law regime who try to mollify the outraged feelings of people, both here and abroad over the excessive travesty of justice in the case of Messrs. Aquino, Buscayno and Corpus. These apologists begin to orchestrate the line that the lives of Messrs. Aquino, Buscayno and Corpus are not necessarily in peril, because there is always the "magnanimity" and the "compassion" of Mr. Marcos to save them from death by musketry.

We denounce this charade under which Mr. Marcos would toy with justice to satisfy his personal and political vindictiveness at the expense of honorable men.

We cannot allow the Marcos martial law regime to toy with justice, with the life of any man, however exalted or humble he may be. This game that makes a mockery of justice must not be allowed to go any day longer. We call for the dismantling of military tribunals for a start.

Countrymen, the vindication of wronged men lies in your hands. The reinstitution of due process in our courts, the return of justice with full majesty in our life as a nation lies in what step you take shall swell the great movement to remove the temporary reign of injustice in our land.

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

28 November 1977.

STATEMENT ON INTERIM PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

"Notwithstanding the overwhelming odds, there are opportunities during the elections which the people can make use of to advance their basic interests and rights."

The martial law regime's call for national unity and initiative at normalization elections for the Interim Batasang Pambansa (IBP) can have meaning for political detainees only with their release from detention and full integration into the political life of the country. There can be no genuine national unity and normalization if political detainees, the outstanding proof of an abnormally repressive regime, remain behind bars excluded from the political life of the country.

The political detainees all over the country continue to suffer from the martial law regime's suppression of the basic civil and democratic rights of our people. They have been arrested, interrogated, and incarcerated in total disregard of their basic legal and human rights. Most of them have been brutally tortured by the civilian and military agents of the regime. Many have languished in jail for years without formal charges. Those brought to trial before the military tribunals of the regime have been subjected to farcical court proceedings. A number of persons arrested for political reasons have not only been tortured but callously murdered or "salvaged", to use the military's perverse euphemism for the outright killing of unarmed civilians.

President Marcos has yet to substantiate his oft-repeated decrees on amnesty and orders to release detainees who have not been formally charged and formally tried in court. The fact that political detainees have not been convicted of any crime all the more makes their immediate release a critical test of Marcos' call for national unity and initiative at normalization. Amnesty was granted to a handful of political detainees who had been long released but not to political detainees presently imprisoned, not even to those in prison who formally applied for amnesty. The orders on the release of detainees who have not been formally charged and tried in court are virtually invalidated by the ridiculous legal argumentation of the regime that considers detainees formally charged the moment they are presented with an arrest order and committed to prison. These deceptions and impositions of the regime clearly mock all established precepts of due process and fair play.

As victims of the gross injustice and maltreatment perpetrated by the repressive martial law regime, we ask all concerned citizens, parties, organizations and candidates to demand firmly and unequivocally the immediate release of all political detainees as a necessary condition for national unity and normalization. The clear support of our organized citizenry from various sectors of our society will greatly boost the growing mass movement for the release of all political detainees.

In articulating the demands for genuine national unity and normalization, it is imperative that the basic issues that ultimately decide the question of our true independence and sovereignty as a nation, and the genuine well-being of the masses of our people, be forcefully ventilated. For more than five years now under martial rule, the poor people have been denied the normal legal venues for the expression of dissent and opposition to policies detrimental to their basic interests. The political detainees, precisely, have been imprisoned and tortured for actively proposing ideas and alternative programs of government conveniently labelled as subversive by the regime.

Thus in the coming elections for the Interim Batasang Pembansa, the basic issues confronting our national interest and those of the oppressed masses of our people should be militantly raised and the people fully mobilized for these legitimate demands.

The increasing control of our economy by foreign imperialists (mostly American and Japanese corporations) and growing foreign indebtedness has subjected us, more than ever, to foreign control and influence. The dismantling of all American bases in the country must be raised as a necessary condition of true sovereignty and independence rather than simply negotiating for higher rent or symbolic pretenses like flying the Filipino flag and installing a Filipino commander. A genuine agrarian reform program that shall truly liberate the poor peasants from feudal exploitation is yet to be implemented. There is no clear program for the protection and enhancement of the rights of national minorities as evidenced by the armed suppression of their legitimate demands. And needless to say, the lifting of martial rule and the restoration of the people's basic civil and democratic rights like the right to free speech, assembly and association, press, the worker's right to strike, and the respect for human rights and due process are yet to be guaranteed.

It is all too clear that the coming elections for the IBP are being held under conditions of martial rule. The regime has at its effective and absolute disposal vast instrumentalities of power and coercion and massive resources which no opposition group today can remotely approximate. Even the technical requirements and procedures for the elections from the regional representation to block voting and the composition of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and election board of inspectors, to name only a few, are all arrayed in favor of the regime's candidates. Worst of all, the basic rights remain suppressed. Like the various referenda held under martial rule, it is difficult to conceive of clean and free elections under the prevailing conditions.

However, the people's struggle does not end with the IBP elections. Notwithstanding the overwhelming odds, there are opportunities during the elections which the people can decisively make use of to advance their basic interests and rights. By openly raising the critical issues, militantly organizing the oppressed sectors of our society, and collectively laying the foundations for the realization of legitimate and just demands, the people shall have pushed forward the struggle for genuine national freedom and democracy.

POLITICAL DETAINEES OF THE PHILIPPINES
March 7, 1978.

if you want
to really understand
us, listen closely
to what we —
are not allowed
to say —
—
—

8 THEY CANNOT BREAK OUR SPIRIT

I should close, but there is a memory locked in my heart that begs to be shared. It is the memory of a young couple — not yet in their thirties — whom I saw some months ago in a large hall that had been converted into a military courtroom, waiting for the case to be called in which they stood accused with some ninety other young people.

I had met the young man before martial law. He was a university student, a leader: brilliant, articulate, involved. That day in the courtroom he sat in a rattan chair, almost motionless, staring blankly ahead, his mouth half open, totally oblivious to the people and the chatter around him: for he had been detained under martial law; punished so repeatedly and so brutally, and subjected to so large a dose of what the military call the truth serum, that his mind had cracked. He is confined, to this day, in the mental ward of a military hospital.

Behind him stood his wife, straight and proud, one hand lightly resting on the crown of his head, the other touching his shoulder, tenderly yet defiantly, ready to spring on anyone who might still wish to hurt her husband.

As I looked at the couple, I saw in them the face of every Filipino; and I knew then that martial law could crush our bodies; it could break our minds; but it could not conquer our spirit. It may silence our voice and seal our eyes; but it cannot kill our hope nor obliterate our vision. We will struggle on, no matter how long it takes or what it costs, until we establish a just community of free men and women in our land, deciding together, working and striving together, but also singing and dancing, laughing and loving together.

SEN. JOSE W. DIOKNO
former political prisoner
from a lecture delivered at AI's
International Council Meeting,
September 21, 1978.

"...the questions you have agreed to confront would all be pointless unless the answers you get redound to the improvement of the human condition, to redress of grievances of those who for ages have been condemned to suffer the inequities of defective and unjust systems of law and justice."

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF APPELLATE MAGISTRATES

Honorable Justices:

Law and justice, for ages under various loci and climes, have been a crucial problem for humankind. Advances in political institutions, judicial structures and international jurisprudence have hardly mitigated the problem.

While we commend the efforts of enlightened men and women all over the world in searching for ways and means to alleviate social inequities through improved law and justice, we note the ironical fact that in several countries law and justice have been flagrantly violated by the very authorities supposed to uphold their sanctity.

A case in point is the Philippines. This makes it doubly ironical that your conference is being held in this country. Here law and justice, already madly wanting before 1972, have been shorn of meaning and substance under the martial law regime of President Ferdinand E. Marcos.

We wish to bring to your attention the wanton violations by the Marcos regime of constitutional and human rights of the Filipino citizens, specifically:

- the right to due process of law;
- the right against the use of torture — force, violence, threat, intimidation or any other means — which vitiates the free will;
- the right to presumption of innocence and against self-incrimination;
- the right, whom under investigation for the commission of an offense, to remain silent and to counsel, and to be informed of such right;
- the right to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation against him;
- the right to bail and against excessive bail;
- the right to a speedy, impartial and public trial; and
- the right to humane treatment in prison

These rights have been consistently denied to political prisoners who now constitute a considerable number of those held under military custody since the imposition of martial rule on Sept. 21, 1972.

Almost every political prisoner undergoes "tactical interrogation" immediately after arrest, where his constitutional and human rights are utterly disregarded by his custodians.

Taken to a secret place called a "safehouse", the prisoner is denied the right to inform his relatives about his arrest and to secure counsel. He is subjected to physical and mental torture for prolonged periods. He is forced to incriminate himself; and under duress, he is made to sign and swear to affidavits or depositions wherein he is made to vouch that his statements were given of his own free will.

Common torture methods used include: electric current applied on the sex organs, legs, thighs, abdomen, chest, neck and face; fist blows and kicks on the face, torso, and other parts of the body; water cure; burning with lighted cigarettes; simultaneous slapping of both ears; beating with a rubber hose; pressing the esophagus until subject is forced to retch and vomit; and dipping the face into a toilet bowl and forcing subject to eat human excreta and to drink urine. Sexual abuse of women detainees also have become common.

So flagrant has been the use of torture that Amnesty International (AI) and the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP) — the organization of 40 religious orders — have published separate detailed accounts of torture of political prisoners in the Philippines. Copies of those reports have been submitted by AI and AMRSP to President Marcos and other key officials.

Many political prisoners subjected to such tortures have suffered permanent or lingering pains and illnesses, such as frequent headaches, memory lapses, busted eardrums, deformed chest cages, and sexual impotence.

After undergoing torture, the political prisoner is further denied visits by relatives and counsel for an indefinite period of time. A current instance is the case of Jose Luneta who, since his arrest a year ago on January 16, 1976, has been in isolated confinement, denied sunshine and fresh air, regular visits by relatives and visits by counsel.

Basic rights such as regular sunshine and fresh air, adequate and palatable food, regular visits by relatives, access to newspapers and other reading materials, visit by counsel, and other prison rights are generally denied. Only after collective struggles — such as through mass petitions and representations by the prisoners, their relatives and sympathizers and failing these moves, through hunger strikes — have political prisoners been provided these basic rights. Even then, the military authorities resort to arbitrary suspension or denial of such rights all too frequently.

As regards judicial process, political prisoners have generally been frustrated in their quest for justice. A good number of political prisoners have been kept in detention for as long as two or three years without being formally charged in court or without being informed of the nature of the charges against him. Detainees already facing charges in court are frequently denied counsel of their choice; evidence and witnesses against them are withheld from accused and counsel, thus denying them the right to prepare their defense.

Although the Philippine Constitution explicitly provides that "all persons, except those charged with capital offense when evidence of guilt is strong (underscoring ours), shall, before conviction, be bailable by sufficient sureties . . .", no political prisoner has yet been granted the right to bail, regardless of the nature of the charge against him.

Speedy and impartial trial under martial law is non-existent for political prisoners. Hearings of cases are often suspended for lengthy periods or are allowed to drag on for months or years. Trials before military tribunals cannot be considered impartial, since military officers both stand as accusers and sit as judges.

Moreover, the introduction of new rules in military courts which recognize hearsay information as evidence and which perpetuate the testimonies of deceased witnessess — thus depriving accused of refutation by direct confrontation of witness — gravely diminishes the chances of acquittal of accused.

The above-cited violations of citizen rights make law and justice in the Philippines under martial law a travesty, nay, a mockery.

We therefore demand that political prisoners detained for unduly long periods without charges be released immediately. As for those facing charges in court, we demand that their cases be transferred to civilian courts and that they be accorded all the rights guaranteed by the Philippine Constitution and established jurisprudence, particularly nullification of signed and sworn statements taken under duress, right to bail, and speedy, impartial public trial.

Furthermore, we appeal to you, Honorable Justices, to take this opportunity of your presence in our country to inquire into the judicial concepts and procedures pertaining to political prisoners. Otherwise, if you confined your conference to discussion of merely the outer ramifications of such concepts and procedures and not inquired into the essential questions of law and justice, we fear you would be missing the *raison d'être* of your conference.

For the questions you have agreed to confront would all be pointless unless the answers you get redound to the improvement of the human condition, to redress of grievances of those who for ages have been condemned to suffer the iniquities of defective and unjust systems of law and justice.

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE PHILIPPINES
January 10, 1977.

"Far from being 'anathema to official policy', torture has virtually become official policy."

STATEMENT ON TORTURE

The case of Trinidad Herrera, a political prisoner tortured by the military intelligence men, brings into focus once again the issue of torture of political prisoners under the Marcos martial law regime.

Trinidad Herrera, who grew up in the slums of Tondo became a militant defender of the rights and leader of the Tondo people. As chairperson of the Zone One Tondo Organization (ZOTO), which has long been in the forefront of the struggle of the Tondo people against attempts to demolish their community, Trinidad Herrera became well known nationally and internationally.

On April 26, 1977, as part of the martial law regime's attempts to quiet the growing restlessness or at least to rein in the militancy of the Tondo people of whom she was a leader, Trinidad Herrera was arrested by Metro Manila police. She was subjected to electric shock and other forms of torture while being interrogated by Metropolitan Command intelligence operatives under Lt. Eduardo S. Matillano.

Ostensibly because of the government's concern for human rights, she was released from Camp Bicutan on May 13, on orders of President Marcos. Mr. Marcos likewise ordered the court martial of Lt. Matillano and several others in connection with the alleged "maltreatment" claiming however that medical examinations by the military found no evidence of torture, thereby casting doubts over Mrs. Herrera's account of her ordeal as well as over her doctor's (Dr. Raul Idea) and her lawyer's (Sen. Soc Rodrigo) confirmation of existing torture marks.

From reading the newspapers it would seem that the government response to the Herrera torture case has been commendable, even exemplary. A close scrutiny on nonpublicized facts reveals the exact opposite.

In the first place, the government's decision came not out of its own initiative or concern but in reaction to strong protests and criticisms from urban poor communities, religious, intellectuals and civil libertarians throughout the country and in many parts of the world, including the United States. Local Herrera's supporters among the religious and civic groups, through her counsel Sen. Soc Rodrigo, filed a complaint with the Department of National Defense. Copies of the complaint were furnished local and national organization and national and world press. By various means, ZOTO supporters abroad such as the Friends of ZOTO have also exerted pressure on the Marcos martial law regime. ZOTO which she leads has become such a significant and sizeable people's organization and has won so many friends and supporters nationally and internationally that ZOTO and its supporters' indignation over what the military did to their leader could trigger an explosion. In order to prevent such an explosion, the Marcos martial law government released her as soon as news of her torture erupted and ordered an "investigation of her torture case."

Secondly, it must be pointed out that countless other victims of torture and maltreatment have not been given as much attention as Mrs. Herrera's case. In fact, except for a few other celebrated cases, all have been ignored or hushed by the government.

A number of persons among the scores rounded up at about the same time as Mrs. Herrera (April, 1977) for alleged "subversion" were tortured by military intelligence personnel who apprehended and interrogated them. Among these recent victims now detained at Camp Bicutan are Danilo Lumelay, Edwin Madrigal and Ernesto Orellana of Escopa St., Project 4, Quezon City; Rolando Leosal, Felix Ortega, Arturo Revilla and Augusto Segarra of Tatalon, Quezon City; and Ferdinand Tiamzon, a UP student — all of whom were beaten up or subjected to electric shock by the Metrocom Investigation Unit.

Contrary to assertions of President Marcos and other government officials that cases of torture are "few and isolated", torture continues to be used on a large scale under martial law as a means of extracting information from political prisoners during interrogation. Since the visit of the Amnesty International mission to the Philippines in November-December, 1975, which found that the employment of torture on political prisoners was widespread, new cases of torture have been reported from detention centers all over the Philippines.

Among the present Camp Bicutan political prisoners, there are at least 19 "new" cases of torture — political prisoners who were arrested and maltreated during the period from January 1976 to April 1977. These are apart from those also arrested and maltreated during the same period but subsequently released, like Mrs. Herrera. These are also apart from 29 "old" torture cases — political prisoners presently detained at Camp Bicutan who were arrested and tortured prior to 1976.

Thus a total of 48 political prisoners presently detained at Camp Bicutan, underwent torture or maltreatment. Of all these cases, only that of Julius Giron and Cenon Zambrano were investigated and brought to final resolution by the government.

On March 1, 1977, it was announced in the newspapers that a military court had ordered the dismissal from service of a junior PC officer (Lt. Clifford Noveras) and six months on hard labor for two non-commissioned officers (Constable 1st Class Eddie Abalea and Henry Rato), for resorting to third degree while interrogating Giron and Zambrano. A fourth accused, S/Sgt. Jacinto Calica, was acquitted on March 18, 1977, in spite of overwhelming evidence against him.

Investigations into the complaints of three other political prisoners in Camp Bicutan — Maria Elena Ang, Eugenia Magpantay and Nathan Quimpo — have remained frozen for some months now, after a few initial inquiries. The complaints of four other Camp Bicutan political prisoners, Santiago Alonzo, Charlie Palma, Alejandro Arellano and Agaton Topacio, all co-complainants of Giron and Zambrano as early as January 1975, have arbitrarily been dismissed by the military. The rest of the torture cases have not been afforded any inquiry whatsoever.

In spite of many reports of torture in the provinces, there has been no substantial government inquiry into the torture of political prisoners now confined in these detention centers.

By watering down the Giron-Zambrano case, extending token investigation to a few other torture victims ignoring the great majority of torture cases, the government is in effect trying to propagate the myth that there are "few and isolated" cases.

Time and again, the Marcos government has expressed that torture and inhuman treatment of political prisoners has not been its policy, citing provisions of the Constitution and the penal code which supposedly guide its avowed policy. But by the repeated actions of its military personnel in torturing political prisoners and by its inaction on countless torture cases reported, it has, in fact, tolerated and condoned torture. Far from being "anathema to official policy", torture has virtually become official policy.

Government efforts to stamp out torture are definitely not enough. If, the government is truly serious about its repudiation of the use of torture and its concern for human rights and the rule of law, then it should formulate and implement measures that would render justice to all victims of torture, strictly forbid and discourage the practice of torture and severely punish military and police personnel who inflict physical and mental harm on political prisoners.

Most of us having been direct victims of torture, we, the political prisoners of Camp Bicutan, feel most concerned that the government should put more substance to its condemnation of torture. We therefore demand that the government adopt the following concrete measures:

1. Release immediately and unconditionally all political prisoners against whom the whole evidence was "tortured into existence".
2. Institute full and open investigation of all cases of torture and bring before civil courts the erring intelligence, military or police personnel.
3. Eliminate totally the use of "safehouses" or unidentified places of interrogation, where torture is most often conducted.
4. Formulate, publish and strictly enforce a code of conduct for the decent and humane treatment of political prisoners based on internationally accepted standards for the treatment of political prisoners.

POLITICAL PRISONERS

Camp Bicutan

May 12, 1977.

"It appeared that the victim, not the torturer was on trial!"

STATEMENT OF BICUTAN POLITICAL PRISONERS ON THE ACQUITTAL OF MRS. HERRERA'S TORTURERS

We, political prisoners at Camp Bicutan, express our indignation over the acquittal of the torturers of Mrs. Trinidad Herrera, the well-known leader of the militant Zone One Tondo Organization (ZOTO) and our former fellow political prisoner here at Camp Bicutan.

We followed closely the developments of her torture case and we are aghast over the way the entire court martial of her tormentors, Lt. Eduardo S. Matillano and 2Lt. Prudencio Regis, Jr., was conducted.

We deplore the harassments and intimidations made by the military on Mrs. Herrera and her husband, Mr. Fernando Herrera, immediately before and during the court martial; the use of false witnesses, notably the notorious CIC Paterno Ordona, who himself has inflicted grave torture on some of us and the court martial body itself which was arbitrarily set up by and composed of the very persecutors of Mrs. Herrera — the military.

There are a number of points about the case which we consider highly irregular and questionable.

1. We find it inconsistent for President Marcos, to claim on May 13 that medical examinations had found no marks of physical injuries and maltreatment on Mrs. Herrera, then to state before foreign correspondents on June 3 that "she was examined by doctors and showed signs of having been inflicted physical pain."
2. We cannot accept the contention of Matillano's and Regis' lawyers that the scars on Mrs. Herrera were "caused by factors other than electric shock" or "were self-inflicted" and that her state of shock was due merely to "her boil on the head, lack of sleep and poor appetite."

The outrageous allegations fly in the face of the testimonies of many of us who experienced electric shock treatment — enough to be able to tell the signs — and who saw for ourselves the telltale scare on her thumbs and the suffering clearly written on her face.

3. We question the reversal by the court martial body of the previous ruling by the law member allowing three Camp Bicutan political prisoners to testify on similar tortures inflicted on them by the accused, particularly Matillano. According to court martial procedures, the ruling of the law member on admissibility of evidence is final.

This point has far-reaching implications. Had the three political prisoners been allowed to testify, a pattern of torture perpetrated by Matillano and his associates would have emerged. Tortures of other political prisoners, not just those of the three, would have been exposed.

At Camp Bicutan, where 41 out of the total 55 political prisoners (or 75 per cent) were subjected to torture or maltreatment, at least 10 were tortured by Matillano and his men.

4. We find it grossly unfair for the court-martial to scrutinize the background of Mrs. Herrera and trace her so-called "subversive links", while prohibiting testimonies on the character of her tormentor for the ridiculous reason that "the bad character of the accused is not a fact in issue." It appeared that the victim, not the torturer, was on trial!

The case of Mrs. Herrera is only one of the many torture cases in the Philippines and one of the few to have been publicized in the local media. No less than the Amnesty International, the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines and very recently, the International Commission of Jurists have attested to the widespread employment of torture on political prisoners in the Philippines.

We therefore condemn the court martial and exoneration of Mrs. Herrera's tormentors as nothing but a whitewash, a cover-up for the many tortures and abuses committed by the military on political prisoners.

By conducting sham investigations on a few torture complaints and ignoring the great majority of torture cases, the martial law regime is in effect attempting to bolster its insidious propaganda line that there are only "few and isolated cases" of torture and that it has accorded "full action" to each of these "few" cases.

We also condemn the outcome of the Herrera torture case as a basis laid to support another long-standing and equally insidious line: that reports of torture are mere "fabrications" made by "extreme subversives" out to discredit the government.

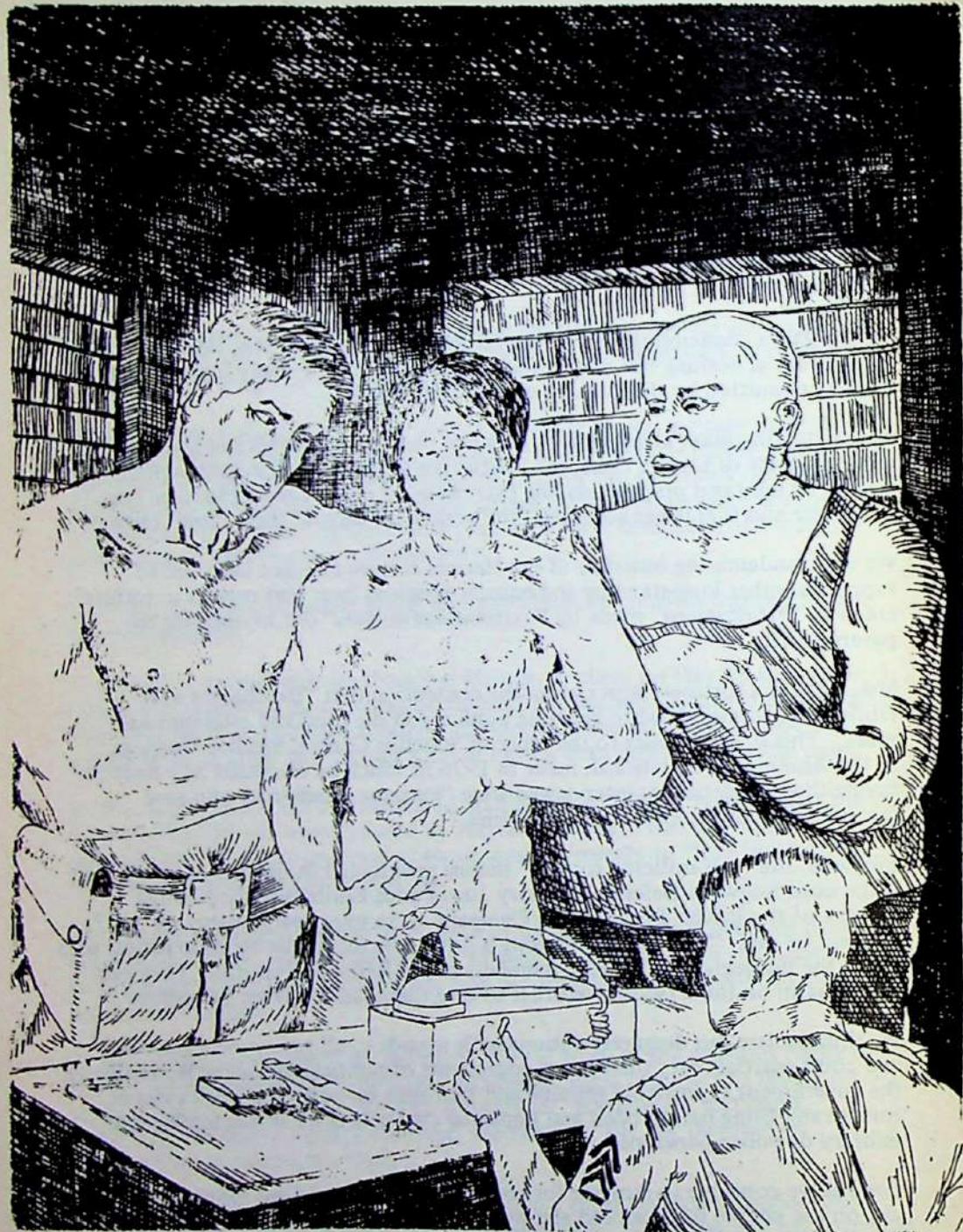
Mrs. Herrera's torturers won out on the contention that "the charges were fabricated and magnified to generate publicity in the local and international press." This is very similar to the reply of Solicitor General Estelito Mendoza to the Amnesty International, made in 1976 in which he dismissed AI's findings, saying that the detainees interviewed were "extreme subversives who gave fabricated and untrue accounts of torture."

Likewise, the "self-inflicted torture" theory propagated during the court martial is the same hogwash Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile furnished Vanya Kewley of the British Broadcasting Company in an interview in February 1977, wherein he said: "This (self-infliction) is not a new technique by these people who are in the underground, who are members of the leftist organization. They can inflict harm on them (selves) in order to save them (selves) from the gallows".

We thus declare our deep reservations with regards to all government inquiries and court-martials over the torture complaints of political prisoners. We challenge the government to institute genuine and thorough investigation of all cases of torture and bring before open and impartial civil courts the erring intelligence, military or police personnel.

Even as we continue to struggle for redress of violations of our human rights, we call on the people to take heed and not to relax their vigilance. For the exculpation of Matillano and Regis is the go-signal for others of their ilk to follow or carry on with their brutish ways.

POLITICAL PRISONERS
Camp Bicutan



"Hawaii Five - O," a torture method as drawn by a political prisoner

*"We ask the help of your association...
in presenting our side to the foreign
press and in the publicizing our demands."*

LETTER TO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Victor Laniauskas
President
Foreign Correspondents Association
of the Philippines

Dear Mr. Laniauskas,

In a speech before your association last June 3, 1977, President Marcos made claims about his regime's "just and humane treatment of detainees." We, political prisoners at Camp Bicutan, wish to take exception to this statement. In particular, perhaps the President was not fully informed when he made the following declarations:

- That "in all the reported cases of maltreatment of detainees, full action has been taken by the government, particularly, the military in order to punish the guilty."
- That "all (detainees) are facing formal charges in court."
- That "reports... sometimes received by the military concerning the reported (sic) disappearance of certain persons...are instantly investigated, and findings communicated to the reporting parties."
- That military commissions which are handling the cases of detainees will be phased out as soon as practicable, and that cases of detainees will be transferred to the civil courts.

The issue of political prisoners — their torture and prolonged detention — has emerged as one of the most sensitive issues confronting the martial law regime, a prime cause for criticism and denunciation, both locally and internationally. Thus time and again, President Marcos has been constrained to speak up and answer his critics, issuing blanket denials or attempting to minimize the notoriety of his regime's abuses on political prisoners.

We view the President's recent speech before your assembly as most significant in that it has to date been his most extensive response, and possibly his most intense reaction, to the charges of violation of human rights, specially, the unjust and inhuman treatment of political prisoners. It merely proves just how much public opinion has been generated the world over, thanks in part to the foreign media, and how much pressure has been brought to bear down on the regime.

Let us then discuss the issues the President has raised point by point.

ON TORTURE

In a nationwide radio-television address on December 11, 1974, the President stated emphatically: "No one but no one has been tortured." A few days later, the torture of Camp Olivas detainees was exposed by Fr. Edicio de la Torre and other Camp Olivas political prisoners. Since then, the wanton torture of political prisoners all over the archipelago has become an established fact and has caught the concern of human rights adherents the world over.

Two noted organizations, the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP) and Amnesty International, presented to the government in 1976 documented cases of torture and maltreatment of political prisoners by military personnel.

In addition, a number of political prisoners themselves filed formal complaints on torture, with the Department of National Defense and with the Inspector General's Office of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Since the AMRSP and AI reports, new and increased numbers of documented cases of torture and maltreatment have surfaced.

In Camp Bicutan alone, 49 out of the present 61 political prisoners or over eighty three per cent, underwent torture or maltreatment (Attached Annex A is the listing of these prisoners.) The 49 cases are apart from those arrested and maltreated but subsequently released from Camp Bicutan, like Mrs. Trinidad Herrera.

There are many more cases in the eighty or so military detention centers all over the country which unfortunately are difficult to document properly due to the inaccessibility of these detention centers.

Despite the glaring widespread use of torture, Mr. Marcos has stubbornly refused to admit beyond his current pitch that only a "few abberations" have been committed. On top of this, he even declared that "full action" has been taken by the government on torture cases.

On the many reports and complaints on torture, only one case has been given due course by the government. And in that case, one junior PC officer and two enlisted men were only made scapegoats for the torture of two political prisoners (Julius Giron and Cenon Zambrano, both presently detained at Camp Bicutan). Several senior officers, including a colonel, were "acquitted for lack of evidence."

It is possible that the case of Mrs. Trinidad Herrera, which drew worldwide attention despite initial cover-up attempts by the government, may be turned into a second showpiece case. Earlier, the President expressed doubts over Mrs. Herrera's account of her ordeal; now, he has admitted that she has indeed "showed signs of having been inflicted physical pain." And he has even seized upon her case as an example of his regime's "swift and unequivocal" action.

By choosing to act only on a few select cases such as that of Mrs. Herrera, while ignoring the great majority of torture cases, the government is in effect trying to propagate the myth that there have only been "a few abberations" and that it has responded swiftly and unequivocally on these "few" cases.

ON PROLONGED DETENTION WITHOUT DUE PROCESS

As early as September 20, 1974, President Marcos announced in a world press conference that "the government has just released the last of the detention prisoners who are not facing criminal charges."

On January 7, 1977, harping on the same theme, he denied the very existence of political prisoners in the Philippines, taking the term to mean those "who have been detained without proper criminal cases filed against them".

In the same breath, he promised to release all uncharged political prisoners, declaring that "if there are any as of tonight, I order the release of any person detained by the military or by the civil government against whom there are no charges filed as of today."

Now, the Chief Executive has proclaimed before the ECAP all over again, that all detainees, are facing formal charges in court and again ordered the immediate release of any detainee who has not been formally charged (as of 3:00 p.m., June 3, 1977).

Once again, let us review the facts:

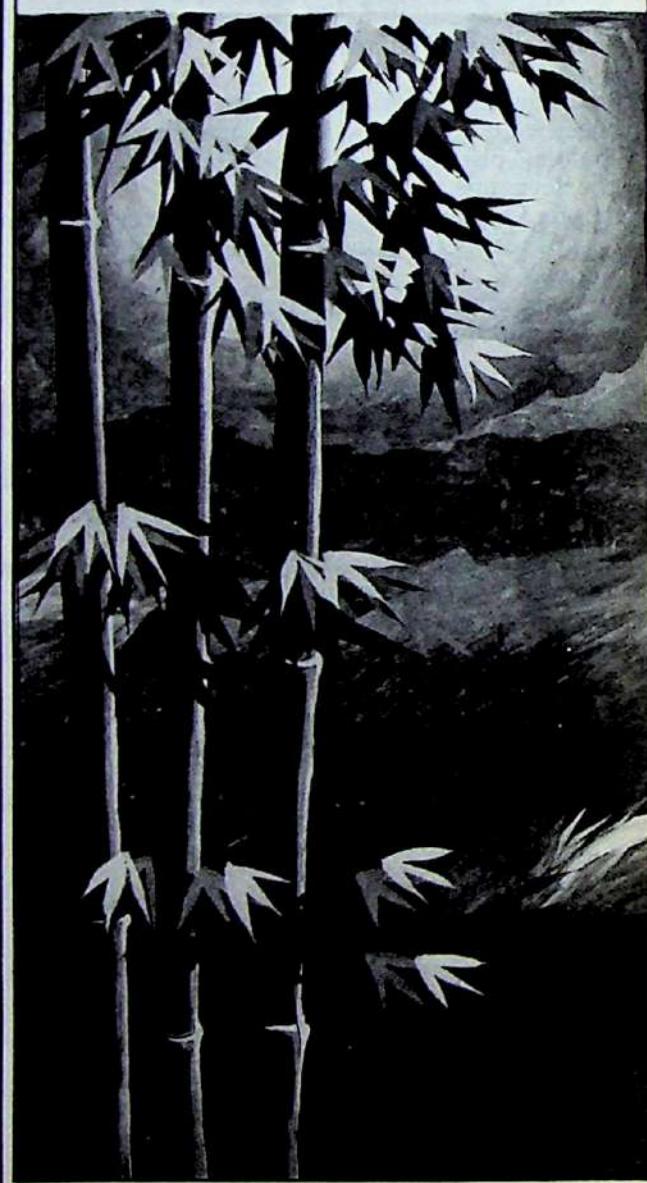
In Camp Bicutan alone, there are 30 political prisoners being detained indefinitely without proper charges filed against them -- about half of the total political prisoners here. Of those 30 prisoners, 24 have not even undergone any summary preliminary investigation (SPI), which is supposed to determine if *prima facie* evidence exists against a prisoner. Six are still undergoing SPI, which in at least two cases has dragged on for a year already. (Attached Annex B documents this fact).

In the cases of 15 others who are facing a charge of rebellion starting this July 7, under the case "PP vs. Jose Maria Sison et al." the newspapers claimed that Summary Preliminary Investigation on their case has been concluded and that the Summary Preliminary Investigation has shown that *prima facie* evidence exists against those charged. In fact, however, detained respondents in this case were brought before an investigating panel only once (October 18, 1975). Practically, only a roll call was then made. The panel moved to postpone the hearings, setting the next date for Jan. 3, 1976. The next hearing did not take place on January 3 nor on any date thereafter. Yet, the government had claimed that the SPI had been concluded!

As for the rest, they too suffer unjustly prolonged detention because the government has conducted their trial at a snail's pace and has denied them the right to bail. Several cases in fact date back to pre-martial or early martial law days and still have not progressed beyond a few arraignments.

The situation in detention centers outside of Greater Manila, where some of us were detained prior to our transfer here, is even worse. Practically all the political prisoners in these detention centers are uncharged, yet, are being detained indefinitely.

nothing is so strong
as gentleness
nothing is so gentle
as real strength



9 BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS

FOR NELIA

WHY ARE YOU SO HARD? THEY ASK.
WHY DO YOU NOT BEND A LITTLE?

*They call it grace
Swaying like the bamboo
With the wind.
Listen to it weave
The music of compromise
While it kisses the ground
At your feet.
Even bamboos however
Could only bend so much.
When the storm comes
Listen to their cracking!
They break one by one.
You could only bend so much.
I would prefer to be a rock
Smoothened by the years
But unswaying.*

WHY ARE YOU SO HARD? THEY ASK
WHY DO YOU NOT BEND A LITTLE?

by Clarita Roja

open letter on hunger strike

"... we have purged ourselves of the illusion that political prisoners should avoid militant struggle either because it is unnecessary (relying on the spontaneous benevolence of our captors), or because it is even harmful, leading to reprisals."

Dear Friends:

Last Friday, 19 March, our relatives attended the Church-Military Liaison Committee (CMLC) meeting that discussed the four issues raised by our group in the hunger strike. They informed us of the following discussions and decisions:

1. On our demand for a written schedule of activities (to prevent arbitrary harassment while under detention) — Undersecretary Barbero gave Col. Buenaventura of IRECAD until Monday, 22 March, to give us one.
2. On our demand for the house arrest of two nursing mother—detainees and their babies — the CMLC unanimously agreed to this and decided to follow this up immediately in the face of one remaining objection from the SIB.
3. On our demand for transfer to a Metro Manila detention center — the CMLC asked that our lawyer file a motion with the Supreme Court since it had issued an injunction to the Military Commission trying our case. On 30 March the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the transfer.
4. On our demand for a similar transfer of fellow detainees on a sympathy strike — the CMLC clarified the misinformation that they are criminally charged and asked that their transfer be followed up with IRECAD.

That same evening, our relatives announced to the CMLC that we would lift our fast. They had earlier learned from us of our intention to end our hunger strike that weekend, in line with the principle of avoiding unnecessary sacrifice (six of us had already collapsed, with two needing dextrose infusions due to extreme dehydration).

Today, 26 March, we received news that the two nursing mothers and their babies — Isabelita del Pilar-Guillermo and Dodo plus Elita Ponce-Quinto and Lily-Lisa — were given house arrest papers. Earlier, we were also shown a written draft of our schedule of activities.

Thank you very much for your support that made these initial victories possible. Let us share in the joy over this good news in the same way that we shared the pain and sacrifice of the struggle.

And yet, in a deeper sense, the house arrest of the two nursing mothers and their babies is not the first victory of our hunger strike nor its main fruit. Allow us to share our reflection on what our greater and more permanent gains are:

1. The hunger strike has tempered us and deepened our unity.

Upon our arrest last 1974, we hardly had anything in common, having come from various places and different walks of life. We were not even detained in the same prison, but in three separate detention places within Camp Olivas. Practically our sole unifying bond was to have been victims of maltreatment by our captors. When we denounced this (with your help), the military authorities gave us another basis of unity by filing charges against us as a group.

Because of our hunger strike, we have been united physically, in one detention place, for the first time since 1974. This made intense discussions possible among us and led to deeper and more conscious bonds as the principles underlying our hunger strike became more explicit to ourselves.

First of all, we have purged ourselves of the illusion that political prisoners should avoid militant struggle either because it is unnecessary (relying on the spontaneous benevolence of our captors), or because it is even harmful, leading to reprisals. When one has been tortured and charged before a military court, it is easier to avoid being deceived by the ploy about being released after "rehabilitation."

We reaffirm our basic trust in the people — that they will support just and reasonable demands and that their organized pressure will help us achieve victory and avoid reprisals.

But we should also avoid the other illusion of expecting an easy, quick and total victory. The people's support must be generated through painstaking explanation and follow-up. The military can and will resist the pressure, ignoring it when it is small, muddling the issues or outrightly hardening its stand when it assumes greater proportions. Besides, our issues might not be the only issues nor the chief issues asking for the people's support and pressure.

Hence, the need for sacrifice. Hence, the need for restraint, even in the face of provocation. We learned to temper our impulse for a quick showdown (by either declaring a definite period for our fast or by entering into a total hunger strike). Instead, we arrived at a new, restrained form of protest fast that effectively projected our participation in the sacrifice that any struggle for justice demands and at the same time allowed for enough time to generate support and pressures among the people. Further reflection made us temper even our expectations — we agreed to lift our fast if many of us fall and no action was forthcoming from our captors, in line with the principle of avoiding unnecessary sacrifice. But this lifting would have been like that of a hammer that only gathers more force to strike again.

2. The hunger strike has deepened our unity with our relatives.

As Filipinos, we are bound to our relatives by strong blood and family ties. A second bond of unity was added by our arrest, torture and harassment under detention as our relatives not only sought to feel with us but were themselves subjected to direct harassment.

To these ties of blood and the bond of common suffering, our hunger strike has added a unity born of common struggle for justice. In a real sense, we can begin to say that our mother and father, son and daughter, wife, husband, brother or sister are those who suffer because they dare to resist oppression and dare to struggle for freedom.

Most of our relatives are poor and uneducated, but their growth in self-confidence and experience in seeking mass support and facing up to various military authorities are concrete examples of how true human development results from persevering struggle for just issues.

As political detainees unable to dialogue directly with the people, we saw reflected in our relatives the growing awareness and support outside. In the same way, they gave voice and expression to our thoughts and principles and were our hands and feet, eyes, ears and tongue.

The hunger strike also taught them and us the lesson of self-reliance. The intrigue sown by evil men among the ranks of some friends made us see that while we always seek the support of organized groups, we must rely first of all on our immediate selves (both prisoners and their relatives) and organize new groups to add to existing ones or even take their place if necessary.

3. The hunger strike has widened and deepened mass awareness and support for the political prisoners' issue.

While we directly struggle for our particular issues, we are aware of our links to the general issue of political prisoners. Fresh, specific struggles like ours serve to renew, widen and deepen public awareness for an issue that has been with us even before martial law but which needs to be constantly raised in the face of a natural tendency to be benumbed by problems that keep worsening.

May our struggle serve to stress again the truth that it is only through the struggle of political prisoners, their relatives and friends that their rights can be achieved.

Because our particular issues were raised at a time when workers' and squatters' issues were prominent, we reflected on the links between political prisoners and those who struggle for their rights outside prison. With the arrest, torture and detention of many workers, squatters and students, surely we should ask what kind of people are those who readily and harshly punish those who protest injustice, but do little against those who oppress people.

To those Church people who have helped us, we have a particular point for reflection. While your efforts are presently directed to help others, the experience and the organized groups you have developed are going to be useful to yourselves. For if foreign religious are deported, is it farfetched to expect Filipino Church people to be imprisoned?

On this serious note, allow us to end with renewed appeals for your support.

Our particular issues on transfer and bail as part of a fair and just trial still call for unremitting pressure.

We know that many more have been detained these past weeks. How many have been tortured (this time, in safehouses), how many have not even been allowed visits yet, we do not know.

What we do know is that we have to redouble our efforts and intensify our commitment to this struggle.



And so as we lift our fast, let it be only to generate more strength for more effective pressure next time, much as we lift a hammer only to deliver a heavier blow.

Thank you very much again, and let us continue in our common fight for justice and freedom.

Sincerely yours,

FR. ED DE LA TORRE
JULIUS GIRON
ALEJANDRO ARELLANO
REYNALDO GUILLERMO
ARMANDO TENG
VICTOR QUINTO
EDUARDO SENENSE

SANTIAGO ALONZO
CENON ZAMBRANO
REYNALDO ILAO
ISABELITA DEL PILAR-GUILLELMO
FRANCISCO VERGARA
ELITA PONCE-QUINTO
AGATON TOPACIO

Isolation Cells
Camp Olivas

26 March 1976.

your concern has raised our hopes

Your concern for us has raised our hopes. You cannot imagine the relief we felt when you started visiting us. Since our arrest, it is only now that we feel a definite peace of mind, and for this we express our deepest gratitude.

There were eight of us who were captured on 3 and 4 February. Some of us were more than roughed up while in the hands of the 4th MIG in order to extort from us sensitive information on our comrades and friends. We ask your help for a neutral doctor to conduct a check-up on some of us for suspected broken ribs and other ailments.

We assure our comrades and friends that, to the best of our ability, we have resisted all forms of pressures. We have not betrayed their trust.

Now that our case is publicly known, we have plucked up enough courage to categorically state that we repudiate many portions of our statements. Although we were advised about our rights to have a lawyer, in reality, this was impossible.

Many of our answers were anticipated. Our interrogators even added words or names to our answers on their own initiative. To protest was useless. We were constantly threatened, and these threats were translated into bodily harm.

We may have made self-incriminating admissions, but we shall not falsely testify against others.

Although some of us are proud to admit our membership of the Communist Party of the Philippines, there are others who are perfectly and absolutely innocent. Please help them get an early investigation so that they may be released as soon as possible and rejoin their families. Please help also the NPA suspects who have been detained here for more than seven months.

**LETTER TO CONCERNED CITIZENS
OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY
POLITICAL DETAINEES OF CAMP ALAGAR**

February 14, 1976

new year appeal

We greet you with all the season's cheers and joys! And though high walls and barbed wires separate us, we are one in the spirit of rebirth and resolution. We have shared so many things in the past and for the help you have kindly given, thank you very much. The new year promises new life and new things to be shared together.

This year we express our highest hopes for new life — to live as free men and women again. We want to be with our loved ones, our families and our kins. We believe that our lives are better spent outside of detention as active participants in the task of nation-building.

We believe that we should be released for legal and humanitarian considerations. Thus, we seek once more your active support and kind intercession on our behalf. We ask you to send letters and telegrams to president Ferdinand E. Marcos, the First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos, Secretary of National Defense Juan Ponce Enrile, Undersecretary for Civil Relations Carmelo Z. Barbero, PC Chief Maj. Gen. Fidel Ramos and other Defense and military officials. With your help, our freedom is just a step away.

**POLITICAL PRISONERS
OF CAMP BICUTAN**

Jan 1, 1977

release

"sona"

victims

We, political detainees at Camp Bicutan, respectfully appeal to you for the immediate release of sixteen (16) residents of North Bay Boulevard-South, Navotas, who have been unjustly arrested and are now detained here with us.

All of the sixteen are innocent common people. Some are *batilyos* (fishtub haulers) who have only been protesting legally and peacefully the fish port project because it is depriving them of their only means of livelihood. A few others are barrio civic leaders who merely sought to defend their community from being demolished to make way for the fish port complex, and who are trying to improve the lot of their impoverished community through self-help projects. Others just happen to be related to *batilyos* or community leaders being sought by the military. The rest are simple North Bay Boulevard-South residents, adversely affected by the changes wrought by the construction of the new fish port, and thus sympathize with the *batilyos* and the entire community's cause.

Most of them were arrested in a "sona" of their barrio on April 15. At 1:00 a.m. of that day, the residents of the barrio were roused from their sleep. The 5,400 males were forced to mass in the vicinity of the municipal jail while raiders searched every house, tore up ceilings, walls and floors, looking for "subversives" and "subversive documents." Unable to find any "subversive", the raiders instead arrested 10 persons at random, some as hostages. One of the hostages, an old man named Bonifacio Castro, was taken even while sick with asthma and fever because the raiders could not find his son. A young girl of 19, Pacita Pineda, who was just on an overnight visit at the house of an uncle to attend the wake of a dead relative, was arrested because the raiders could not find her aunt. Alfredo Mabanto was taken because the raiders could not find his wife. A young man, Luis Almencion, was arrested because the raiders were initially unable to find his cousin, Leonardo Illut. A little later, they found and arrested Illut, but Almencion was taken in just the same.

Because not one of them has been charged is reason enough for all of them to be immediately freed. Because they have done nothing wrong and have only been legally and peacefully expressing their just grievances, there is no reason to detain them a day longer, especially so in the case of those who have been arrested by mistake, at random or as hostages.

**LETTER TO PRESIDENT MARCOS
47 POLITICAL DETAINEES
FROM CAMP BICUTAN**

May 6, 1977

holy week

message

"As we transform the passive unity of common victims of oppression into active unity of common participants in struggle, we look forward to the joys of Easter and to our final liberation."

For many Filipino Christians, Holy Week is not just a time to reflect on the passion death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It has also become a time to consider the passion, death and resurrection of Juan de la Cruz, the common Filipino.

The parallelism is easy to perceive. The emphasis on the passion of Christ mirrors the obvious suffering in the daily lives of most Filipinos. We can understand why both preacher and people have oftentimes contented themselves with surface reflections — such as an emotional identification of one's personal pain with that of Christ, and an appeal to the better-off to sacrifice for the relief of other people's immediate needs — all with resignation and acceptance of a basic situation that will remain the same Holy Week after Holy Week.

But recent years led to deeper insights into the meaning of Holy Week and into the basic condition of the Filipino people. Beyond describing and sympathizing with the many faces of suffering, we now ask what its causes are. We look not just at individual victims and culprits but at oppressed groups, even a whole nation or people, and at oppressive systems and structures. More important, we refuse to accept as fate or mystery, but proclaim the people's right and responsibility to remove suffering by its very roots.

Thus we distinguish passive from active suffering.

We cease to accept that one who undergoes suffering must accept it as personal fate or fault; much less do we accept that passivity in the fact of suffering is a Filipino, Asian or Christian trait. While it is true that oftentimes we cannot do much more than endure, it is equally true that the suffering that liberates is not passive but active — the suffering undergone by a martyr. Active suffering takes place when one refuses to consider only his own suffering but goes out to other victims and feels greater anguish as he sees the extent and depth of oppression. More suffering and sacrifice takes place as one not only denounces injustice but struggles effectively to end it.

To say that active suffering liberates does not mean to actively seek suffering and death. We should avoid unnecessary sacrifices, but we should also reject the illusion that we can faithfully serve the people without risks and costs.

As political prisoners, we are only too aware of the risks and costs of such service to national liberation. Names change but the pattern of arrest, torture and indefinite detention of political prisoners remains the same. Torture has in fact been institutionalized to the point of having its own distinct vocabulary — "San Juanico Bridge" (for suspending a victim between two chairs, lying stiffly), "Meralco" (for electric shock treatment), and similar labels for techniques of maltreatment. More and more political prisoners remain missing, kept in "safehouses" or, as some fear, killed ("salvaged" in the language of their executioners). These are not idle fears. We still remember the death of Liliosa

Hilao in April 1973 in the hands of military interrogators, that of Santiago Arce in Abra in 1974, and more recently, the death of Puri Pedro in February 1977. And what of the nameless others "salvaged" in the remote provincial and military task force stockades?

This Holy Week, we invite you to share some deeper reflections on these facts. Are they really mere exceptions, aberrations from official policy as the martial law regime claims? Are they only due to the warped personality and psychological make-up of some notoriously brutal officers and men? Is not the persistence and even intensification of such inhuman practices directly related to martial law and the system it maintains?

Reflecting even deeper, should we not root these events in the basic conflict between the present system's deference to foreign and elite interests and the commitment of those who seek to protect and advance the people's interests?

The deeper cause of torture and death of political prisoners lead us also to reflect on the need to deepen our present commitments. While we start with the issue of due process and human rights of political prisoners, we cannot avoid facing up to the broader question of human rights under martial law and the legitimate struggles of the oppressed Filipinos — especially the peasants and workers, the urban and rural poor and the national minorities — for full human development.

We invite you, therefore, to express with us our solidarity with the many groups of Filipinos who are actively suffering in the various struggles for our common liberation.

We end this message, much like Holy Week ends, on a note of hope. We base our hope not just on a firm faith in the justice of our cause and the people's capacity to transform our present situation, but also on very concrete though modest signs of victory.

The issue of political prisoners and human rights has become both a national and international issue. This reflects the efforts of many groups and individuals both here and abroad and is a favorable development for our continuing struggle to stop torture and seek the release of all political prisoners.

We see a sign of hope even in the face of continuing arrest, torture and detention of more Filipinos. This reflects the growing and intensifying participation of the people in the movement to defend and advance their legitimate rights. This, despite the harassments and threats and the climate of fear that martial law has fostered.

As we transform the passive unity of common victims of oppression into active unity of common participants in struggle, we look forward to the joys of Easter and to our final liberation.

POLITICAL PRISONERS
Bicutan Rehabilitation Center
Camp Bicutan, Taguig, Metro Manila
Holy Week, 1977

who are the political prisoners

It is ironic that your annual conference, having as one of its poignant subjects for discussion the protection of human rights, is being held in our country where under martial law human rights have been wantonly violated.

However, we deem it a fortunate event in the sense that you, advocates and defenders of law and world peace, can have the opportunity to look closely into the human rights situation in the Philippines, specifically as it applies to us, political prisoners.

We have no doubt that you would welcome such an opportunity. It would provide you a clear and concrete backdrop to the subject "Program of Implementation of Internationally Protected Human Rights Within Nations" and the corollary subject: "The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Promotion of Internationally Protected Human Rights", which we understand you have lined up for discussion on August 23.

You are well-informed, we believe, of the documented reports of Amnesty International (AI) about the widespread use of torture on political prisoners in the Philippines and other violations of human rights. The report of the U.S. State Department, reflecting the AI findings, has also been publicized internationally.

No doubt, too, you have heard or read about President Marcos' repeated denials, first, of the practice of torture (he has said in December 1974 that "No one but no one has been tortured", a statement he would recant later); and second, of the existence of political prisoners in our country (on Jan. 7, 1977, reacting to the U.S. State Department report, Mr. Marcos said that there are no political prisoners in the Philippines). He qualified his latter statement thus: "... if by political prisoners, we accept the original connotation of the word in international law, which means those who have been detained without prior criminal cases filed against them..."

You are in the best position, as an international organization of lawyers or as individuals, to determine if the accepted definition of "political prisoners" must regress to Mr. Marcos' version or adopt the current simple definition generally accepted in civilized societies all over the world.

LETTER TO WORLD PEACE
THROUGH LAW CONFERENCE

July 15, 1977

message to church coalition for human rights in the philippines

"It is reflection of both the indiscriminate repression waged by the martial law government and the Spirit moving and breathing life into the churches that Philippine detention centers always contain some church people among the detainees."

Dear Friends,

Through this letter, the political detainees at Bicutan would like to extend our warmest greeting as a first step toward regular working relations with you.
*Mabuhay kayo!**

We came to know of the formation of the CCHRP and its decision to take up the issue of political prisoners through some mutual friends. These same friends informed us that you have also directed your attention to the latest trend toward murder ("salvage") of arrested political activists. We hope that your efforts to expose and denounce this latest tactic of the martial law regime will bear the same results as the earlier campaign of various groups, especially church groups, against torture and indefinite detention without charges. We do not expect to completely eliminate such inhuman practices so long as the basic system that breeds them remains, but we can definitely lessen their incidence. At the very least, constant exposure and denunciation of evils which we cannot immediately stop help bring about among our people the consciousness and consequent decisions that will eventually put an end to these evils.

It is reflection of both the indiscriminate repression waged by the martial law government and the Spirit moving and breathing life into the churches that Philippine detention centers always contain some church people among the detainees. Our shared reflections have been fruitful. One theme that particularly dominates our conversations is the call to be both as simple as doves and as cunning as serpents. In the past (and even now), church people either lost their simplicity in their efforts to be wise, or, in the case of many activists, satisfied themselves with simple sincerity without working hard at the wisdom demanded by our common struggle.

*Long Live!

Our experiences in the struggle for prison welfare, humane treatment and legal release have taught us that it is not enough to have a just cause and people who believe in its justice. To actually achieve concrete victories, we have to know and make use of the peculiar characteristics of the very authorities we oppose. More often than not, they are forced to do the right things for the wrong reason.

For example, instead of yielding to demands that they themselves eventually concede to be just because of the pressure we generate through our own mass protests (like hunger strikes) and through the educational and organizational work of our relatives and friends, military authorities tend to give decisive weight to publicity and pressure from abroad, especially the US. We know that this reflects the essential dependence of the "New Society" on foreign support — a vulnerable point that we must wisely exploit.

The current debate on military and economic aid from the US to Marcos, and the bases negotiations provide other examples. Although the official debate, especially on the bases' issue, is on sovereignty and national interests, the issue of human rights (not only of political prisoners but even more of the people these prisoners have worked with and represent) is very much involved. After all, the money Marcos is trying to get will directly strengthen and even expand the apparatus of repression that forms the core of his rule. And the increasingly vocal opposition to the bases among the American people is not just based on a recognition of Philippine sovereignty; it is also based on the realization that the bases are a leverage for Marcos to blackmail the US into supporting his regime.

This is why we are encouraged by the news that you have also decided to take up the bases' issue and the related question of US military and economic aid to Marcos. Part of the wisdom the struggle demands from us is to realize that the Marcos government listens more seriously to human rights groups if these groups represent not just the simplicity of human and Christian concern but also the wisdom of organized and conscious pressure on areas closer to the martial law government's interests.

As we said in the beginning of this letter, we hope this is just a first step toward closer and more regular working relations with you. Please extend to your members our thanks and greetings. People like you make our struggle inside prison not just desperate gestures but acts of hope. Together, we shall overcome.

In struggle and in hope,

POLITICAL PRISONERS
Bicutan Rehabilitation Center

February 28, 1978.

TRIAL BY MILITARY TRIBUNALS

The issue now agitating mostly everyone concerned with justice is the guilty verdict and sentence to death by musketry handed down by Military Commission No. 2 on Messrs. Benigno S. Aquino Jr., Bernabe Buscayno and Victor Corpus. While President Marcos has ordered the reopening of the trial — in reaction to a widespread outcry of concern, if not disapproval — the fact remains that the military tribunal is grimly set to condemn to death the political enemies of the martial law regime.

We view this development with grave concern. A good number of us are currently facing trial before military tribunals on charges of subversion and rebellion. As in the case of Aquino, et al, those of us facing trial are appalled by the military tribunal's consistent denial of vital pleas and motions.

Could we be wrong, then, to conclude that these trials will doubtless end in conviction and severe sentences of the accused?

Moreover, military officers from the Judge Advocate General Services (JAGS) have stated that President Marcos is determined to vindicate himself for having declared martial law. In other words, he is dead serious on convicting those facing subversion and rebellion charges.

While we do not begrudge President Marcos such a defensive complex, we protest the manner with which he seeks vindication — through military tribunals that he himself put into existence and which he absolutely controls. Because we cannot expect justice from these military tribunals, we urge their abolition.

Nevertheless, we persevere in asserting our right to proper trial, both within and without the domain of the military tribunals. We persevere through our legal counsels, to seek a full measure of due process even when we see clear patterns of its being wantonly disregarded. We're hopeful still that justice will prevail for as long as there are those who continue to fight for it.

Trial by military tribunals is by no means our only problem.

We continue to struggle for our human and democratic rights in the face of their continuing violation by the military. Basically, we seek justice on the following: (a) prosecution of military personnel who inflicted torture on political prisoners; (b) release of those who continue to be detained without proper charges filed against them in court, and of others who are either sick or whose families are starving as a consequence of their detention; (c) stop the growing practice of "salvage" or summary execution of suspected political offenders arrested by the military without witnesses, and a stop to the continued disappearance of arrested political activists; and (d) release of rearrested former detainees.

OPEN LETTER TO FREE LEGAL
ASSISTANT GROUP (FLAG)

December 1, 1977

more arrests

Your honorable Chairman, Lord Richard Wilberforce, has given us reason to hope for a measure of help from you. In his open letter to ILA members arguing strongly for attendance to this 58th conference in the Philippines, he stressed two significant points:

—ILA members can do more to spur on President Marcos to relax on martial law restrictions and to help the cause of human rights by going to, rather than by staying away from, the conference; and

—The truth regarding reports of torture and ill-treatment of detainees in the Philippines "can only be determined by first hand local investigation" and, in pursuance of the ILA Human Rights Programme, "the case of a visit (to the Philippines) in 1978 would appear stronger than one of abstention".

Under martial law, the civilian and military authorities have over-extended, to the point of dangerous distortion, the interpretation of political offenses covered by national security statutes. As a consequence, thousands of innocent persons have been arrested and detained during the last five to six years without any clear evidence of guilt being presented.

We shall cite only a few recent cases: (1) Late last year, 77 Kalinga tribesmen of Northern Luzon were arrested and detained for weeks merely for opposing the construction of a dam that would wipe away their ancestral lands; (2) last month, 125 sugarcane workers of Bago City in Negros were arrested and detained for attending a dialogue with the landlord and the military; (3) on May 24, 1978 thirteen (13) factory workers of the Riverside Mills Corporation in Metro Manila were arrested and detained for one month merely for participating in a trade union strike.

Then there was the case of 560 supporters of the opposition party LABAN who were arrested and detained for joining a peaceful protest march after the April 7, 1978 elections. Strong public pressures from here and abroad spurred President Marcos to order their release sooner than others, arrested under similar circumstances, who were detained much longer.

**OPEN LETTER TO
INTERNATIONAL LAW ASSOCIATION
BY 69 POLITICAL DETAINEES**

August 23, 1978

building solidarity links

Like any oppressed group, we know that we bear the principal responsibility to struggle for our rights as prisoners and as human beings. But like any oppressed group, too, we recognize the need to link up with other groups for mutual support. Given the interconnection of problems and of the powers that presently dominate us, we cannot do otherwise.

The Marcos martial law government has taken grudging notice of this truth by changing its official line in the face of mounting local and international protest. It still tries to deny the technical existence of political prisoners, announces token punishment of torturers, and promises to limit the scope of military tribunals. But it also feels the need to announce dramatic mass releases and even an amnesty program.

But the lists of supposed new releases contain mainly old names (temporarily released detainees or TRD's), and up to now not a single detainee has been released under the amnesty program. For this reason, various groups in the Philippines have initiated a campaign for a genuine general amnesty as a long-term goal, and for temporary release of detainees as an immediate target.

We hope you can lend your voice to this movement for amnesty and release of detainees. The martial law regime itself has announced an official policy of national unity and reconciliation, and a general amnesty is integral to such a policy.

One of the most obvious developments in the churches today is the insight into the world-wide structure of injustice and oppression that is more and more consciously organized by those who have "hardened their hearts." This places on those who would struggle for justice and liberation the essential task of building solidarity links also on a world-wide scale.

Would it be too presumptuous to look into existing international missionary groups for the needs of such a project? Perhaps in this way we can retrieve the authentic meaning of catholicity after its historical distortion in the colonial and semi-colonial domination of the third world and the understandable and necessary stress on nationalism and self-reliance.

**LETTER TO
MARYKNOLL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
BY 79 POLITICAL DETAINEES**

October, 1978



AFTERWORD

When committed people are locked within four walls, with nowhere to turn, their deepest feelings and beliefs often come to the fore in a way that surprises even themselves. The Bonhoeffers and Gramscis and George Jacksons and Dan Berrigans attest to that. When all possibility for action has been cut off, women and men who have hitherto expressed their commitment by doing seem to find a new way, a new voice, a new color, a new expression. Poems and Letters from Philippine Prisons is an example of this phenomenon.

Vignettes such as these letters and poems are indeed small works of art, expressive as they are of the human quest and vision. This art may, in fact, be among the most expressive of all art forms, pressed out, not of idyllic surroundings or romantic imaginings, but of the most basic human passions, tensions, struggles, death.

These letters and poems are themselves a fruit of the lives of their authors; they bear further fruit in the transmission to others. For by means of them, we who read and see and hear can better understand the fire that burns inside. We have an eye into the mind and heart of committed persons and insight into the cause that fires them. If we are already of similar mind and heart, we find to our amazement that someone has given voice and shape to convictions and yearnings of our own hitherto unexpressed— we recognize and are grateful.

These works of art are, in a way, primary sources. For those with eyes to see and ears to hear they are one means of comprehending repression, injustice. They encapsulate these realities in a way different from but complementary to both intellectual understanding and specific action.

We human beings must use such varied ways to grasp and to change the reality around us. Expressions such as these letters and poems, action flowing from commitment, cold logic and hard thinking – all of these together enable us to take hold of and work change on the world.

We need to know what or who is the “enemy” that causes the struggle that causes the repression that causes the feelings that causes the expression; we need to know who and where and when to effect a change in this chain of causes.

This is the challenge that confronts me in reading these letters and poems. They do not let me rest in simple enjoyment of the words. They push me inward, onward and outward all at once: inward to a look at my own feelings, onward to continued study, outward to cooperative action. They are demanding.

I do not then, feel it out of place to underline this demand, this challenge, and to offer some practical steps we can take toward understanding and action. For a beginning, here are some groups and publications available to encourage us in our task.

- * AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. Headquarters at 10 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7HF, England. Chapters of AI are in several cities of the US, Europe and some of the countries of Asia. AI offers an opportunity to work with others in organized efforts regarding human rights.
- * UNION OF DEMOCRATIC FILIPINOS (KDP). Chapters in several cities of the US. Study and action on Philippine issues. San Francisco group publishes bi-weekly newspaper, *Ang Katipunan*, P.O. Box 23644, Oakland, CA 94623.
- * FILIPPINJNENGROEP NEDERLAND. Organizes support work for Philippines in Holland. Coordinates with Philippine support groups in Italy, Great Britain and other parts of Europe. Published *Makibaka, 5-years of Martial Law*. Sekr V.L. Jeudestraat 21, Utrecht, Netherlands.
- * RESOURCE CENTER FOR PHILIPPINE CONCERNS is a Hongkong based office that seeks to build an information network on Philippine issues specially in Asia. Publishes *Solidaridad II*, P.O. Box 2784, Kowloon Central Post Office, Hongkong.
- * FRIENDS OF THE FILIPINO PEOPLE (FFP). Mobilizes US public opinion on issues like US bases in Philippines, US economic and military aid to Philippines. Publishes *FFP Bulletin*, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 824, New York, N.Y. 10027, USA.
- * NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON POLITICAL PRISONERS IN PHILIPPINES (NRCPPP). Publishes occasionally *Tanod*, and organizes letter writing campaigns in behalf of political prisoners and victims of torture. P.O. Box 27118, Oakland, Ca 94602.
- * ASIA/NORTH AMERICA COMMUNICATIONS CENTER. 2 Man Wan Road, 17-C, Kln. Hongkong. Research center focusing on US imperialism in Asia. Publishes *Asia Monitor*, a quarterly journal which monitors US economic presence in Asia.
- * ASIA FORUM ON HUMAN RIGHTS primarily supports national human rights working groups in Asia and provides opportunities for them to meet, consult and share experiences, strategies and common concerns. Kiukin Mansion 6/F, 566 Nathan Rd., Kln, Hongkong.
- * SOUTHEAST ASIA RESOURCE CENTER. P.O. Box 4000D, Berkeley, CA 94704, Publishes *Southeast Asia Chronicle*.
- * PHILIPPINE LIBERATION COURIER is a monthly newsletter published by the International Association of Filipino Patriots, P.O. Box 24737, Oakland, CA 94623, USA.

M. HEFFRON

Philippine Working Group, H.K.

Asia/North America Communications Center

all the
flowers of
tomorrow are
in the
seeds of
today