



pahatid kapatid

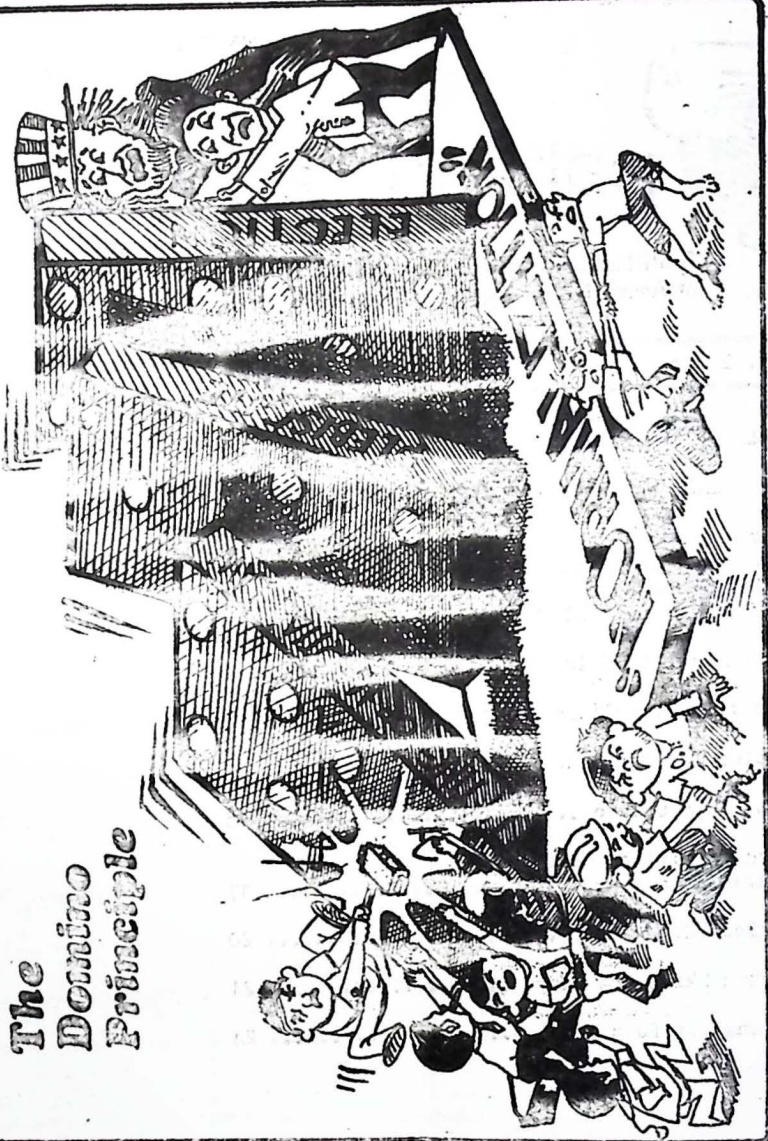
Published by KAPATID (Kapisanan Para sa Pagpapalaya
at Amnestiya ng mga Detenido sa Pilipinas).

Vol. 2 No.4

April, 1981

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The Domino Principle



editorial

What's Next?

The June 16 presidential election, like the April 7 plebiscite, will be held as a necessary step to the government's "normalization" scheme, which is designed to achieve "national unity and reconciliation" after more than eight years of martial rule.

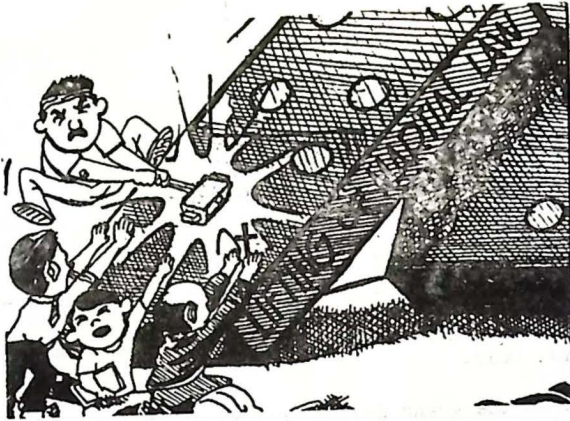
But it seems the grand design dreamed of by the administration is floundering.

First, the plebiscite aimed at restructuring the government system laid down by the 1973 Constitution was ignored by the people when many of them stayed away from the polls.

Second, the presidential election is turning out to be another embarrassing affair (at least, for the administration) as the boycott movement snowballs. President Marcos is left with no serious and credible opponent for the presidency as the more known opposition leaders opted to boycott.

Third, in the midst of these political exercises, the people's clamor for their rights and welfare intensifies as strikes and mass actions are declared by workers, drivers, students, teachers and bank, hotel and government employees.

Even the administration, in the face of negative responses of the people and the mounting opposition to its policies, had to shed some of its pretenses at reconciliation even as it releases more political detainees, particularly in Metro Manila.



It is intensifying its harassment, arrest and detention of more and more people from Cagayan to Manila to Davao. Cases of "salvaging" are evident even after the "lifting" of martial law. By employing an iron hand in containing the upsurge in the people's struggle, the regime itself is undermining its own "normalization" scheme.

The people's response to the government's initiative at "democratic" practices and the government's action vis-a-vis the people's demands show that the "normalization" scheme can never attain its avowed aim.

This is no surprise at all, considering that it is intended not to appease the people but to please the regime's foreign creditors and investors, as per recommendations implied in the Ascher report.

The least the government can do to be true to the intent of bringing in political normalization to a troubled society such as ours is to release all political prisoners. But four months after the "lifting" of martial law, the regime had not yet taken this step. How, then, can unity and reconciliation be attained when many citizens of the country are forcibly separated from the rest of society?

NEWS

Boycott Gains Momentum

While the Marcos administration is busy preparing for the June 16 presidential election, the boycott movement is gathering momentum among various sectors of society. Even before the April 7 plebiscite, mass meetings and actions were held to explain the issues to the people and urge a boycott of the plebiscite-election.

On April 5, about 1,500 people attended a symposium at Christ the King Church in Quezon City. During the symposium, slogans like "Down with US-Marcos Dictatorship!" and "Boycott the Plebiscite-Election!" were heard after the speeches of the speakers.

After the gathering, small groups held simultaneous lightning rallies in designated places in the city.

On the eve of the plebiscite, stickers and slogans with the same calls were glued and painted on the walls of the city.

As expected, the "yes" votes prevailed over the "no" votes in the April 7 plebiscite. However, more people stayed away from the polls as evidenced by the very low turnout of voters at the precincts.

The Commission on Elections (COMELEC), however, reported that only 5 million out of a total of 24 million registered voters failed to vote for "various reasons". A pre-plebiscite survey cited by the People's Opposition to the Plebiscite-Election (PEOPLE) showed more than 60% of the voters had no intention of going to the polls.

On April 11, a PEOPLE symposium held at UP Diliman, Quezon City was attended by 3,000 students, professionals and urban poor, plus some leaders from the opposition. Again, shouts of "Dismantle the US-Marcos Dictatorship!" and "Boycott the Election!" filled the air.

The Marcos administration received a big blow when the United Democratic Opposition (UNIDO), an umbrella organization of the opposition, announced on April 24 its stand to boycott the election for failure of the ruling party to meet its demands concerning the "rules of the game". Without the participation of the UNIDO, President Marcos is left with no credible opponent for the presidency.

Meanwhile, more mass meetings are being scheduled by PEOPLE and other sectoral organizations to explain to the people the necessity of boycotting the election.

Detainees Released

This April, releases were granted by President Marcos to nine political detainees. Andy Magtoto, Eduardo Brion, Ernie Arellano and Vic Amado were the first batch of detainees allowed to be freed. They were released last April 9.

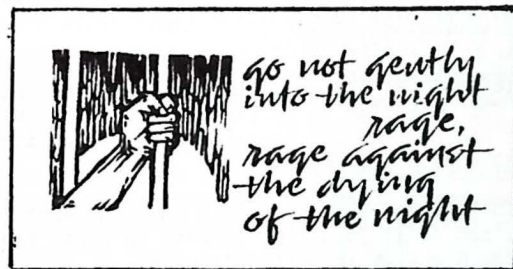
A week later, Hermenigildo Garcia IV and Winfred Villamil were released. The next day, April 17, Oscar Armea, Mario Galang and Glicerio Gervero were set free.

While these detainees value their freedom very much, they could only be half-happy for their release because they lament the continued detention of other political detainees. They strongly believe there is no vindication in subjecting them to suffer behind bars for an indefinite period of time.

Kapatid Cultural Group

The KAPATID Cultural group is a success as shown these past four months. Invitations for serenade for freedom from different sectors, such as the student, teachers and health workers continue to flow in.

Performances this month included serenades of a group of nurses and teachers on April 4 and April 26, respectively. On April 29, the group performed at an assembly sponsored by PEOPLE, KAPATID, KAPISANAN, KPPK, Health League for the People, and Wednesday Fellowship. After the performance, the group went to a CACP meeting to serenade the consumers' group. Later, the cultural group performed before an assembly of doctors. On April 30, the group entertained the crowd attending a mass meeting at UP Manila with a cultural presentation.



FOR INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Support The Irish Hunger Strike

KAPATID, as an organization of relatives and friends of political prisoners in the Philippines, cannot but extend its sympathy and support to Bobby Sands and the three other hunger strikers at Maze Prison in Northern Ireland.

Sands and his fellow inmates resorted to a fast unto death to dramatize their demand to be treated as political prisoners by the British government, which presently has 11,000 troops stationed in Northern Ireland.

Though the British government charged and convicted the imprisoned Irish Republican Army (IRA) guerillas with criminal acts, no one can deny their cause is political in nature — to get the British out of Northern Ireland so it can unite with the free Irish Republic in the south. As such, Sands and his fellow inmates have all the right to be accorded the status of political prisoners.

As late as 1976, the British government recognized the imprisoned IRA guerillas as political prisoners. Since then, however, it had changed its position and now considers the guerillas as common criminals.

KAPATID believes that Britain's intransigence is uncalled for, and so it joins the peoples in other countries clamoring for a change in Britain's stand.

KAPATID, likewise, extends its deepest sympathy to the Irish people who have been fighting British occupation of their land for decades. Bobby Sands and his fellow hunger strikers may die, but they will live through the struggle of the Irish people.

Statement of Political Detainees

The deaths as a consequence of their indefinite hunger strikes of Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes, two of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) members held in the Maze Prison in Northern Ireland, ought to concern all peoples who value human life, freedom and justice.

Messrs. Sands and Hughes, both young men, laid down their lives for a peaceful struggle to regain recognition as political prisoners for some 400 IRA members in Maze Prison. They died because British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher adamantly refuses to grant their demand, on the single argument that the IRA militants were convicts and "terrorists".

Mrs. Thatcher may be right to assert that her government, or any government for that matter, must not sanction terrorism. Unfortunately, she regards the IRA cause through a very narrow viewpoint. She sees only the violent means taken up by the IRA prisoners for which they suffer the fate of convicted ordinary criminals. She conveniently chucks the historical roots of the Irish Catholics' protracted struggle to be freed from British rule — a noble cause that has been suppressed violently through several decades until driven to resort to extremist means.

We, political detainees in the Philippines, deplore this narrow and condescending regard for the Irish freedom fighters. We deplore the heartlessness with which the Thatcher government views the loss of human life through such pacific means as a hunger strike, coldly brushing off the entreaties of religious and human rights intercessors. We deplore the ruthless passing of the blame to Messrs. Sands and Hughes for their sufferings and deaths.

This heartlessness, this ruthless passing of the blame is as much a form of violence as what Mrs. Thatcher purports to stamp out.

Besides deploring this outrage, we are concerned that Margaret Thatcher's example may inspire emulation in our country. We already see the omen.

Since 1975, President Marcos has been denying the existence of political detainees/prisoners in the Philippines. This, when in 1974 he categorically said in a nationwide radio-television address that of more than 5,000 persons in custody as a consequence of martial law, over 1,000 were political detainees. Some time after Mr. Marcos made a turnabout on the matter, the martial law regime started using the term "terrorists" in reference to the New People's Army (NPA) and the Moro National Liberation Front/Bangsa Moro Army (BMA), whereas before members of the two organizations were called either "dissidents" or "rebels".

Today, any political oppositionist who just as much as warns of the outbreak of violence if the regime does not return to democratic ways is liable to be tainted as a "terrorist" by the regime.

In commonly branding as "terrorists" both the revolutionary fighters and the traditional political opponents, the Marcos regime seeks to justify the use of overwhelming violence against those who oppose it. As a consequence, military brutality is spreading. The labelling of "terrorists" on the liberation forces also aims to becloud the fundamentally political character of the armed struggle and reduce it to senseless bloodletting. But such attempts of the regime do not, and cannot, deceive the people.

Thus far, because we have relentlessly struggled to assert our rights and our status as political detainees, we have won treatment different from those of non-political detainees (who, because of their disunity and lack of political ideals, are easily subdued and maltreated gravely). But where political detainees are unable to struggle successfully because of insurmountable odds, such as those in outlying provincial areas, they suffer the drudgery of being treated like ordinary criminals, or even like animals.

However, those arrested for involvement in the liberation struggle in the late 1960s and early 1970s who were tried and convicted of ordinary — not political — crimes (e.g. murder and illegal possession of firearms) have been thrown into common prison cells with ordinary criminal convicts at the Muntinlupa national penitentiary. For them, the Bobby Sands et al struggle may as well be their own.

For us political detainees not yet tried in court or sentenced to prison terms, the prospects of suffering the fate of those now in Muntinlupa, stripped of political-prisoner status looms clearly.

It is just and proper, therefore, that we continue to assert our right to proper treatment and regain official recognition as political detainees. It is just and proper that we fight for political-prisoner status for those convicted of crimes basically stemming from their political belief or commitment.

It is just and proper, too, that we express our support for the IRA militants in the Maze Prison in Northern Ireland in their arduous struggle to regain recognition (withdrawn since 1976) as political prisoners or as prisoners of war.

Political Detainees in the Philippines
May 16, 1981

children's section

Roz is 7 years old. He is the son of Mario Galang who was released last April 1981 after 2 years and 10 months of political detention.

ZANA LUMAYA NA
ANG TATAY NG MGA
KALARO KO SA
MUNTINLUPA



ROZ

Justice for Sabilano

Prisoner or not, every individual belonging to a just and democratic society is entitled to his legal and human rights. However, these rights are oftentimes grossly violated by people in authority. It is deplorable that people behind bars, particularly the sentenced political prisoners, become victims of inhuman treatment. Their defenseless position makes them easy prey to their aggressors — their jailers.

There have been several grim occurrences inside prison cells which passed unnoticed by the public eye. One graphic example is the case of Alfonso Sabilano, a sentenced political prisoner who was charged and convicted as a common criminal and is now jailed at the National Penitentiary in Muntinlupa.

On the night of May 7, during headcount, Sabilano was taken aback when a guard named Castillo ridiculed him in front of his fellow inmates. The turnkey claimed that Sabilano made an omission the day before so he had to take the consequence.

Sabilano tried to reason out the alleged offense he committed and begged Castillo not to humiliate him in front of other inmates. The jailer was infuriated and brought Sabilano to the Officer-of-the-Day (OD) for "disciplinary action".

While at the OD office, Castillo and two other prison guards, De la Paz and Espeleta, ganged up on Sabilano and beat him savagely, resulting in severe physical injuries.

After being mauled, Sabilano was forced to sign a statement. When he refused to sign without consulting his lawyer first, the OD ordered the prisoner to be confined in a dreadful cell more commonly known in Muntinlupa as an "ice box". He was cramped in the "ice box", manacled with leg-irons weighing 18 kilos.

What right did the custodians have in doing this to Sabilano when this harsh punishment is not even sanctioned by the Bureau of Prisons?

Granted that Sabilano committed an infraction, he should have been given the privilege of a fair trial before being penalized, as provided in the rules and regulations of the Bureau of Prisons.

How many more inmates have met and will meet the same fate as Sabilano's? And how many more atrocious jailers would outrightly violate the rights of prisoners?

Muntinlupa Update

• A suspected member of the New People's Army (NPA) was scheduled to be executed on May 7, but the execution has been postponed.

This was the fifth time Alfredo Celestino, 38, underwent the whole process of preparation for execution. He was scheduled to be executed on September 23, 1980 but it was postponed to November 27 of the same year and then to January 26 and February 25 this year.

Celestino was arrested by a combined team of PC PAF-INP operatives in San Nicolás, Pangasinan in August 1975. He was made to undergo physical torture before he was put in a regular detention center.

His death conviction for murder, handed down by the Court of First Instance of Lingayen, Pangasinan, was upheld by the Supreme Court in March 1980.

His friends and relatives, including his two young children, request the commutation of his death sentence.

● The 12 remaining political detainees at the National Penitentiary requested prison authorities on May 3 that visits be allowed on Saturdays instead of Mondays.

The detainees cited the fact that visitors are busy on weekdays and have only weekends as free time to visit them.

● Two foreign guests of the National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA), Ms. Eileen Sudworth and Sr. Susan Smith, both of the Asia Partnership for Human Development, never expected they would be robbed inside prison. But it happened to one of them.

On April 28, while the two were visiting Dorm 9-C of the political detainees, Ms. Sudworth noticed the loss of her small brown leatherette handbag containing 5 gold rings, P250 in cash and \$26 in Malaysian currency.

After some investigation, a common crime prisoner and an accomplice to the robbery, Flor Almeffe, testified that one Juanito Custodio, another prisoner, was responsible for the "job".

Almeffe bumped Ms. Sudworth while she and Sr. Smith were still at the main compound after visiting three sentenced political prisoners. As Ms. Sudworth stooped down to pick up her ball pen, Custodio picked the leatherette handbag from Ms. Sudworth's shoulder bag.

Custodio admitted the crime at once when confronted with the testimony. He then produced the leatherette handbag, the 5 gold rings and the Malaysian dollars, but without the P250 in cash.

From the frying pan into the fire?

Harsh Conditions Confront Bicutan Detainees

Ten political detainees who were transferred to Bicutan on April 8 from the National Penitentiary in Muntinlupa and the Military Security Unit (MSU) in Fort Bonifacio are now facing more oppressive regulations than convicted prisoners.

Although housed in comparatively more comfortable living quarters in Bicutan, the detainees' visiting rights and other privileges have been drastically curtailed by camp authorities who claim to be following orders from "higher authorities".

The detainees transferred from Muntinlupa were Eduardo Olaguer, Othoniel Jimenez, Reynaldo Maclang, Macario Aceron, Danilo de Ocampo, Rene Marciano and Victoriano Amado (who was later released). Those transferred from solitary confinement in MSU were Jose Luneta, Satur Ocampo and Sixto Carlos, Jr.

Except for Carlos and Olaguer, the detainees and twelve others who remain in Muntinlupa awaiting transfer are all Bicutan "returnees". They were removed from Bicutan and transferred to Muntinlupa after the "lifting" of martial law on January 17.

THE "NEW" BICUTAN. The detainees in Bicutan, however, found themselves subjected to more stringent rules than the penal regulations they left behind in Muntinlupa.

They were padlocked inside their building, depriving them of sunning and outdoor exercise. Their visiting relatives were refused admission by jail guards. Wives, children and parents were sent walking back and forth in the scorching heat from the jail gate to brigade offices a kilometer away in futile efforts to gain entrance and find someone who knew the rules.

The new visiting rules make the Muntinlupa restrictions mild by comparison: a) Visits are limited to two hours, twice a week. In Muntinlupa, inmates are allowed 6-hour visits, five times a week. b) Visitors, including immediate relatives, are required to secure ODA/COMCAD passes. In the "old" Bicutan, this requirement was applied only to friends and non-immediate relatives. c) Visitors are restricted to the "visiting hall" (a hot, uncomfortable, ill-furnished hall where privacy is impossible). In the "old" Bicutan, and later also in Muntinlupa, visitors were allowed inside the detainees' quarters. d) Visits are suspended on military "red alert" days. This practice had long ago been stopped in Bicutan. It is terribly punishing and unfair to visitors since they have no way of knowing in advance when "red alert" would be declared and how long it would last. In Muntinlupa, which is under civilian authority, there is no such thing.

BACK TO SQUARE ONE. The hard-won conditions the political detainees enjoyed in Bicutan before the "lifting" of martial law -- "privileges" which should have been automatically extended as basic rights of political detainees but had to be won slowly and painfully through hunger strikes and other forms of militant struggle by the detainees, their relatives and sympathizers -- were now disregarded.

The harassed relatives wrote Deputy Minister Carmelo Barbero, ODA chief, asking for the discontinuance of padlocking the detainees and the restoration of visiting privileges: a) three-hour visits on any weekday, three times a week, and whole-day visits on weekends and holidays, even during "red alert", both for immediate relatives and friends; and b) conjugal visits by spouses twice a month. They also asked that the visiting relatives and friends be allowed to go inside the living quarters of the detainees, as this helps in fostering close family relationships.

The relatives wrote: "Seeing the new restrictions imposed on our detained loved ones..., we cannot help but be shocked why this situation must arise after the lifting of martial law. We had rather expected that with the lifting of martial law and the assiduous pursuance by President Marcos of political normalization, things would become better rather than worse for our detained relatives and for us, too."

OTHER PROBLEMS. As of this writing, the detainees are no longer padlocked inside their building during daytime but all other restrictions remain, even as new ones are being imposed. For example, visitors (including little children) are now required to fill out detailed information sheets similar to job application forms; friends and non-immediate family members securing visiting passes from COMCAD are told they have to get clearance from intelligence units, which could take weeks; and the number of visitors are limited to five persons per detainee, which means large families cannot visit together. The net result is harassment of relatives.

Still another problem is the food budget. Col. Remy Penson, PC-INP Jail Superintendent, says no implementing order has yet come increasing the daily budget from ₱4 to ₱6, which President Marcos ordered last December.

To aggravate matters, there is no clear delineation of authority among the Jail Superintendent and PC Brigade officers, resulting in conflicting orders. The absence of coordination between the brigade headquarters and the jailkeepers adds to the confusion.

The atmosphere of disorganization on the part of the military authorities vis-a-vis prison administration may either be the result of sheer inefficiency and ignorance or a conscious policy of harassment. Whichever may be the case, it does not speak well of the military establishment and the Marcos government, particularly in the light of "normalization".

If the treatment of political detainees is a reflection of the true spirit behind the government's pursuance of political normalization -- of which the lifting of martial law, the April 7 plebiscite and the coming June 16 election are supposed to be shining proofs -- can we escape the conclusion that in fact, not only the political detainees but the entire Filipino people are being delivered from the frying pan into the fire?

A PRISON SONG

HUMAKBANG KA

Dm-A7-Dm-A7

Dm A7 Dm
Humakbang kang dali-dali

A7 Dm
Nang tayo ay makarating

Gm Dm A7 Dm
Sa tutunguhing landas na may puso't damdamin

Dm A7 Dm
Kapit-bisig tayong umawit

A7 Dm
Maghanda sa layang sasapit

Gm Dm A7 D
Tinig ay pasiglahin, puso'y paalabin

A7 D A7 D-Em7
Anong tamis, anong lugod, anong ligaya

Em A7 D A7
Baya'y mahango sa pagdurusa

D A7 D-Em7
Tangi nating minimithing siya'y makita

Em A7 D
May kalayaa't masagana

A7 D
Kahit ang araw ay tabunan man ng ulap

A7 D
Sapilitan ding siya'y sisikat

A7 D D7
At ipakikilala ang kanyang liwanag

G A7 D
Ganda'y walang makatulad

(Repeat Stanza 4)

G A A7 D
Sapilitan ding sisikat

G A A7 D
Ganda'y walang makatulad

G D G D G D
Kanyang ganda'y walang makatulad

Bicutan Skits and Plays

In November 1980, political detainees in Bicutan went on a hunger strike to secure releases from the Marcos administration. The detainees' struggle was participated in and shared by relatives and friends, urban poor, religious and other sectors of Philippine society. Out of this confrontation arose a number of skits and plays that mirror the conditions of the political detainees and the broader masses of Philippine society as well.

The skits and plays that emerged from the hunger strike of 1980 form part of the new art and literature emerging in the Philippines today. These can best be described as mass art and literature because they serve the interests of the masses in the struggle for national liberation and democracy.

In the mass-cum-play Pagsambang Bicutan IX, for example, the condition and demands of various sectors of Philippine society are graphically presented in the gradual:

Manggagawa: Kaming mga manggagawa, sa pawis namin nagmumula ang yaman at ginhawa, subalit kami'y dukha: Malaon na kaming binabalan ng mga mapagsamantala. SOERA NA! Kailangan naming lumaya!

Translation:

Worker: We are the workers whose toil brings wealth and comfort yet we are poor; we have suffered enough from the hands of our exploiters. We must be freed!

The difficulties of prison life are exposed in Tibursyong Walang Takot, a skit about a student who joins a boycott and is jailed in Bicutan:

Koro: Tumakbo sa dram... naghanap ng tabo... naghanap... nakakita... ayun... kinuha ang tabo at tumakbo sa dram... nang biglang...

Blang!!!

Walang tubig... pumunta sa kubeta...
Walang laman ang dram...

Translation:

Choir: runs to the drum to scoop for water....but there is no water...
goes to the toilet...but there is nothing in the drum

Blang!!!

Nagpunta sa kabilang building at...

In another untitled skit, a brutal exposition of what has become a reality in the Philippines today, is presented: a torture scene.

Militar 2: Umamin ka na. Masyado mo lang pinahihirapan ang sarili mo. Subersibo ka, 'no? Sino ang huling kasama mo?

Translation:

Militar 2: Own up. You are making it hard for yourself. Aren't you a subversive. Who were you last seen with?

Kibaka: Hindi ho. Maawa na kayo. Wala akong nalalaman.

(Tatadyakan ng militar at pagsususunatukin....)

Translation:

Kibaka: Have pity. I am not a subversive. I don't know anything (cringes in fear).

(The military kicks and punches him.)

Dialogue that is explicit; characters the masses can easily identify with, props and costumes that are simple; these characterize the plays and skits which arose from the hunger strike of 1980. Because Truth is unadorned. As the narrator in one untitled play says: "Mga kaibigan..., Ibig lamang naming ipakita sa inyo ang katotohanan. Katotohanang lamang naming iilan lamang ang nakakabatid."

NATIONALIST POEM

GOLD

In the dark bowels of the earth,
Under a mountain of pressure
That gathers the heat of the sun,
Gold is made and imprisoned
But glitters with collected fervor.

The miner cannot reach the ore
Without making a deep-going shaft,
Without exerting painful labor,
Without a long-lasting lamp
Through darkness under pressure.

Fiery furnace and acid bowl
Remove dross and refine gold,
Then the fashioning tools turn
To make the crown of triumph
That is the lofty glory of the nation.

Jose Ma. Sison
12 April 1978

PAHATID-KAPATID is a monthly newsletter of the Association for the Release and Amnesty of Detainees in the Philippines (KAPATID), an organization of families and friends of political detainees. PAHATID is a Tagalog word which means "message".