TO SUFFER THY COMRADES

REvised Edition

HOW THE
REVOLUTION
DECIMATED
ITS OWN

"Bobby Garcia provides a riveting account of the Communist Party of the Philippines' "killing fields" and situates it within the context of a revolutionary movement that was nobly motivated but also tragically flawed."

—SHEILA CORONEL
Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism

Robert Francis B. Garcia
“Garcia's book, *To Suffer Thy Comrades*, details exactly what his comrades did to him and describes similar and often more gruesome experiences of other one-time revolutionaries.”


“Written by a guerrilla who nearly lost his life in the violent internal purges of the communist party, *To Suffer Thy Comrades* is an insider account of the Philippine killing fields.”

—Dipak Gyawali, *Nepali Times*, Nepal

“There is nothing humorous in it, except an occasional wry observation or two. It is certainly not something that will set your mind at rest. But read it anyway. Its virtue is to be found in that biblical observation, "The truth shall set you free."”

—Conrado de Quiros, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*

“If reading Robert Garcia’s bloodcurdling, first-person account in his book *To Suffer Thy Comrades* crushed my heart, listening to (purge) survivors and a repentant party official made my soul tremble and want to dig into that pain. How deep, how raw.”

—Ceres Doyo, "Human Face," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, on the commemoration of the CPP-NPA purge victims

“It was urgent that this phase of the Party’s history be told for the sake of the survivors and the victims’ families who are deeply embittered and disillusioned by it....their physical injuries are the least of their pain; the greatest is from not understanding how the Party whom they served with the best years of their lives turned in and decimated its own, comrade against comrade. These people badly needed justice and closure.”

—Karina Bolasco, “What Is A Publisher To Do?”


“Look back at Cambodia’s killing fields, your excellencies, and read Garcia’s sad account, and realize: It could have been us.”

—Raul Pangalangan, “Passion for Reason,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*

“This book was written not with ink but with blood, our blood. Its voice is not just Bobby's, it's ours. It's not just a collection of stories but a memorialisation of a dark period in the history of the Philippine Left so that it may not happen again.”

—Lan Mercado, Regional Director for Oxfam International in Asia and current Chair of PATH

“No one reads this book without suffering an injury of the soul. No one goes through this text without waking up in the middle of the night with visions of nuns torturing cadres and shallow graves swallowing up heroes. This is a truthful and hurtful account. It is a story that needs to be told, an account that must be read.”

—Alex Magno, *Manila Standard*, 22 February 2002
"This bestselling 2001 book, To Suffer Thy Comrades: How the Revolution Decimated its Own by Robert Francis ‘Bobby’ B. Garcia, is a landmark, or should we say bookmark, in the growing literature on the national-democratic revolution led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)-New People's Army (NPA)-National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) or even on armed rebellion in general and globally but especially of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist variety.

"It deserves this Anvil reprinting after 15 years, no doubt occasioned by a demand for more copies. It is a victim-survivor’s intense yet reflective personal account of one in a series of CPP-NPA purges of suspected deep penetration agents (DPAs) mostly mistakenly believed to have been deployed by military intelligence forces into the rebel ranks. These purges resulted in thousands of rebel lives suffering extrajudicial killings (EJK), torture and enforced disappearances—certainly among the most serious human rights violations—in rebel hands. Thus, the recurring phenomenon of a revolution occasionally devouring its own children, its own comrades.

"This is certainly an unfortunate occurrence or unnecessary cost for a process (revolution) that is supposed to bring social and personal transformation for the better, even if by way of armed struggle. To the extent that this struggle is an ‘effort to assert a better view of humanity...so that others [or the majority] may live justly and enjoy the blessings of more meaningful freedoms,’ the revolution must uphold, or shall we say reaffirm, human rights for all, including those of its enemies. This book is therefore a call on the revolution to rectify errors and reform itself along the universal values of human rights, as well as a call to the human rights community to shift its traditionally state violator-oriented paradigm of human rights to one that is more victim-centered regardless of the perpetrators, which should include abusive non-state armed groups.

"The further merit of Bobby’s book is his ‘making the word flesh,’ as it were, through the warm-body advocacy and practical work these past 15 years of his independent group of CPP-NPA purge victims and survivors, including their family members, called the Peace Advocates for Truth, Healing and Justice (PATH), highlighted now in Bobby’s new Introduction ("Reintroduction") to this reprinting. Both the revolutionary Left and the government’s armed forces are mistaken when they see or use, as the case may be, Bobby’s book and PATH’s work as or for counterinsurgency. That book and work are ultimately revolutionary in their seeking a better realization of humanity in the revolution and of ‘a regime of truth, justice, freedom, love, equality, and peace.’"

—Soliman M. Santos, Jr.  
Judge, RTC Branch 61  
Naga City, Camarines Sur  
Human Rights and International Humanitarian Lawyer,  
Peace Advocate, Researcher and Author
to suffer thy comrades
The author would like to thank the following organizations for supporting this project:

University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies, Psychosocial Trauma Department

Institute for Popular Democracy

Popular Education for People's Empowerment

Also by the author:


Popular Education for People's Empowerment [PEPE]
3 Road 1, Pag-Asa, 1105 Quezon City, Philippines
tel/fax: 453-0058; 928-8802
e-mail: poped@pepe.org
to suffer thy comrades
HOW THE REVOLUTION DECIMATED ITS OWN

robert francis b. garcia
“Alas,” said the mouse, “the whole world is growing smaller every day. At the beginning it was so big that I was afraid, I kept running and running, and I was glad when at last I saw walls far away to the right and left, but these long walls have narrowed so quickly that I am in the last chamber already, and there in the corner stands the trap that I must run into.” “You only need to change your direction,” said the cat, and ate it up.

Franz Kafka
CONTENTS

Introduction by Patricio N. Abinales X

Preface XV

Preface to the 2017 edition XVIII

Part One: The Zone of Unrest
  1. The Camp 4
  2. The Trap 14

Part Two: Methods in Madness
  1. A Society Ripe for Revolution 32
  2. A Movement Beckons 35
  3. A History of Internal Decimation 39
  4. The Imperatives of Torture 55
  5. Contingencies of Survival 61
  6. Trauma and Tribulation 70

Part Three: The Rot in the Root
  1. Seeds of Atrocity on Fertile Soil 91
  2. Perpetuating Atrocity 96
  3. The Movement's Infirmitiess and Dangerous Proclivities 102
  4. Some Steps Forward 109

Appendices
  1. Lessons from the Quezon-Bicol Border Infiltration 112
  2. Replies to Specific Questions 115
  3. Literature Study 123
  4. Schema of Factors Leading Up to the Violent Purge 135

Afterword 136

Bibliography 143

Acknowledgments 146

Notes 151

About the Author 153
INTRODUCTION

Revolutions and their Tragedies

Epochs of insurrection which are destined to punish great crimes are also epochs in which great crimes are perpetrated.
—Dominique Garat, French Minister of Justice, 1791-92 and Minister of Interior during the Reign of Terror

Struggle—always; violence—within limits; terror—never.
—Isaac Steinberg, first Deputy Minister of Justice under Lenin

The first time I read a draft of this manuscript I cried. Once again. For I have encountered a story similar to what Bobby Garcia details in this book before. Nearly a decade ago, a friend, a former cadre of the Communist Party of the Philippines in Mindanao, showed up at our house and asked me to have drinks. That afternoon, we talked about the past and tried to catch up on things and people. Then at one point, after a couple of beers, he broke down and started telling me about executions ordered by party bosses of comrades suspected of being deep penetration agents. He was shocked upon learning about it and when he voiced criticism to his political officers, he was ordered to go to the guerrilla zones “for consultations.” Upon receipt of the order, he decided there and then to end fifteen years of working underground as a loyal cadre of the Partido and went home.

To this very day, my friend still has difficulty adjusting to “civilian life,” traumatized by what he now calls a gross violation by the kilusan of the human rights of its members. He keeps asking himself whether those fifteen years of “simple living and hard struggle” were worth it. He often muses that it might have been better if he chose the apolitical life of a petit bourgeois living under martial law. Kampanyang Ahos (KAHOS)—the anti-deep penetration campaign waged by the CPP’s Mindanao Commission—has scarred him permanently.
Throughout the mid-1980s, the CPP leadership conducted a series of executions in Southern Tagalog, Mindanao, the Cordilleras, and even Manila and other urban centers in an attempt to ferret out and eliminate suspected military agents who had successfully infiltrated the movement. The purges came at the most unusual and ironic of times for they were launched when the political situation was clearly in favor of the revolution.

The Marcos dictatorship was in disarray, its leader dying from the ravages of *lupus erythematosus*. The “middle forces” and anti-Marcos elites had been galvanized by the Aquino assassination but remained hampered by incompetence, lack of experience, nebulous political programs and alternatives, and the regime’s success in keeping their ranks divided. Only the CPP and its satellite organizations appeared unified, committed, and clear about their line of march. Its ranks had grown tremendously after a series of “rectifications” and adjustments were made in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The party and its armed component, the New People’s Army, now had a nationwide presence—a feat never accomplished by past revolutionary movements. The National Democratic Front (NDF) had begun setting up many of its regional and territorial councils, and counterparts in the open political arena were paralleling this. The CPP thus entered the mid-1980s with extreme confidence; some of its cadres were even unofficially predicting victory for the revolution by the century's end.

Then the EDSA counter-revolution broke out, marginalizing the entire Left and exposing rifts inside the revolutionary movement that then caused bellicose ideological battles. The debates in turn led to factional rivalries that ultimately brought about the split of 1992. In that historic rupture, CPP chairman-for-life Jose Ma. Sison and his allies staged a successful internal coup to seize the leadership from their rivals. They proceeded to expel over 50 percent of the members of the central committee, ironically the very same people who had presided over the party’s expansion during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

If the CPP’s marginalization and break-up were the catalysts of crisis and general retreat, recovery was further hampered by the purges. In cadre terms alone, the Party suffered considerably: because of KAHOS, the Mindanao Commission lost over half of its cadre corps. Despite the fragile unity that Sison had re-established after 1992, and despite the resurrection of the Party’s presence after January 2001, the revolution has yet to fully
overcome the trauma of the purges. And one reason why I think it has had a hard time closing this chapter of its history is the Party's refusal to allow those who went through the ordeal—victims and perpetrators, implementers and supervisors, leaders who formulated the policies and middle-level cadres who conveyed these to the general membership—to tell their stories.

Sources inside the Party have confirmed that any effort to seek these stories needs the permission of “Utrecht” (i.e., Sison). So far, there is no evidence that the Great Leader has consented. Those who persist are told that it is time to move on. Besides, has Sison not already given the definitive exegesis of what happened in his 1992 document reaffirming the CPP's Maoist orthodoxies? In classic Stalinist fashion, the Party has set up a wall of silence while allowing only officially sanctioned stories to be told.

Surprisingly, those who were ousted in 1992 have also been silent about the tragedies. While the prominent “rejectionist” Paco Arguelles did write a reflective essay on the purges and others have declared themselves ready to face the music, no one has taken the next decisive step of presenting their stories for the public to read and hear. The explanation of one rejectionist that they would do so only if Sison and his “reaffirmist” colleagues likewise agreed to tell all and admit culpability, is a good tactical move designed to delegitimize their rivals (at the background, one hears “Plaza Miranda!” being shouted). But it does nothing to get the stories out, for revolutionary catharsis to occur, and for those involved—from perpetrators to victims, but most especially the victims—to experience closure.

However, not everyone has accepted this injunction or made this tactical qualification. Some, admittedly a small minority, have decided to tell all if only for their own personal peace of mind. One of them is Bobby Garcia.

In this extremely moving book, Bobby does just that. He tells his story along with others who agreed to share their experiences of the purges. The first part of To Suffer Thy Comrades focuses on the stories themselves. They are heart-rending accounts of the brutal treatment Bobby and his comrades received from the very people who, a few weeks or months earlier, were their most intimate associates. In graphic detail, Bobby narrates how he and others were “arrested,” tortured to admit to being military spies, and in some cases, summarily executed.
The book gives us a glimpse of an array of individual reactions as the wheels of “revolutionary justice” began to turn—the confusion and anger upon being accused, malevolence of investigators and guards, pleas of innocence, and even, before being bludgeoned, an appeal to comrades that they evaluate (maglagom) what happened. It tells of friends and couples forced to turn against each other, even to torture a loved one. But it likewise tells of a newfound sense of solidarity and companionship as victims try to deal with their condition one day at a time. They speak of attempts to get back one's bearings, be they revolutionary or personal, as part of the process of recovering one's humanity. They detail efforts, after being exonerated, to answer the question “Why did this happen to us in such an honorable organization as the Party?”

It is this question that is the concern of parts two and three of the book. Its starting point is the “paranoia” argument that Paco Arguelles and the scholar-activist Walden Bello posit in their writings about the purges. Bobby extends this by giving a psychological twist to the analyses, benefiting from the insights and guidance of his research coordinator, Dr. Elizabeth Marcelino, herself a former cadre of the movement. Readers may find this section less interesting because of its “academic” hue and psychologizing bent. I myself admit I had a hard time agreeing with Bobby, given my bias in favor of “bigger picture” analysis. Also, today's national democrats may find it deficient; in fact, one youthful national democrat warned me that the section reminded him of “anti-communist tracts (because of its crudity) in spite of the good intentions.”

But these—including my initial response—are all unfair impressions. On reflection, I find the next two sections as compelling as the stories that precede them. Given that the CPP and those it expelled have not provided any credible explanation for what happened, and given that Marxism, as theory and political guide—either prefers structural or class explanations of such tragic episodes or says little about them—it is perhaps inevitable that victims like Bobby try to seek alternative explanations. And what could be more appropriate than an explanation that explores internal inconsistencies in the ethos of revolutionary organizations or the failings of individual revolutionaries in given historical periods?

Conservatives who will read this book and proclaim it evidence of a dormant Stalin or Pol Pot lying hidden in the soul of every Marxist are
equally wrong. Their moralizing reflects not so much a superior position but an indolent attitude that reifies historical episodes and conflates them to suit a worldview celebrating the pre-eminence of a conservative order with its social hierarchies and reactionary politics.

At the very least those who fault the book for perceived ideological, analytical or political failings should accord Bobby and his comrades the right to explore alternative explanations. For behind the academese is an admirable attempt by a former CPP cadre to go beyond his anger and find an answer to violence perpetrated upon him by his comrades. It is an answer that he hopes will satisfy his intellectual curiosity, bring closure to a traumatic period of his life, and find him the inner peace that he and his comrades long for.

More importantly, this is a book whose author still believes in the need to overcome human misery through a process that empowers the poor, even as he criticizes his former organization for the viciousness it inflicted on its own people.

Patricio N. Abinales
Center for Southeast Asian Studies
Kyoto University
PREFACE

My final manuscript was finished before I discovered Primo Levi. He was the Italian chemist who joined the anti-fascist resistance during the Second World War; who was captured, detained, and deported to Auschwitz and who survived—feeling guilty and ashamed for it because others did not. Others he deemed better than he; others who deserved, he felt, to survive more than he. In a way, it can be said that he did not survive the Holocaust after all, for after writing his final book in 1987, *The Drowned and the Saved*, he killed himself. At pain, bitter, and dejected.

But not before submitting to the world his most profound thoughts on silence and credible truths, on memory and its failure, on human motivations and human denials. “The memory of a trauma suffered or inflicted is itself traumatic,” Levi wrote, “because recalling it is painful or at least disturbing: a person who was wounded tends to block out the memory so as not to renew the pain; the person who has inflicted the wound pushes the memory deep down, to be rid of it, to alleviate the feeling of guilt.”

More than anything else, this book is an attempt to exhume buried truths before memory failure becomes complete, before memories are obscured by new ones and obliterated by time, neglect, and denial. To make sense of an experience dreadful enough to test credulity. An experience akin to the many tales of human suffering we had been familiar with—from Gulag to Auschwitz to Nanking to the Cambodian mass graves. On a smaller scale perhaps, but jarring nevertheless in that it happened at all—well after Gulag and Cambodia and all.

After thousands of literature on cruelty and social suffering, new ones like this still come up, still with the same old theme. This is enough to make us doubt human capacity to learn from experience. It makes you wonder if books and studies have any use after all.

Nevertheless.

When I began work on this book, I wanted to satisfy a lot of people. Among them were dear colleagues from the academe who wanted to make it academic, of course. Before I did this study under the University of the Philippines, all I wanted was just to tell what really happened, a “true-to-life
story” so to speak. But academia wished to go beyond the tale. They wanted it to be analyzed, be made an object of inquiry. To make use of scholastic tools, in this case, psychological instruments. And so I did, finding the works of Judith Hermann, Philip Zimbardo, and Stanley Milgram handy. I perused literature, collected data, enumerated things, classified, compared, contrasted, expounded, concluded.

Tedious work, though I felt good when it was finally done. What happened next was that my erstwhile editor and other literati wanted me to just tell it like it is, for greater accessibility. They said we wanted to reach as broad a readership as possible, so make it simple, make it alive with more personal details. And do away with the academic gibberish. Stick with the tale. Thus, confused, I came full circle. A better geometric idiom is that I was back to square one.

I finally ended up doing both—a story and a study. Feeling not too confident about the outcome, I take comfort from the fact that I was not the first one to attempt such a mix. Victor Frankl, in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, began with a description of his own personal experiences in a concentration camp before discussing his logotherapy theory. Michel Foucault opened *Discipline and Punish* with the gruesome details of a specific torture case during the Inquisition. In *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn interspersed actual experience with introspection and analysis.

Truly, there are different ways of explaining reality. Had I been a painter, I would have just splashed my insights on canvas. Or if I had a camera at the time, I might have just shown you pictures. A mighty stunt to perform, of course, if one were in chains.

*To Suffer thy Comrades* speaks of atrocity yet again, one that happened closer home this time. Events described here happened more than a decade ago, though I imagine much of them still find resonance and relevance in these cataclysmic times. Hostage-taking by the Abu Sayyaf fundamentalists in Mindanao, Israel’s bombing of Palestine, the terror attacks against innocents at the World Trade Center, and the wholesale slaughter expected in retaliation—all apiece with the ethos of violence endemic in contemporary mindsets; all bearing upon fundamental questions of dignity and simple respect for human life.
Meanwhile, the peace talks between government and CPP-NPA will be coming around in full swing, and with or without this book, accounting of past events will inevitably arise. I believe it is important that the public be served a more holistic scrutiny of the movement’s internal purges, informed by context rather than just fed media snapshots and confusing sound bytes from opposing camps.

The book comes in three parts. The first tells the story. The second analyzes it. The third analyzes it further. Readers though may be unable to connect with some parts of the book. Some would naturally take to the stories, some would take interest in how I probed and belabored the phenomenon. Some may feel enlightened in the end, and some may end up completely disagreeing, even disbelieving.

While I received considerable support in seeing this project through, I may inadvertently generate critics and fuming detractors as well. There will be people who would not like what I wrote, those who would not like how I wrote it, and those who would hate the fact that I wrote it at all. It will be easier for me to engage with the first two for we call argue endlessly about form and substance. As to the latter, they would likely begrudge me for this and there is not much I can do about it. “It’s all in the past now,” they would say. “It’s been ‘assessed’ already.” “The ‘enemy’ will use it.” “Why can’t you let sleeping dogs lie?”

Tell that to those who continue to suffer.

I said earlier that I had to satisfy a lot of people as I worked on this book. All victims of the carnage, I realized, were the foremost consideration though I would not go so far as claim to speak on the others’ behalf. I just had to take an initial step, albeit a painful one. For in the final analysis, I realized all I really had to satisfy was myself. My own peace. My own coming to terms and my own closure.

It had never been easy. But nevertheless.

Bobby Garcia
24 September 2001
PREFACE TO THE 2017 EDITION

A Reintroduction

The launch of this book in December 2001 was a “non-event.” Only family and friends and close colleagues were present at the University of the Philippines (UP) Asian Center, where another human rights-related event was happening at the same time. There was no Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp or Viber then; hence, we had less readily available digital tools to “spread the word” about the book launch or, to use contemporary lingo, make it “viral.” The good thing is, there was less clutter; there were no so-called “trolls.” The subsequent discourse around the book was less instantaneous but more deliberate compared to the kinds of exchanges we see today over the Net.

It has been more than 15 years since To Suffer Thy Comrades: How the Revolution Decimated its Own first came out, and I believe it started something in motion. I could say that, at the very least, it signaled a new take on things. The notion of “human rights” and the identity of the “perpetrator” were put into sharp focus. It also occasioned the surfacing of more stories.

Weng’s, for one.

Jesse Marlowe “Weng” Libre lost his mother and father when he was five years old. Both dedicated cadres of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF), Jess and Nida Libre nurtured their only son within the revolutionary mould. They taught him the value of helping and finding solidarity with the poor. Weng remembers being brought along by his parents to rallies in the early 1980s, listening to activists play the guitar and sing political songs; watching them weave through checkpoints and sleep on pavements. The revolutionary couple also took him to the mountains on occasion. Their comrades helped carry the chubby little boy along the tough terrain. Weng was aware that those places were guerrilla zones because the people carried guns. Such a setting may somehow be unusual for a very young boy, but he had fond memories. After all he was always together with his loving parents, and that was all that mattered.
Sometime in 1985, Jess and Nida said goodbye to Weng, telling him they would be gone for only three days. He cried and refused to let go. That was the first time they were going somewhere without him. But they said it was important. The kid would hear none of it. He sprawled on the floor and threw a tantrum. His parents patiently explained that they had no choice, but assured him they would be back even before he knew it. So off they went despite his tearful protestations. Three days felt like an eternity! But wait he did.

Three days passed. No sign of his parents. The days turned to weeks, then to months, then to years. Jess and Nida were never heard from again.

Weng’s grandparents, who took care of him alternately with his aunt, promised that if he made good grades his parents would come back. He studied well, graduating salutatorian in grade school. He was the only student who marched on stage without his parents to pin his medals.

As Weng grew up he was made to believe that government security forces killed his parents. Thus in his formative years he developed a deep hatred for the military and the police and harbored grim thoughts of revenge. In college he became involved in radical political activities just like his parents, becoming an officer of a radical youth organization.

Weng became a young adult steeped in seething anger. He never stopped thinking of retribution. That was his state of mind when we found him.

It was early 2005 when the husband and wife team of Earl and Reca Parreño was able to locate Weng in Davao. Both members of the Peace Advocates for Truth, Healing, and Justice (PATH), the couple undertook this search as part of their initiative to reach out to the orphans of the revolutionary warfare. They searched for six months and finally got his mobile phone number. When they called him for the first time, Weng was distant, shifty, guarded, and suspicious. He refused to talk about his parents. Nevertheless he agreed to meet. Thus when Earl and Reca introduced themselves to Weng, they
shared their life backgrounds as fellow revolutionaries of his parents. They then told Weng about what they knew regarding Jess and Nida Libre's disappearance.

Jess and Nida were both victims of the CPP-NPA's anti-infiltration operation against its own members who were suspected of being deep penetration agents (DPAs), or military spies. They were executed at the end of the investigation, though their remains have yet to be found. Weng was incredulous. How could he not be? The idea was utterly ridiculous and out of this world, totally beyond his comprehension. It went against everything he thought he knew and everything he believed in.

Earl and Reca said they did not expect him to believe them at once—being strangers bearing a most incredible story—but he could do his own research, including a background check of their identities and track record. Better yet, "you can just join us in our search for your parents' remains."

Thus on November 2005 we set out on our mission, accompanied by the forensic team composed of Professor Jerome Bailen (forensic anthropologist), Dr. Ben Molino (medical forensics expert), Dr. Jun Rosete (forensic dentist), and Dr. Jojo Erfe (medico-legal) as well as some local guides. The Cebu mountain trek was long and arduous. The trail was steep and muddy, and many in our mission team were no longer in the proper physical shape to be climbing mountains. Nevertheless there was a palpable sense of challenge, thrill, and excitement. We felt we were in the cusp of a breakthrough.

Finally we reached the site. After some rest, we set up camp and prepared for the rigorous process of locating and exhuming the remains based on hopefully reliable information.

The digging commenced forthwith. After so many days and numerous trenches that bore no results, frustration began to set in. "Are we digging for nothing and wasting our time here?" Then at one point, an increasingly disappointed Weng stood at a certain spot nearby and prayed. He softly called out to his parents, "Ma and Pa, please help us find you. I want to bring you back to Mindanao. I won't leave this place without you. Let us go home." I do not want to sound mystical or anything but, the following day, we finally found the remains underneath the very spot where Weng stood and prayed and called out to his parents.
Buried six feet under were the remains of Jess and Nida Libre—facing each other, locked together in an embrace, hands and feet tied with duct tape. The skeletal remains bore telltale signs of severe torture before they were executed. The skull of Jess had received severe blows. The ribs of Nida showed puncture wounds. According to one witness, Nida's words when she was stabbed were: "Yung anak ko ha...yung anak ko." (My son...please don't forget my son.)

The forensics team was able to positively confirm the identity of the remains—using antemortem data, dental comparisons, and skeletal examination—leaving without a shadow of doubt that they indeed were Jess and Nida Libre. One can only imagine how Weng felt at that very moment: a glaring, graphic confirmation of the horrific fate that befell his parents. "I'm a grownup and a big man now, but I can't help but cry.”

But the moment also served as a kind of catharsis. Weng was finally able to carry his parents' remains back to their hometown in Iligan City and give them a proper burial.

Over the years we were able to exhume nine sets of remains.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recovered Remains</th>
<th>Date Exhumed</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jess Libre</td>
<td>Nov. 2005</td>
<td>Bgy. Pamutan, Cebu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nida Cabrera-Libre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben-Art Valmoria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herculano Laguna</td>
<td>Sept 2006</td>
<td>Bgy. Sapang Dako, Cebu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz Añasco-Laguna</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo Caguinto</td>
<td>June 2007</td>
<td>Dumalinao, Zambo del Sur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean Barrios</td>
<td>Oct 2007</td>
<td>Bgy. Fimagas, Katipunan, Zambo del Norte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cesar Villadores</td>
<td>Jan 2010</td>
<td>Cebu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Unknown)</td>
<td>June 2010</td>
<td>Dangcagan, Bukidnon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ben-Art Valmoria, a youth activist, was the third person we located during the Libre exhumation. Forensic examination revealed a broken hyoid bone in his throat, indicating a severe blow in the neck area.
The following year, in November 2006, we found another husband-and-wife couple's remains: Herculano and Luz Laguna, also in Cebu. Unlike the Libre couple who were buried together in a single gravesite, Herculano and Luz were buried a few meters apart. They were however dealt an exact same blow: a huge boulder was found on top of them, crushing their upper bodies. It was evident from the gruesome scene we uncovered at the site that the tormentors of the couple went to great lengths to inflict the most severe forms of torture and punishment imaginable. These were their very own comrades in the CPP-NPA-NDF, a revolutionary movement that has through the years created organizations that strongly fought for human rights.

We have exhumed nine bodies as PATH, but our capacities simply cannot be equal to the task. Thousands have been killed in all the CPP-NPA's anti-infiltration operations all over the country in the 80s. These individual victims accepted the revolutionary path offered by the movement, choosing to fight against oppressive social structures and transform society. Many of these unique individuals have been regarded as among “the best and the brightest” of their generation.

Like Kristo.

The case of Josemari Enriquez, nicknamed “Kristo” by his colleagues in the movement, is among the most difficult and baffling. He disappeared on July 27, 1988. His family received confirmation of his death from the hands of the Party in 1991, along with an apology. His remains, however, have yet to be found, despite the enormous effort put in by his family and friends. The location of his body remains a mystery, with promising leads going nowhere and the family being given the runaround.

Kristo was born in 1961. He studied engineering at the University of the Philippines. Marie, the eldest of his four younger sisters, narrates how their brilliant, talented panganay inspired them to excel. “Kristo, to me, means I have to step up. Always...in our younger years, he played, studied and debated with conviction.

...Maybe, it was because he knew he needed to make the most of his short life. No room for excuses, no place for mediocrity. He lived to excel academically and in whatever he believed in...
...he could produce a mean, expressive sketch or drawing in a few minutes... (Taking) up engineering as early as high school was second nature to him. Constantly creative, he could invent games and make mini-boats out of blankets so we could sing "We all live in a yellow submarine." He seemed to have the answer to all the questions. But he was mostly introspective.

On the 26th of July 2008 a tribute was organized for Kristo, celebrating his life and memorializing the twentieth year of his martyrdom. He was by most accounts the ideal revolutionary cadre.

"Comrades only have love and respect for Kristo," says the organization T'bak in its nomination of Enriquez for inclusion to the Bantayog ng mga Bayani. "His sisters and wife remember that he would give his remaining coins to comrades who haven't eaten, and would himself sacrifice not taking food. He was highly disciplined, making sure that he comes to meetings on time... He spoke to his sisters of humility and simplicity, and the sacrifice of just sleeping for four hours when we go fulltime... When he got married, Kristo cared for his child while preparing notes for his meeting and tried his best to support his family from the meager allowance he was receiving."

The loud and unrelenting call for those responsible for his untimely death, or even for witnesses to give information on where he was buried, remains unheeded to this day.

And then there is Marcel Roxas, the son of short story writer Clemente M. Roxas and brother of journalist and editor Psyche Roxas-Mendoza. Marcel was a B.S. Agriculture student at the University of the Philippines at Los Banos during the early years of martial law. He joined the Samahan ng Demokratikong Kabataan (SDK) and later became a trade union organizer with CENTRUM, a labor center in Mindanao. He was last seen in September 1985, when he left his home in Iligan City to attend a farmer's meeting. Marcel also suffered and died under the Kampanyang Ahos in Mindanao. His remains, believed to be buried somewhere in Ma-a, Davao City, have yet to be found as well.

There are many, many more: thousands spread across practically all regions in the country—areas where the CPP-NPA-NDF operated. Most of them have yet to be found; their families have yet to know their fate. Ironically,
those who are in the best position to help return the remains of the victims to their loved ones are the least inclined to do so, for reasons not hard to understand. They were directly involved in the killings, whether as direct perpetrators or as accomplices—co-interrogator, guard, lookout, or plain witness. They fear culpability. There are also those who remain faithful to the revolutionary cause. They see any action that calls attention to these excesses as inimical to the movement. The CPP-NPA-NDF itself considers the issue of the purges a “closed book” and sees no point in dwelling on it.

Legal actions have also been initiated. A number of us who were tortured and survived the “Oplan Missing Link” (OPML) purge operation in Southern Tagalog filed a case against our main perpetrators. Unfortunately, the provincial prosecutor in Laguna dismissed our case, arguing: “...these complainants voluntarily and willingly submitted themselves to the discipline of the Party being ideologues and partisans. Naturally, as part of that Party discipline and as consequence of their having freely, willingly and voluntarily submitted themselves to the jurisdiction of the party organs including the investigating committees, was their temporary restriction in movement and in their liberty during the course of such inquiry (sic). They were not under any legal obligation to submit themselves to such inquiry but since they opted to do so, it cannot be seriously argued that they were detained against their will during that time...”

It was a preposterous legal argument, not unlike blaming a victim of domestic violence for marrying a scoundrel. But such dismissive judgment from the prosecutor ensured that the case would not prosper. Subsequent appeals were not acted upon.

Meanwhile, a far bigger case was filed in the wake of the Philippine Army’s discovery of mass graves in Southern Leyte on 26 August 2006. Sixty-seven severely deteriorated skeletal remains believed to be victims of the anti-DPA Operation Venereal Diseases (VD) were recovered from Sitio Sapang Daco, Barangay Kaulishan, Inopacan, Leyte. After skeletal and DNA analysis, crime scene investigation, and collection of testimonies from relatives and witnesses, multiple murder charges were filed against 54 top CPP-NPA-NDF leaders. These included Jose Maria Sison, Benito Tiamzon, Wilma Tiamzon, Randall Echanis, Vicente Ladlad, Rafael Baylosis, and Saturnino Ocampo, among others.
The case progressed until it reached the Supreme Court, which found merit in it and ordered the pertinent court in Manila to proceed with the hearing with dispatch.

The legal process however was apparently overtaken by the country's political events. The new president, Rodrigo Duterte, elected in the May 2016 elections, professed affinity with the armed revolutionary left at the outset. He showed proof of goodwill by, among others, appointing radical leftists in his Cabinet, declaring a ceasefire immediately after his State of the Nation Address (Sona), and releasing key political prisoners—including the Tiamzon couple who occupy the top CPP leadership posts. Benito Tiamzon, the CPP Chairman, was even included in the team of peace negotiators from the CPP-NPA-NDF.

There has been significant progress in the peace talks between the two camps. As I write this, the second round of the peace talks has been completed in Oslo, Norway. Optimism is high, though there remain reservations from the NPA, which calls attention to what they claim to be continued military operations in the countryside.

Hence the prospects of peace, while promising, still remain uncertain.

I do hope that both parties would successfully reach a peace agreement and effectively end the nearly five-decade insurgency that has already cost hundreds of thousands of lives. The benefits would be enormous. The vast resources being devoted to finance the war against the communist insurgents can be channeled to more productive purposes.

It would also occasion a proper accounting of the excesses of the past by way of transitional justice or through what are called "truth commissions." There are many examples all over the world. At the end of South Africa's violent armed conflict against apartheid, they set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that investigated and documented atrocities committed by both the security forces and the African National Congress (ANC) rebels. Meanwhile, the Truth and Justice Commission that was set up after the successful peace settlement in El Salvador did the same. The difference in both models is that the South African one provided for amnesty among the perpetrators if they would give full disclosure. The El
Salvador model used the commission's findings for successful prosecution of the lead perpetrators.

In fact, one of the early advocacies of PATH was to create a truth commission-type of mechanism specific to the CPP purges. In a paper that argued for its creation and proposed modalities, Atty. Jaye dela Cruz made a compelling case, even as she acknowledged the difficulties.

...(The) issues and problems that make the creation of a truth commission for the purges a formidable challenge, are precisely what make it absolutely crucial.

When your perpetrators are still outside the pale of the system, high-ranking members in a still-thriving organization known for both its paranoia and its vindictiveness; when the issue of sponsorship is bogged down by political subtext; when truth-seeking is still vulnerable to the vagaries of an ongoing conflict and peace process; when the controversy is one of remote emotional proximity to the larger population even when what is at stake is human rights in its most fundamental sense—then you know that it would be difficult to contemplate a more marginalized class of victims.

Now there is an opportunity to push the issue back from the margins. It does not have to be a standalone process focused solely on the victims and survivors of the CPP-NPA-NDF's violations. The reopening of the communist purges can be part of a larger truth-seeking mechanism that covers both State- and non-State-perpetrated violations. By “larger” I mean viewing the issue through the universal lens of human rights and not through the narrower sense of politics. This is particularly relevant in contemporary times, when the very notion of human rights is taking a beating.

Whatever model is ultimately adopted, what is important is for the truth-seeking process to happen. This could facilitate healing and finally bring about the long-sought closure for everyone.
A memorial rock for the purge victims unveiled on May 10, 2003, at UP Diliman, Quezon City. The unveiling, part of the commemoration ceremony for the victims, was organized by the PATH and T'bak: A Generation of Filipino Activists.
Guests gather for the commemoration ceremony.

Officers of PATH and T'bak at the unveiling of the memorial rock during the commemoration ceremony. From left: Benjie Mateo, Ferdie Llanes, Joel Saracho, Jessica Soto, Bobby Garcia, and Risa Hontiveros.
PART ONE

the zone of unrest
The Camp

They used black cloth for my blindfold. They also used black string to tie my wrists. I'm pretty sure though that the hue was purely coincidental—they could have used pink ribbon for my eyes and a polka-dotted yellow strip for my wrists and it would have produced the same effect.

It was early evening then at the camp, November 1, 1988. We just had our light dinner and had finished washing our white metal plates on the river. It was exceptionally dark at the time. There was no moon, the weather was cool, and there was an occasional drizzle. The crickets were a familiar sound, and it did not particularly interest me that the shrill noise they made was the result of the rapid beating of their wings, nor that they do it for mating purposes. It may as well be their battlecry or the sound they emit in the heat of passion for all I care. I actually completely forgot that I used to be a zoology student and studied to be a doctor. The nearest-I got to medicine was watching a comrade’s gunshot wound sutured, and having a physician’s penmanship.

When, as a little boy, I was asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I did not say I wanted to be like Che Guevarra, though that was as good a revolutionary icon as can be. But there I was, somewhere between Laguna and Quezon, deep into the jungles of the Sierra Madre, whiling away my time in a guerrilla camp with men and women who strut around in full battle gear.

A few weeks earlier, we were in a boat—seven of us in a small, motorized fishing vessel borrowed from a fisherman, one of our local contacts. The sun was a bright blaze, the sea tranquil, though there was the occasional strong splash that sent cool sprays on our faces and were quite bad news for our newly oiled rifles. Saltwater rusts steel much faster, as any driver from Malabon would know. There were a few other boats plying the sea, their occupants often casting a curious glance in our direction.

But we were reasonably covered. When we boarded the boat, we concealed our weaponry, our fatigue uniforms and all other identifiable articles under a green canvas mantle. We tried to pass ourselves off as just another
bunch of locals on a routine trip—which was not an easy task with our unfamiliar faces. I particularly was a liability—every inch of my skin and every movement I made reeked of middle-class, urban upbringing. As we say, peti-burgis. I wasn’t the best company for a team of guerrillas disguised as local fishermen.

We had been traveling for more than a week already, all of it on foot until now. This boat ride had been a most welcome change, our abused legs and overburdened shoulders temporarily getting a break from the endless trek. We were getting nearer our destination, almost at the tail end of our traverse from the Bondoc Peninsula to the Sierra Madre. For a couple of hours, we idled by on our boat, enjoying the pleasant scenery and not minding the hot sun above. We’ve grown lax and complacent, the tarpaulin cover getting rumpled and some of the barrels of our Armalites jutting out. But we didn’t bother. Anyway we were almost there.

We then entered the mouth of a river. The thing is, we may be armed guerrillas, but more than anything else, we were basically overgrown kids. With our small banca swaying forth, the weather a pleasant blue, nice cool water beneath, a couple of birds cavorting above, green mountains standing tall and proud in the horizon—nothing can be more inviting. Just like anybody else, we wanted to have fun. Next thing we knew, one of us jumped into the water. And then another. I took my shirt off in an instant and made the loudest splash. We swam in the brackish waters for a few minutes, while the others just looked on and laughed.

Later on I found myself alone in the water. The two others already went back to the boat, while I thought, “So soon?” When I climbed up, the faces of my comrades were a curious sight to behold. They were pale and unmoving, as if they saw a platoon of enemy soldiers or something. When I looked around, I realized that they in fact did. Soldiers were on both banks of the river, staring at us. Some of them were bathing, some were doing their laundry, and some just standing there—their automatic rifles slung about, cradled, or otherwise just lying around. They all stopped what they were doing and looked.

Mammals, when faced with sudden danger, react in a variety of ways: attack viciously, scamper to safety, freeze, or play dead.
To be sure, we can no longer act like corpses. No dead man could do backstroke. It was completely fortunate, though, that our collective instincts went in one direction: Be still. I did not feel anything at all. I was completely numb. None of us made a move. We just sat there and looked back. The soldiers, meanwhile, also did not react. They were probably completely puzzled by this brash, unusual intrusion into their territory. And so we plodded on while maintaining our gaze. All of it seemed in slow motion—the seconds ticking by were like an eternity. Turning at a river bend, now beyond the view of the still uncomprehending soldiers, came a sudden collective jolt. We grabbed all our stuff in delirious frenzy, jumped out of the boat, and ran—ran as if there was no tomorrow. We left behind unimportant things as shoes and shirts and clambered up the hills, to the security of foliage where hours later we sat wondering how we survived at all. Damn close call.

I had no inkling, though, that I would survive a far worse episode at the camp we were then trying to reach.

There was nothing unusual in the camp we came to, at least none on the surface level. It was located in the heart of what we called a sona, a guerrilla zone, in one of the clearings along the slopes of the country's longest mountain range. The trees were sparse in that area, with a clear river nearby where we later took our baths and washed our clothes.

What was different in this camp, though, was that it was unusually large and bursting with activity. Some major event was proceeding, and the way the people were comporting themselves, as if it was a matter of life and death.

It was.

There were more people here than in a normal guerrilla camp. A "normal guerrilla camp," meanwhile, would be difficult to describe. It can be a small space amidst that vast mountainous expanse providing immediate comfort to, say, three exhausted members of a mobile squad; or a large one that endures the aggravation of an entire company. (A company formation has three to five platoons; a platoon has three to five squads; a squad has five to seven foot soldiers—that is, if I correctly remember my college Citizen...
Military Training. We, did not particularly care for “military precision” as guerrillas anyway).

A guerrilla camp is a temporary shelter. We stay there for no more than a few days at a time, then move on to another, and then another. We had No Permanent Address indeed. On occasion, we would visit houses deep in the mountains and ask to sleep over for a night or two. But more frequently, we would just pick a nice clear spot, hack away at the weeds and tangles, and there set up our sleeping quarters. Serious environmentalists would not exactly be thrilled with how we built them. Each of us looked for two young trees roughly the diameter of a human calf and standing very straight. These would form the sides of the frame of our stretcher. We would chop down the tree at the base, then lop off the upper tip, the branches, and the leaves. The poles would have to be roughly six feet long or more apiece. Next we would take out from our backpacks two large rice sacks stitched together lengthwise, both ends of which are open, and insert the two poles. Now, to be able to support a human body, both ends of the contraption must have a brace. Without it, the person who tries to lie on it will be engulfed by the sack cloth as the poles close in and this would not make for a good night’s sleep (imagine what a sandwiched hotdog feels). We would thus prepare two wooden pegs, each of them about two feet long, and make a V-cut on both ends of the pegs. We would then wedge these pegs between the poles at either tip, with the V-cuts biting the poles snugly to form a rectangular frame, stretching the rice sacks taut at the edges with a little sag in the middle. The stretcher was now ready for mounting.

The frame was either tied on well-positioned trees or fixed over makeshift wooden leg posts about three feet above the ground. With our “beds” done, we would then work on our respective awnings, or overhead covers for protection against sun and rain. For this, we would each have our own sheets of taffeta (the material umbrellas are usually made of) installed atop our stretchers with strings tied through sewed-in ears to nearby branches. Our rifles would be positioned right beside us or just overhead—within grabbing distance. That was how our camps looked like, with many variations. Some, for example, preferred hammocks to stretchers. Or in really trying times, we would just pick coconut stalks with leaves intact, throw them on the ground, sleep on uneven soil, and hope that ants or termites have not set up their quarters ahead of us.
This large camp basically had the same contraptions, only more of them. Also, many of the sleeping quarters were not individually located and constructed, but clustered in fives or sixes or more, with the stretcher constructed in rows. I’m not sure, but there must have been more than a hundred persons here, with continuous comings and goings. Some of them I knew well, some not too well, some not at all. A number of them would see for but one fleeting instant, and then no more. Ever.

Another unusual thing about this camp was the screams we would hear in the dead of night, and I tell you they were not mating calls.

I shared quarters with five others: Ka Ranel, Ka Anong, Ka Mel, Ka Ton, and Ka Ranny. That afternoon, just before dinner, we were on a light banter.

“Why did you leave the University?” I asked Ka Ranel, as I wiped the magazines of ammunition of my M-14 with a piece of cloth dabbed in oil.

“I can never find it in my heart to continue studying there—not after what they did to me,” he sighed. Ranel was sullen and seemed to be in deep thought.

“Why? What did they do to you?”

“They kicked me out.”

“Oh, I see. Can’t really blame them though. Err, is that a direct quote from Gary Lising?”

“No, I rephrased.”

“You seem to read more of Lising than Lenin.”

“Yes, he’s funnier.”

“Indeed—and easier to read.”

Ka Ranel was my buddy at the camp, and we got along fine. We always found ways to put the other down. Once he told me how, the first time he saw me at the camp during a hand-to-hand combat exercise, he could not...
place me. His first impression was that I was of urban middle class origins, but was wondering why I had such poor, baduy taste, referring to the pair of gray gabardine pants I wore during training.

Only much later was I was able to explain to him—he had to ask—that those pants were not originally mine. Another comrade gave them to me when I ran out of clothes. In the mountains, our personal belongings did not last very long. The pair of high-cut Adidas I brought with me endured the boondocks for no more than a month. Mud and soil invariably lodged themselves into the openings and slowly wormed their way up into my unsuspecting toes. My three pairs of pants ended up in shreds with the constant brushing of cogon grass and other vicious plant life during our incessant treks. More durable materials are available nowadays to be sure, but not in those times.

But the greater absurdity was why Ka Ranel was interested with such trifles at a time when we should be more concerned with the reliability of our guns; and in a place when security of concealment, rather than the aesthetics of one’s fashion, was of greatest consideration. Of course there were oddities in life far greater than this, and flukes of character in others that are far more malignant and deadly, right in this very camp.

Ka Ranel was also of typical urban stock. He was of medium build and medium height, and had that typical intellectual curiosity and occasional bitter disposition. Like most petit bourgeois cadres, he started out as a conscientious student activist who decided that schooling wasn’t worth his while and so responded to a “higher calling.” He wasn’t particularly cut out to be a mobile guerrilla fighter, though: On the first day of our special military skills training, he sprained his ankle and had to sit out the remaining part. He just watched and grumbled as the rest of us trainees jogged each morning, climbed monkey bars, ducked explosives, did target shooting, simulated water-borne operations, and traversed jungle trails with hidden booby traps and other nasty surprises (such as the carabao shit that hit me in the face pointblank).

The worst that could be said of Ka Ranel was that he sometimes took life too seriously. He could be overly sentimental at times, often brooding, and given to irrational behavior—such as joining the armed revolutionary resistance in the countryside when he was already comfortably ensconced in the pristine environs of Melbourne.
“Look who’s talking,” he could just as easily have told me. I could have gone on to graduate and become the most absent-minded doctor this country had ever seen. How many pairs of scissors could I have left in some patients’ unlucky stomach? And that old joke might actually ring true for me—my forgetfulness borders on the legendary. I was once lost in the woods for more than four hours, completely losing my way but fortunately not my nerve. With rifle in hand and ammo pouch hanging proudly on my long and lean structure, I approached community folk and asked where the heck my comrades were (with as much dignity as I can muster, though looking utterly comrades stupid nevertheless).

What I lacked in spatial orientation, I tried to make up for with physical vigor, analytical rigor, and a preposterous sense of humor that tended to rub off on people like Ka Ranel and the others in my group. It also often rubbed people the wrong way, particularly those who thought of revolution as a serious business that allowed little space for inanities.

And then there were Ka Mel and Ka Anong, who were physically of the same mold: both were small, bony men. Ka Mel was the academic type. He talked concepts and was given to verbal profundities, like saying, “The center is a myth,” while affecting a ponderous look. Ka Anong was plain and simple, a street-smart, smart-alecky type who amused us with his wisecracks and crass acts. Once when we were bathing in the river, he announced to everyone around that we were performing in a live show, and gyrated accordingly.

And lastly there was Ka Vina. She was small and tan, with a round, pretty face and an easy smile that belied a toughness within. Her speaking voice had a natural hoarseness in the mold of Demi Moore’s or Lolita Carbon’s. She had already been in the hills for a few years, having left university life for pretty much the same motivation that we all had. Commitment. Struggle. The Revolution. The people. The works.

The five of us made up the ad hoc education committee haphazardly assembled to teach revolutionary courses for the guerrillas in the camp. We were tasked to draw up lesson plans and give lectures about American imperialism, the history of our movement, and other serious stuff. We tried to deliver our assignment with appropriate graveness, with as little fun as we could, which wasn’t altogether difficult at the time despite our
inherent predilection for the ridiculous and the mundane. The atmosphere at the camp lent easily to grimness; in fact, to dead seriousness.

Ranel, Mel, Anong, and I were in the same sleeping quarters, while Vina stayed with the other female officers in the camp. Sharing quarters with us were two other locally groomed guerrillas. One of them was Ka Ton-Ton, whose personality needed no infecting with humor. His facetious nature was not only infectious, it was pathogenic. He heckled left and right, made a mockery of physical attributes, always had a ready repartee, and he cared not if he was getting on your nerves. He would inject a nasty remark or two, which for him seemed funny (sometimes they actually were) at the most unlikely moment. Once, he asked Ka Rez, a comrade who was conspicuously stooped to rest for a while and put down his backpack. Ka Rez, of course, wasn't carrying his backpack then.

Comrades generally did not mind Ton-Ton's vicious barbs, much as he also did not mind being ribbed. For one, he had no ribs—or else they were completely concealed by the layers of flab he maintained around the middle. Ka Ton-Ton must have been blessed with an inordinately slow rate of metabolism that, despite all our physical exertions, he remained plump. He therefore had to grin and bear all references he got on a regular basis with the stouter members of the animal kingdom.

Ka Ton-Ton's buddy was Ka Ranny, who was quite tall and strongly built. He was quiet for the most part, making him an ideal partner to the relentless Ton-Ton. Ka Ranny also held a formidable record as an armed city partisan in the Southern Tagalog region before he became a regular guerrilla in the countryside.

Ranny and Ton-Ton both came from the local area—both being farmers before they became full-time guerrillas. They were not part of our education unit, but since the six of us were under one roof, so to speak, they joined our idle banter and tense conversations about the situation in the camp.

"Ka Roman had his eye on me again," lamented Ka Ton-Ton.

"Why?" we asked.

"I don't know, but he seems to pick on me more and more severely each day."
“Actually it’s not only you, Ka Ton-Ton, but our whole group. You notice how he asks the most unusual of questions in the most accusatory tone? I don’t like the way he treats us here—as though we have something to hide,” said Ka Anong.

“True, but I seem to get the lion’s share of his attention. Yesterday he ordered me to dig a latrine, to have something better to do, he said, than sit around on my fat ass all day.”

Does anyone know any developments inside?” Ka Ranel asked the group.

“The Task Force said a few more from Laguna were arrested this morning,” said Ka Mel.

“I saw Ka James a few minutes ago by chance,” I said. “His hands were grotesquely swollen. They seemed to have grown twice.”

“I wonder why,” said Ka Anong. “Do they beat up the prisoners?”

“Only a few—the bull-headed ones. That’s what the Task Force said. And only mildly,” Ka Mel replied.

“Who else do you think would turn up next as a DPA?” asked Ka Ranny.

“We wouldn’t really know,” answered Ka Ranel. “With the way things are going, it can be anyone.”

The group went silent. One of us remembered a joke and the topic was readily changed.

Ka Roman was a large man. He was not muscular, but he was corpulent and quite tall and seemed to grow bigger with the authority he commanded. His round, bulging eyes gave off a cold, penetrating stare that created an impression that he was habitually sizing people up. He had a deep, powerful voice which he put to good use as a commander. He could easily bark orders, which he was used to being obeyed with dispatch.

Ka Roman was big and fat, but unlike Ka Ton-Ton, not one dared call him a pig. Not to his face at least.
Not that Ka Roman lacked a lighter side. He also traded barbs. Still, his overall bearing reminded us that we were leading a military life. One that commanded discipline and accomplishment of missions with precision and without question.

The worst part of it all was, at the camp, he was eternally on our backs. His hawk eyes were transfixed on our every move—discerning, deciphering, scrutinizing, giving meaning, attributing intent—even when there were none. Especially when there were none.

It was Ka Roman who harassed and harangued me in the middle of a mountaintop lecture. Mid-sentence, he would suddenly interrupt and throw the most unrelated and unexpected question:

"Ka Fidel, when was our movement founded?"

"Err...March 1968, Ka Roman."

"In what place?"

"Nueva Ecija."

"What barrio?"

"Ah...sorry, Ka Roman, I wasn't able to read on that. As you know, I'm presently lecturing about the Low Intensity Conflict, not our movement's history."

With my "ignorance" exposed again, he would triumphantly supply the answers himself, with the air of one who knew it all, one who was aware of all possible machinations, one who could not be deceived by upstarts, underlings, and suspicious characters like us. With that achieved, he would then let me continue my lecture as he hung on to every single word I uttered—waiting that something might somehow slip, that some kind of disinformation might be spewing forth in the subtlest of ways.

As were most revolutionaries at the time, we were monitored. What made us particularly vulnerable though was that we were right smack in the middle of it all. For weeks we endured that state. Ka Roman, the vigilant official, made sure we got the message: that he was on to us, and our
counter-revolutionary schemes. Once, when it was our team that cooked the rice, he said it smelt of kerosene.

"Trying to poison us, eh?" he seemed to insinuate.

"Then don't eat the damned thing!" we wanted to say.

He punished our group, our pampered crop of unsoiled bourgeois-turned-revolutionaries by giving us the toughest of assignments. He made us carry sack-loads of rice uphill—up through a more than 60-degree slope with lush vegetation. At that point, we genuinely believed that the best thing we had ever experienced in life was a five-minute rest.

I'm sure not one of us ever imagined that "simple living, hard struggle" would be this hard. But then again, we had not seen the worst of it.

2. The Trap

It had been almost five months since I set foot on the mountains of the Bondoc Peninsula. Before this, I was just another dyed-in-the-wool urban activist who had seen one too many rallies and recruited countless faces for the revolution. Needless to say, I was a romantic. I imagined doing much more than shout slogans and convince laborers and lawyers to do the same. I wanted to be a fighter. I wanted some real action. I imagined the rough and tumble life of a guerrilla who was fiercest in front of the enemy but most timid in the face of the masa. One who had to leave his dearly beloved sweetheart for a nobler calling—a heart-wrenching scene I played over and over again in my head—which only happened in my amorous daydreams, never in real life. But as to the rough and tumble part, I got more than I imagined.

In the hills, I had my share of clashes and enemy encounters. During those times, I realized that being an NPA guerrilla was no easy business. The staccato of gunfire and the sight of wounds could drain you of your bearings, and no amount of it could make you immune to that most basic of mammalian instincts—fear. To be sure, my Catholic boys' school
upbringing did not prepare me for it. But I was much younger then—all of 21 summers—oozing with revolutionary zeal, unquestioning allegiance to the cause, and a dose of quixotic fantasies about what it took to be a people’s warrior.

“Simple life, ardent struggle” was the credo, and I lived it to the brim—first because it was noble, second because I had no choice (I was in the hills already, and one couldn’t really get around that). A more appropriate way of putting it is that I chose that life, and that life consisted of walking days on end in mud barefooted, thriving on ferns and ubod of fleshy plants, watching no movies, walking no malls, and strumming a battered old guitar if not cradling my M-14.

It was war out there, though we believed in our hearts that it was a just and humane war we were waging. There was no dearth of heroes, martyrs, and noble people we would readily die for. The blaze of our guns starkly contrasted with the timidity and gentleness of our comrades. There were the occasional gruff personalities, but generally the kasamas were shy as mushrooms. We laughed often, joked with the masa and planted their camote alongside their children. Except for a few who were uneasy with our grenades and rifles, the people generally valued our presence and relished our company. They protected us and supplied our guerrilla units with a steady stream of able-bodied, enthusiastic recruits.

We felt invincible then, and were strengthened by the thought that our revolution’s victory was just around the corner. A whole new world was slowly being created in front of us, with our own hands shaping it.

We were a very mobile band. We never stayed for more than one week in a single area. It was only at the last camp I described earlier that we spent considerable time. That was around October of 1988.

It would be difficult for me to illustrate this camp beyond giving details about our sleeping quarters and the presence of trees and rivers. I am not the spatial-visual type. I often spend my time thinking about things rather than observing my surroundings. Which also explains my tendency to be lost.
The more important reason, though, is that there were certain parts of the camp we were not allowed to enter. We were made to confine ourselves in the periphery, and we thus conducted our business there at the fringes.

Of course we were all aware at this time that an operation was going on. Though we did not know the details, we knew that comrades were being arrested and detained because they were suspected to be “deep penetration agents,” or DPAs. This awareness gave us total unease. While we convinced ourselves that everything was on the right track and under control, we felt deep inside that something was amiss. Who knew what will happen next?

The atmosphere inside the camp was nothing short of surreal. It was so thick with paranoia: You can smell it in the air, feel it on your skin, choke on it. It was a bizarre feeling, a toxic mix of distrust, anxiety, creeping terror, and unexplained dread that made us feel we were in a nether region, in another plane of existence.

That ambience was laced with sights and sounds. Screams at night, a glimpse of a muddied man in chains, snippets of information.

“Ka Gemi lost his patience with a stubborn DPA,” shared Ka Sonny. “But the arrogant jerk learned his lesson when Ka Gemi punched him in the nose.” Ka Sonny was beaming with macho pride at his boss.

The fairy tale scenario we seemed to be living in brought us into eternal suspended animation. Every day we anticipated that something drastic would ultimately befall us. The suspense ended on a cold, moonless November night. We had just finished our dinner and were now into small talk. We were then into yet another petty conversation about college life. Next thing, we were summoned individually by the higher-ups. We were told not to bother bringing our firearms, as it would just be a brief meeting. Strange.

I was summoned to the kitchen, where some officers and guards were waiting. They engaged me in a light, insignificant discussion on topics they did not seem to be interested in. Everyone seemed to be ill at ease. I tried to make light of the situation by—of all things—borrowing Ka Mela’s rifle. She reluctantly handed her M-16 to me, which I casually checked, asking if she was having trouble with its safety latch, its chamber, its magazine catch—those things. None. No problem at all. So I returned it, running out
of conversation topics about her Armalite, and noticing that the persons around me were getting even tenser.

Some more idle talk, and finally they stopped beating around the bush. Ka Roman, in his most sober tone, said: “Ka Fidel, we need to ask you a few questions. These are just minor points that you need to clarify with us. Just procedural matters. But as SOP, we need to tie you up and blindfold you. Please give me your hands.”

Thus came the black string and the stupid black cloth.

Stunned as I was, I tried to keep my composure, confident that whatever these questionable matters were could easily be cleared up. I knew I had nothing to hide. I had a good track record behind me, some of them were, shall we say, heroic in their own little way. I guided some comrades to safety during the Mendiola massacre, had even saved a colleague from drowning a few months back. And that colleague happened to be the girlfriend of Ka Mela’s brother, now a member of the Task Force. I frantically tried to convince myself that everything would turn out okay, even as I tried in vain to control my trembling.

I told myself I had nothing to worry about. Many of the young members of the “Task Force” created for this “cleansing operation” were my schoolmates, my long-time comrades and my closest barkadas. We had been together in this movement for so long, they knew every little speck of my life. We had spent many hours in endless meetings, months plotting and brainstorming, days playing around and joking about, years doing revolutionary work. I knew they would vouch for my integrity.

Next thing I knew, these dearest friends of mine were cursing me in unison! “@#*!! Fidel, you traitor! You fooled us for so long!” While this barrage of revulsion was being hurled at my face, my blindfold was removed and I found myself beside Ka Ranel, also tied up and looking as bewildered as I was. He was able to somehow find his voice and said: “We’re innocent.” One thickly-built close-in guard responded by slapping him full force.

Later I was brought face to face with the interrogators, who employed their own crude version of “good cop-bad cop.” “When did you become an infiltrator?” they asked. When I said I was not one, they slapped me so many times I felt my face thicken.
The one who played the “good cop”—a former nun with such gentle character and pleasant disposition you'd think she still was one, patiently explained to me that I should no longer hold up on information as we being “spies,” were not considered “prisoners-of-war,” or POWs. This was supposed to be a provision in the Protocol II of the Geneva Convention—that we were not entitled to enjoy POW status and privileges. (At this point, an irony struck me more painfully than severe beating. I remembered the fair treatment we accorded five military POWs under our custody not too long ago.)

When I tried to reason with her, the former nun did away with all the niceties. She cursed and screamed at me while hitting my face with her sisterly hands.

Others joined in the fray. I wasn't able to keep track of the hours of interrogation, but eventually I was brought, eyes glazed, body limp, to the “detention center.” It was a stunning revelation: a virtual hornet’s nest of comrades, many of my friends, many gifted cadres, and brilliant fighters with such impeccable track records behind them—all chained up in their individual sleeping stretchers made of sewed rice sacks and wooden poles.

I was shoved into a vacant half-stretcher. The lower half was missing so it could only support my upper body, leaving my waist and legs dangling in mid-air. It wasn’t too hard to maintain this position, though, for my feet were chained at the base of the stretcher. Before I was left alone to enjoy this posture, one jail guard took a fancy for me.

I had known this guard for quite some time and had always regarded him as a friendly, gentle giant. He stood about 5’11” and probably weighed 200 pounds, with fists half as big as my face. On that sad night, his mighty fist was aimed at my jaw as he asked the question of the hour: “Are you a DPA?” I refused to answer, but he pressed on. After considering the choices of the moment, I decided to play tough and said, “No.”

I realized right there and then that the consequences of some of our decisions in life could come in a flash. This one landed smack in my face, hurling me flat into the half-stretcher. The chains on my feet prevented my fall into the muddy ground. But I wouldn't be able to open my mouth for more than half an inch many days after that, with my jaws making a painful clicking sound whenever I would force rice into it through my
thumb and forefinger. Not much of a problem anyway—the food was just a thumbful, if at all.

The first night of my detention was sheer torture—with and without the human inflictor. Lying on my half-stretcher, feet chained in mid-air, arms chained together. Wind and rain lashed at my violently shivering body all throughout the night. I was dripping wet, my mind numbed with the cold and the incomprehensibility of the moment.

The detainee beside me, Ka Carlo, had always been thin. When I saw him that night, he was virtually skin and bones, like an Auschwitz prisoner. His eyebrows were shaved off, eyes bulging, and a general air of weariness and surrender hung around him—as did all the rest. His wife Ka Ningning was also tied up in the same camp, nursing an infected wound on her foot, which discharged a one-inch thick clot of pus later.

I tried to collect my thoughts and dared a conversation with the living skeleton beside me in the dead of night. "Ka Carlo, what's happening here?"

"Invent your story," he whispered wearily, as if he'd said this a thousand times. "Think up your rank, your salary, your missions as a DPA, anything to escape the torture. You don't have any choice. They wouldn't stop till you do."

I pondered this for the whole night. I wasn't able to sleep, wishing this was just a nightmare. But I tried to muster what was left of my senses and tried to come up with a story line that would ironically implicate me and at the same time save my skin.

Morning came, and so did a teaspoonful of cooked rice with a hint of salt for breakfast—this would be the standard fare for the interminable days to come. We did not spare a single speck. The hunger was indescribable. We got delirious at the mere thought of food.

Ka Ranel surfaced that morning and, with two guards flanking his side, addressed us all: "I'm Lieutenant So-and-So. Good morning," at which I sensed the collective feeling that loomed around me—another soul down the drain.

The hours ticked by slowly, and I was already forming a wishful thought that I would not be called for a second session after all. I could barely talk
anyway with the state of my jaw. But summoned nevertheless I was, that very same afternoon. Complete fear and resignation clouded over me while the two guards dragged me to the interrogation area.

"Are you going to talk now?" asked Ka Dex, a burly member of the TF. I hung my head and remained silent.

"What!" he snarled, while the club in his hand made a drum of my shin. The thumps were administered in such increasing tempo, speed, and force that made my heart beat faster while the pain grew sharper.

I was not crying then, but I tried to feign a sudden emotional outburst, protesting my innocence one more time, pointing out how much I had sacrificed for the movement. Ka Dex’s club, however, only found a new sweet spot—my skull. I was hit repeatedly on the head. Thus I decided to narrate the story I crafted the night before. I said I was a master sergeant.

"Hah, Master Sardinas ka pala. You were going to confess after all, why did you have to hurt yourself? How much is your salary?"

"A thousand."

"The truth!"

"Two thousand."

"I said the truth, or else..."

"I am telling you the truth, Ka Dex, believe me!" Thus I learned the art of bargaining in an interrogation area. I realized that they would take in any kind of story and information you told them, however incredible they were, so long as these would further your guilt.

And as far as incredible went, mine truly was. Tasks: to organize and recruit other DPAs from within; to kill the Commanding Officer; to rise in the ranks by doing good cadre work. Accomplishments: organized a wacky group of male comrades in my university, named Cutie Pie Boys, which eternally made fun and churned out jokes and wisecracks—the real purpose of which was to foment disunity by serving as a clique of do-no-good guys; successfully recruited a number of DPAs.
By then, I seriously considered pointing my finger at those “friends” of mine who were jeering at me, to give them a dose of their own bitter medicine. But I decided against it, hoping in vain to put a stop to this endless cycle of violence and lunacy. I peddled instead the names of people whom I was sure they could not possibly reach, by virtue of distance.

When the horrifying session finally ended, I was sent back to the detention camp, there to spend interminable days getting on with *simpleng pamumuhay, puspusang pakikibaka* in its supreme form. Simple living, hard struggle—our revolutionary credo. We just went through the really “hard” part. Next came the “simple”—lying, sitting, lying again, playing with our chains, food-dreaming, awaiting the next eventful day, lying, urinating, gorging on thirty-five grains of salted rice, lying, wanting to die, lying, wanting to live, listening to our sobs, discussing our fate, and lying. One could not live any simpler than that.

We also shared notes, exchanged experiences, compared magnitudes of agony. Other comrades had to endure a lot more—some were hung by their wrists in trees for days, with no food or water, with sun and rain mercilessly whipping their mortal bodies. There was Ka Ningning’s abscess, and Ka James’s swollen hands. A few lost some of the motor functions of the hands: one comrade needed assistance whenever he had to pee. Others were beaten up for days. And I haven’t really described the creative ones.

And then there was the *pen-pen*, a cheaper version of Russian roulette. We were all doomed to perish right from the start, it was just a matter of time. Candidates for elimination were those who wouldn’t talk, and those who had already “talked enough.”

*Pen-pen* candidates were called by batches of five or more. The children’s song began, and all tensed up at “…haw, haw de carabao, ba-tu-ten. Taya!” It was followed by a crack, and then a swoosh. Let us just leave the onomatopoeias at that, suffice to say that I’m not referring to the crack of dawn and the swoosh of a bird in flight.

All of us, in fact, were candidates for elimination, although we did not know it at the time. All we had was an inkling. Other than that, we only had hope—which was actually used against us. One interrogation tactic the Task Force employed was the peddling of hope. They said we would not
be killed, but “rehabilitated” if we would cooperate. Many of us bought the idea of “rehab” because there was little else to cling to. It offered a certain chance to go on living, a glimmer of hope.

Not all of us bought the “rehab” hoax though. Some detainees used to be Party officials who were privy to the anti-infiltration campaign before they became victims themselves. One of these was Ka Igan, notorious for his viciousness in interrogation and torture sessions. Many detainees applauded his arrest. He went through the same procedures he brought upon the earlier victims. And he knew fully well that all who were presumably taken for rehab were actually laid to waste. He knew that all of us would be, sooner or later. It was already preordained.

Another glimmer of hope came in the form of wishing that the military would run over the camp. Not that we wished they would rescue us, only that somehow some of us would survive a firefight. That should they decide to spray us with ammo in desperation, some would be missed. Some could live and tell the tale. Desperate.

Escape was also an option, though a poor one. We were all too weak then: the lack of food and mobility, the shock, the chains, the depression, the hesitation to hurt “misguided comrades”—all this conspired to make us human jellies.

We all continued wishing it was just a bad dream. Each morning I woke up, I would raise my arms to check if the chains were still there. For a full month, those chains greeted me good morning, like lonely sentries with nothing else to do. The others endured this far longer: two, three, four months. Having those faithful chains on their wrists and on their feet, the same brand of padlock, the same wound (just a little bigger each day) caused by the constant rubbing of steel on skin. Each morning, the deepest levels of sorrow one could possibly reach.

These moments of drag were time and again broken by the arrival of the dreaded rubber boots. When the one who wore them, Ka Lito, came around, that meant someone was being summoned. The Grim Reaper. Let me stay in the drag, the endless idleness, the company of chains, even the delirious hunger, just don’t let the black rubber boots bring me back to interrogation. I can only take so much terror.
There they were. *Shlop, shlop*, wet mud still clinging on the soles and sides, they turned and came towards my direction. Enervate—that’s what those boots do. Sap whatever strength lingers in you. Suck you dry and cold. And, why do the blasted things always come in black?

Ka Lito stopped in front of my piece of space, and said I was being sent for. *Of course, why else plant your bleeding boots on my soil? We are still more than 50 people here alive, surely you had to pick on me this time?* He unchained my feet from my two-foot-wide abode, and he had to really drag me. Why should I help the Grim Reaper? Let him sweat out his task. Too bad, Ka Lito had always been a nice chap.

Ka Kenneth was already waiting in the interrogation area, affecting a “fuming mad” deportment.

“You’re living out your fantasies again! This is no longer a James Bond movie or a Robert Ludlum novel, you scheming bastard! @$%”

What’s this eel talking about?

It was one of the occasions when Ka Kenneth allowed himself to “lose his cool.” The rest of the time he adopted a calm and deliberate mien, as if he was trying mighty hard to abide the aggravation around him in a sober, cerebral yet commanding manner. He sometimes ordered the execution of some captives with an understated slash sign across the neck. Cool Kenneth. Delusional son of a bitch. Excuse me.

I know I am an intellectual, *ahem*, and should act like one. I should look at the big picture; direct my disgust against entire systems and structures, against leadership bodies, against frameworks—not on mortal men who were only cogs in a machine. But that would be for later. Now it is the time for indulgence. It is harder to imagine punching a systemic ill than a hateful man in the nose. Before deconstructing grand narratives, I just wanted to deconstruct someone’s face. Allow me.

Ka Kenneth could make for a really fascinating character sketch. He was probably an incarnate of something, or else an aberrant creation of an abnormal confluence of factors. He was a witch’s brew gone wrong. And his type still surfaces every now and then. These people usually get ahead
not because they are the wisest but because they are the boldest and most ruthless. In a weak organization, or one going through some deep shit, these people occasionally get the upper hand.

Kenneth was reed thin, with skinny arms, fleshless chest, and a stooped posture. His color was pallid. He had a small, craggy face with thick eyebrows. His eyelashes suffered from a stubborn dandruff problem, which made it often flaky. He conducted himself as a sort of brooding guru, who wisecracked once in a while in a sarcastic, condescending manner. He thought of himself as a theoretician, though he was more fascinated with the military part of the struggle. I don't think he has ever fired a gun though, even if he had ordered the execution of scores of comrades.

He used to be our P.O., or political officer, at the university—the type who lurked in the shadows wearing oversized sunglasses while we, his minions, led rallies in the open with blow horn at hand. He wasn't from our school, but he was deployed by his own higher organ to be our political guide. He occasionally met our collective in our secret "UG house," enthralling us with revolutionary concepts and exploits of comrades in the countryside. This was a long time ago.

Ka Kenneth was a middle-level cadre on the rise. He thought he got his big break when he was asked to head the Task Force formed supposedly to cleanse the movement of DPAs. For a time, he wielded great power.

We met a couple of times again in the sona. Then, they were just chance encounters, but this one was a peculiar moment. There I was in my chains, and he in front with an M-16 rifle that looked too big for his frame.

As I looked at the glowering countenance at the place of interrogation, I wondered why I ever let myself be beguiled by this man. That was all I could do then—wonder—especially when he punctuated his tirade by loading a bullet in his rifle's chamber, clicking the latch to "unsafe," and pointing it on my head with his finger on the trigger. All this he did in swift, dramatic succession, a la action star. (Who's fantasizing now?)

What got him so upset this time? I asked myself. Things got a little clearer when Ka Mel was brought to face me. His hair was cut in a funny way. Seems they needed some sense of humor if they had to torture people. Ka Mel was ordered to speak. "Admit it, Ka Fidel," he started. "You talked to
me when we were in the river. You told me that we should say the same things, along with Ka Ranel and Ka Ton-ton."

So that's what it was all about. They discovered my scheme. Poor Ka Mel, he wasn't cooperating yet, and he had to squeal on me. All I did was communicate secretly with them, my "batchmates," when I saw the chance at the river. What I wanted was simply for us to synchronize our stories. I felt we needed to arrive at a consistent storyline, lest they continue to hurt us. Obviously, our stories must jibe in order to be "credible." Ka Mel had yet to get on the groove (though soon he did).

Meantime, Ka Kenneth did not seem to be interested with my explanation. None was forthcoming anyway. I just stared blankly. He seemed already satisfied to have shown his bravura performance and handed me back to the mercy of Ka Dex. The latter brought me to my feet and said: "Ka Fidel, you're finished. Run!" He roughly shoved me down a rocky slope, loaded his Armalite with a bullet and aimed it on my back. I closed my eyes and waited.

The black rubber boots were down there waiting, ready to collect another terrorized lifeform back to the endless idle.

Some of us immediately noticed the changes. There were subtle clues, among them the food. Ka Ranel and I no longer had to count grains of rice to equally divide. We had almost a cup of rice each, and a generous serving of salt. Later we even had some fish.

I did not know that something was afoot, preoccupied as I was with solving the inconsistencies in my testimony. I sort of developed a dislike for interrogation, thus, the next time I was called they'd have to be completely satisfied.

Some major event was under way. We were being called one at a time, to face a new group of people. When I was summoned, I knew the people I was brought to, but did not know what they were up to. I knew they were Central Committee members, and I thought that session was still part of the interrogation, so I spewed out this new version of my DPA narrative. Ka Tonio and Ka Carlie, CC members, were befuddled—they expected a retraction, and they got this long-winded testimony instead.
Later on I was apprised of the new situation. The Central Committee of the Party, my co-detainees said, were reviewing the whole process. Why only now? They were here all along; they knew all along that this was happening. They were ultimately responsible for it. I wanted complete assurance that it wasn't a trick, that there really wouldn't be any more interrogations or torture. After some misgivings, I was finally convinced. When I was called for the second time, I told the reviewers what really happened. I began with the damned black blindfold...

Some say freedom is relative. One man's freedom is another man's bondage. We may have been in chains, but we weren't shackled by delusions. Our movements were restrained, but we weren't tied up by myth. Our tormentors thought they were free, but they were blinded by falsehood; their senses were deadened by the mirage of power they clutched and made god. And then they were stunned by their own shadows; paralyzed by fear of the very monsters and demons they fashioned in their heads that stood to devour them at the end of it all.

I'll stop waxing lyrical for now. Too many metaphors can be confusing.

Our eventual freedom was truly memorable. The process of unchaining was both literal and symbolic, and not without drama and fanfare. We weren't released all at once, but one or two at a time. Ka Ranel and myself were freed at the same time—around December of 1988. “Free at last!” we declared, grinning from ear to ear. We were guided through some underbrush, after it we came upon a clearing where the rest of the former captives were waiting. We were greeted with applause. Tearful hugs, handshakes, up-heres, singing, merry-making, even role-playing. Rage and retribution will have to wait. The moment was a celebration.

The sudden flow of food in our system was not particularly pleasant. Deprived of nutrients for too long, our throats burned with the emission of acidic pulp not fully digested by our stomachs. Our bellies bloated, our tissues swelled with fluid retention (manas), our minds a blur. These were temporary inconveniences though as time and exercise took care of them.

A few days later, we hiked back to our homes. Our respective families were happy to see us, though most of them did not really know what we just went through. Most of us went back to “normal” life, whatever that meant.
Ka Mel went back to the university, got married, had kids, worked. At the onset he wanted to explain to me why he did what he did (that of revealing my James Bond trick). He wanted to apologize, say that he meant no offense. I said none was taken. We all frantically used whatever survival tools we had at our disposal, and those tools conflicted sometimes. All he needed to do was buy me a couple of beers and both of us would drown our sorrows. Done.

Ka Ton-Ton and Ka Ranny went back to their guerrilla units and continued the struggle. Last I heard of Ka Ton-Ton, he was hit by a bullet in an enemy encounter, and commanded his comrades to go on without him. The enemy soldiers caught up with him, and he was burned. I'm sure you saw that as your preeminent joke, batchmate—the idea of being roasted. I could imagine your hearty laugh. I offer you a toast (pun intended), and may your kind increase.

All I know of Ka Vina is that she has a family now. We talked on the phone once, and she still had the husky voice. Ka Anong, I never heard of since, but I'm sure he's as smartass as ever. Some gifts one never loses in life, even with inconveniences like purges and stuff.

Ka Ranel went back to Australia to nurse his wounds, finish his studies, and find a girlfriend. Last I saw him in Melbourne, he was still busy with the third.

Ka Dex suffered from a lot of illnesses after. He was bedridden for the most part. Stories have it they were mostly psychosomatic.

Ka Roman was humbled. Comrades said he was completely remorseful, and volunteered never to hold any key position in the sona, even as he still wanted to stay.

I heard that Ka Kenneth now wears a religious cloak. A friend said he is as fervid now with his pious averments as he was as an upstart revolutionary. He never acknowledged the mistakes, and has stood by his acts until now. I don't know, he must have found some intersection between his past atrocity and his present refuge. Some flaws one never loses in life, even with fatal errors like purges and stuff.
Some petty members of the Task Force I still see once in a while. We never talk about it.

Members of the Central Committee became busy reaffirming or rejecting one or the other, along with their followers. Some concerns people never really notice, or choose to ignore, even if vivid shadows loom in front and stare them in the face. Even if those are shadows that cry for justice, human rights, restitution, accountability—concepts they so readily mouth in different circumstances.

As for me, I went back to the hills for some time, to see if that life was still for me. I decided that it no longer was (kind of stupid that way, don't you think?). I went on to finish another course, worked in an NGO and taught in college. Married, had kids, settled (a misnomer, for friends would say I'm anything but).

Somewhere along the way, I remembered one little thing. At the time of the ordeal, I told myself that should I ever come out of it alive, I should write.

So there.
Guests light candles for the purge victims in the UP Diliman commemoration ceremony.

Commemoration of purge victims on May 10, 2003 at St. George Hill, Baguio City, also organized by the PATH and T'bak.
PATH officers' meeting with Cebu Mayor Tommy Osmeña (third from left) prior to the exhumation of purge victims Jess and Nida Libre in November 2005.

The start of exhumation work.
PART TWO

methods in madness
1. A Society Ripe for Revolution

How does one become a revolutionary? During Marcos's time it was fairly easy. State oppression and injustice were so blatant and vulgar it seemed the most natural thing to do. Peasants, workers, and the youth, particularly students, flocked to it as bees to flowers.

Many revolutionaries often joked that Ferdinand Marcos was the number one recruiter of the New People's Army, an accurate assessment, after all. The economy, for one, went into freefall after the assassination of Nino Aquino.

The excessively corrupt and tyrannical rule of Marcos eventually gave way to a massive outpouring of people power that ultimately deposed him. Now referred to as the EDSA uprising, it brought to power a new government led by Corazon Aquino.

The revolutionary group of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army (CPP-NPA) was arguably the strongest and most organized leftist opposition group against Marcos. It had both a strong legal front and an armed component. This homegrown revolutionary organization went through astronomic growth under Marcos and continued to thrive under Aquino.

It remained a strong force under the presidency of Fidel Ramos, though permanently fragmented as a result of internal debates on strategy, tactics, and ideology. The

Many leaders and members of the CPP-NPA have either formed other political blocs or left political struggle for good. From the original Reaffirm-Reject (RA-RJ) divide, the ranks were divided further. The RA suffered another faction called KPD. The RJ, mean-while, is divided into the Siglaya and Sanlakas (whose leader, Popoy Lagman, was gunned down by unknown assailants on 6 February 2001). I do not intend to belabor this labyrinth though. It's the subject of an entirely new study. What I'm dwelling on is a period in the movement's history when it was still a monolithic force.
movement thrived under the short-lived rule of President Joseph Estrada, and seems poised to be at the center of political action under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. At this time, what remained of the CPP-NPA leadership and rank and file is a much reduced set from its original force prior to the cleavage in the early 90s.

The CPP was founded by Jose Maria Sison, an English professor from the University of the Philippines who decided to break off from the old Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas. He successfully recruited a number of student intellectuals that formed the core of the party. In 1968, Sison had a historic meeting with Bernabe Buscayno, or Kumander Dante, who was then the leader of a ragtag group of armed rebels. That led to the alliance between the CPP and the NPA.

Sison and Dante hit it off immediately and they talked throughout much of the night about the possibility of merging their forces... When they finally ended the meeting the next morning, they had reached an agreement in principle. Sison and young Maoists had found their army. Dante had his party. (Jones 1989)

According to military estimates, the NPA rebels grew to a peak strength of 20,000, a result of vigorous organizing and recruitment in the countryside. They also recruited workers from the cities. Many recruits from the youth-student sector later decided to join the "highest form of struggle" by moving on to the countryside.

Revolutionary work in the guerrilla zone, or sona, was done either through the SYP (sandatahang yunit propaganda or armed propaganda unit) or through guerrilla fighting units. The SYPs roamed the countryside in small squads, organizing house-to-house. The guerrillas had stronger formations—platoon, company, or even battalion-size units in some areas—that launched raids and ambuscades against the military, in the process accumulating arms.

While the intellectual cadres also participate in military operations, their primary work was education and ideological development to provide theoretical rigor within the framework of armed resistance. This distinction occasionally fomented resentment, with the locals harboring certain levels of insecurity from their schooled urban counterparts.
But the locals got to make up for this with their brawn, which made for funny moments too. The petit bourgeois cadres were expectedly the clumsier ones in hillside mobility. They got their share of good-natured ribbing with their frequent slips and slides.

Life in the countryside was fraught with endless danger and hardships. There was incessant walking, mud, wounds, even snakes. And there was the constant threat of an encounter—which was frequent enough to provide a regular jolt to the rebels' already frayed nerves.

Revolutionary life in the cities took on a different color. They hid not in vegetation but in concrete, behind a facade of legal institutions. Workers launched their strikes, students mobilized the academic community, and political officers, lurking deeper, plotted all these in clandestine meeting spots.

And then there were the so-called Sparrows, armed city partisans of the NPA well known for their lightning-speed operations that include direct executions of abusive policemen and *agaw-armsas* (weapons capture).

The early '80s saw the CPP-NPA grow to unprecedented levels, with Mindanao taking the lead both in terms of NPA expansion and urban impact. The rest of the country was also at high levels of agitation, especially after the Aquino assassination. The normally laid-back middle class was prodded into action, thus the CPP-NPA found a formidable, albeit wary, ally.

When Marcos called for snap presidential elections in February 1986, the CPP-NPA declared it a sham, a mere ploy to preserve Marcos's precarious grip on power. It called for a boycott. The rest of the opposition saw through the sham too, but nevertheless saw in it the opportunity to depose Marcos.

With history rapidly unfolding at EDSA, the CPP-NPA felt the full weight of its isolation from the broad opposition as a result of its boycott stance. But this debacle would prove to be just one of the major errors the CPP-NPA would continue to commit.

The ascendancy of Aquino in 1986 signaled a new era, one that the broad progressive movement was unable to completely make sense of. As I put it in a previous book, “the certainty of struggle gave way to the confusion of reality.”
...the post-EDSA confusion was heartfelt and deep, especially for those of us who had risked life and limb to bring down the 'US-Marcos dictatorship.' We found ourselves facing a strange fruit, one plainly different from what we expected after two decades of toil. Marcos was down, Cory Aquino and her people were up, and we, the Left, didn't quite know what hit us.

Under the Aquino administration, elite democracy was reinstalled, the citizens enjoyed what was called a "democratic space," political prisoners were released, and various other reforms were instituted. But the armed left concluded that no fundamental changes had taken place and continued to wage its struggle.

The rest is history. After a failed peace negotiation and the massacre of peasants at Mendiola, the CPP-NPA went back to the battlefield and government declared total war against insurgency.

2. A Movement Beckons

Revolutionaries are not extraordinary beings. Most of us lived relatively normal lives in our youth, grew up in typical Filipino community settings, were molded by the constitutive environment of family, school, peers, church, media, and tradition.

Many of us joined the movement in our youthful prime. We made the crucial choice in our teens—that point in our lives when we were barely forming our identities, that point when we were passing a volatile phase characterized by confusion, aimless search, and typical existential angst. It was that stage when our restless beings were looking for new things to believe in, new groups to connect with and belong, new outlets for our youthful rebellion.

The movement offered all that, and more. It provided a singular cause to espouse and a perfectly logical belief system that was also romantic enough to evoke levels of passion and commitment from individuals burning for such kind of stimulation. It was also able to provide the essential human connection and sense of belonging—a circle of friends or barkada, a
community, even a virtual family. People in the movement were comrades with whom one shared something out of the ordinary, but they were also normal beings one talked with, ate with, shared risks with, fought battles with, laughed about, and on many occasions wept for.

The movement captured our imagination. It offered a new and exciting life—a new and exciting world—and gave a whole new meaning to the word *adventure*. It has profoundly altered our conception of how life should be lived and transformed the lifestyle we grew up with. It might as well have been a cult, if not for the comprehensiveness of its doctrine and for the sheer number of people it was able to bring to its fold.

Inside the movement, we led lives of utter simplicity and strove to divest ourselves of ways deemed bourgeois—sometimes to comic proportions. A young activist, in his zeal to get used to the simple life, chose to sleep on the floor even when there was a bed available. Another refused to wear his Levi’s pants and scoffed at comrades who did. A few regarded baths as an occasional luxury.

Apart from embracing a life of proletarian simplicity, it also often meant completely turning one’s back on things one held dear, not only material possessions but also religious beliefs and sometimes even one’s intimate relations. Most significantly, it entailed defying one’s family and earning their ire.

Within the movement, we practiced collectivism, putting the highest premium on consensus and giving little space for internal dissent. Collectivism also meant subsuming the interests of the individual to the greater good, and making sacrifices.

Engaging the state as enemy was our enterprise, with the ultimate goal of overthrowing it. As such, we got used to working with complete caution and secrecy and, learned the sophisticated ways of measured conversation. All this, we believed, we did for our beloved country and the people.

Such transformation, though, did not happen overnight. It went through a gradual process that usually began with one getting exposed to progressive or radical ideas—through a pamphlet, a book, an activist classmate, a symposium, a rally, or any combination thereof. Then one got actively involved in the activities of a progressive group—an academic
organization, a fraternity, a cultural club, or the student council. In no time, the zealous individual got recruited to a national democratic underground mass organization—usually the KM (*Kabataang Makabayan* or Nationalist Youth). He then got to perform a multitude of revolutionary tasks until his proven dedication warranted recruitment to the Party. One eventually decided to do full-time work, either continuing in the urban area or deciding to pursue more daring tasks in the countryside. The latter, in both formal and informal underground discourse, has often been considered the supreme form of struggle.

Many became cadres—those who fully commit themselves to the cause and devote all their energies towards realizing it. Being a cadre entailed being able to do a host of revolutionary tasks. For the white area cadres, these tasks included:

1. organizing campaigns
2. arousing the public on key economic and political issues
3. mobilizing them through mass demonstrations
4. recruiting them to mass organizations and, later, underground collectives.

White area cadres got to do a lot more besides, including such audacious operations as *operasyon pinta* (painting public walls with revolutionary slogans), *operasyon dikit* (pasting revolutionary posters), staging lightning rallies, and so forth.

Red area cadres, meanwhile, could either be armed community organizers or fighting guerrillas. The former roamed the countryside organizing the rural folk towards building a solid guerrilla base. The latter were organized in military formations—in squads, platoons, companies, and even battalions. These fighting units engaged the military in protracted guerrilla warfare.

Whether based in urban or rural areas, and whatever role they got to play, being a cadre of the CPP entailed real risk. There was always the danger of being arrested, tortured, or killed by the enemy. In many instances, this danger was realized. In 1984 alone, according to a study of the Protestant Association for World Mission, 137 persons disappeared, 445 were killed, and 3,038 were held as political prisoners.
As such, the conscious and deliberate act of joining the revolution entails a supreme form of self-sacrifice. It means being ready to take on the superior military might of the state. Despite all this, many heeded revolution's beckoning, lending it a mass character.

How has the Philippine revolutionary movement been able to harness such a horde of dedicated players? There are many reasons for this, foremost of which, of course, is the plain existence of iniquities in society. The argument for revolution is a powerful force mainly because it is valid: Society needs to be changed. And those who chose to embrace this path believed it is imperative to be part of such transformative process. It was all a social question—the simple, modern logic of revolution.

The social question began to play a revolutionary role only when, in the modern age and not before, men began to doubt that poverty is inherent in the human condition, to doubt that the distinction between the few, who through circumstances or strength or fraud had succeeded in liberating themselves from the shackles of poverty, and the labouring poverty-stricken multitude was inevitable and eternal. (Arendt 1964)

Apart from this, there is probably something instinctive in the human propensity to rebel. This itch often comes about in one's youth, when the inevitable crises of identity and the consequent repulsion of any form of authority reach their peak. When the highest recognized authority in society is exposed as oppressive and corrupt, that rebellion finds its cause and its outlet.

Revolutionary teachings are awash with references to the youth-student sector as a "balon ng kadre" (wellspring of cadres). This proved to be true in many ways. Though there was a mass of recruits coming from the so-called basic sectors (labor and peasant), the Philippine revolutionary movement has been substantially populated and chiefly led by former student leaders and intellectuals. The incendiary mix of youthful rebellion, intellectual curiosity, and the reality of social evil made revolution such an attractive proposition. The CPP-NPA-NDF, the strongest, most organized, and best-articulated revolutionary narrative, provided that.

It had its own life and engineered its own evolution. It generated strength and gained a very real capacity to explode an iniquitous society in its face—had it not imploded first.
3. A History of Internal Decimation

The first officially recognized case of the CPP-NPA's string of internal purges happened in 1982, within the guerrilla zones of the Southern Tagalog region. This operation was brought about by what the Party perceived as a massive and orchestrated enemy strategy of infiltrating revolutionary ranks.

According to a Party document released by the Melito Glor Command in 1983, "The Quezon-Bicol zone has become the target of a broad and abundant infiltration from the last quarter of 1979 to the first quarter of 1982. In the history of the region's revolutionary movement, this has been the broadest, deepest, and most systematic ploy of the enemy to infiltrate and destroy the Party, the army, and the revolutionary mass organization."

It is not clear how many individuals have been involved in this anti-infiltration drive, but the campaign was not adjudged at the time as erroneous. In fact, the Southern Tagalog assessment glowingly celebrated it as a success.

It was early 1985 when the second round of anti-DPA operations began to take root again in Mindanao. At this time, the whole island had been going through rapid and massive changes in the economic, social, and political sphere. The intense warfare between the government on one hand and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the CPP-NPA on the other had changed the social landscape and profoundly altered community relations.

The early 1980s saw the revolutionary movement in Mindanao growing at unprecedented levels, especially in Davao. On top of this was the Mindanao Commission, the highest party unit in the island that was mainly responsible for this growth.

Early in 1985, the CPP Central Committee had its Tenth plenum in Metro Manila. Since the members of the Mindanao Commission were attending this top-level meeting of national and regional cadres, a "caretaker committee" composed of three high ranking officials was created to oversee Mindanao operations while the plenum was under way.
The beginnings of the carnage came with the arrest of a few suspected DPAs in North Central Mindanao. Report of these arrests immediately reached the caretaker committee. According to the report, investigation of the suspects revealed that DPAs supposedly abound within and outside North Central Mindanao. This revelation prompted the committee to declare a state of emergency in the whole of Mindanao. The news was promptly sent to the top cadres present at the plenum.

The Mindanao Commission, meanwhile, was supposed to meet after the plenum. But the plenum dragged on too long, and so the Mindanao Commission was instructed to meet, even before the plenum had finished, in order to take care of the "DPA crisis imperiling the movement."

The Mindanao Commission then proceeded to work on the DPA situation, using the Southern Tagalog assessment of the 1982 anti-infiltration experience as the "proper guide" in handling the case. The investigation thus continued with the interrogation of a handful of arrested individuals—many of them promising cadres in their respective areas of work. As Ka Neil, one of the three top Party officials who composed the Caretaker Committee, narrated:

I, personally knew two of the arrested. One was Ka Larry, a gifted united front cadre. He did not admit anything, so eventually he was beaten up. That was when he started to talk.

I did not think at the time that he was making it all up. I was tortured myself before, by the military, and I thought I knew how difficult it was to invent stories.

So when Ka Larry told me these things, I was stunned and outraged. It was a personal thing for me, the feeling of betrayal. At that point I "realized the seriousness" of the infiltration problem.

The Mindanao Commission, after their own assessment of the DPA situation, then resolved to implement an island-wide anti-infiltration campaign entitled Kampanyang Ahos, or simply Kahos. What followed was a wave of arrests, torture, and detention from 1985 to early 1986 that left an estimated 600 to 900 persons dead. According to Ka Neil, not a single one of these could be considered guilty, if internationally accepted standards of court procedures and jurisprudence were used as parameters. The investigations were crude, arbitrary and haphazard, making it virtually
impossible to ascertain anything out of them. Unfortunately, this was to be realized only much, much later.

Immediately after the campaign, the Mindanao Commission’s assessment ruled it again a success, only with some excesses. Such an assessment, alas, made it inevitable for the same scenario to happen again.

Thus, another similar event happened in Cagayan immediately after the Kahos. This “northern version” has not been brought to light even until now, though I was able to interview one of its apparent victims (see following).

**JOEY**

My comrades called me Joey—it was my koda, my nom de guerre. I was 18 years old when I joined the revolutionary movement, 19 when I became a member of the Communist Party of the Philippines. It may be the idealism of youth, or just a deep down desire to make a difference. Whatever, I was an angry young man who wanted to change the world.

Young as I was, I pursued my revolutionary tasks with creativity and appropriate fervor. I worked systematically at building the Party organization at the university, having the knack of getting the maintenance men and office secretaries to stay after office hours. We discussed such political stuff as rights and issues and such imperatives as revolution.

Needless to say, it was dangerous, clandestine work. The threat to life and limb was omnipresent. While it was a dreaded notion, the prospect of being arrested and tortured by the enemy was an accepted reality. On the 25th of January 1986, it became so, though not exactly as I imagined.

On that day, I was brought to a certain house on the pretext of computer training. Loud, piercing music greeted my ears upon entering the place. Thereupon I was ordered by men inside to drop to the floor. Next thing I knew, I was blindfolded and handcuffed.
They brought me to another place and promptly the interrogation began.

My captors said they were from the military. They arrested me because, as they claimed, I work with a rival military unit as a DPA (deep penetration agent) within the revolutionary movement. They said that I was one of Colonel (Rolando) Abadilla’s men, and I was responsible for the identification and subsequent death of one of their own infiltrators.

For four days I was tortured. They put out their lighted cigarettes on my skin, laughing as they did. They hit me with a lead pipe, punched me, and threw water on my face when I was about to pass out. They did their own crude style of “good-cop, bad-cop”—with one interrogator offering me cigarettes and food while pleading with me to “cooperate,” and another beating me black and blue.

As these were ostensibly military men, I tried to invoke the name of a top military official—one of my wedding sponsors. But this only enraged them further.

One night, the interrogators complained about getting nowhere with me. Putting up a show of impatience, they hauled me inside a sack and brought me to a spot where I smelled freshly dug earth. I was thrown inside a shallow grave, and was told that I would be buried alive if I did not confess to being a DPA.

Before I could decide what to do, their two-way radio crackled. They went back inside the house and left me in the grave. Later on I was brought back to the house.

Inside, I overheard from their arguments that they did not know what to do with me. A bunch of confused, undecided men were deliberating whether I should continue living or not.

After a while, my captors came out and surprised me. They told me they were just fooling around!
Still, as a final test, I was to be released on the condition that I agree to be their agent. I readily agreed to this, without any intention of fulfilling it. I believed I had to consent to anything if I were to survive.

Later, I was dropped off at a certain place and given some transportation fare. Commuting home, I remember people staring at me, at my dark and sunken eyes, disheveled hair, ill-fitting clothes.

When I got home some of my father's military friends were in the house. They immediately tried to trace the military units who might be responsible for my abduction. They came up with nothing.

At this point, with my security at the mercy of nameless, faceless men, I decided to get out of the country. My wife and I moved to Australia and continued our revolutionary tasks there.

Those four days of torture left an indelible mark in my life. The beatings and cigarette burning were indescribably painful, but one single moment left the deepest scar. That was when my captors tricked me into divulging where my wife and I were staying.

They taunted me no end about how worthless a jerk I was to betray my own wife. If what they intended was to make a mockery of my dignity, to totally destroy my will, to break me completely, then they have succeeded.

That single act has permanently marred my relationship with my wife, and eventually led to the breakdown of my marriage. It would torment me forever.

What made it infinitely worse was the true identity of my tormentors, which was revealed to me years later. As it turned out, they were my own comrades in the revolutionary movement.
Nineteen eighty-eight proved to be another fertile year for the anti-infiltration bloodbath, again in the Southern Tagalog region. Codenamed Oplan Missing Link, this campaign had its beginnings in a failed partisan military operation in Biñan, Laguna early that year. The failure, as recollected by one of the first victims, was considered mysterious and brought about speculations from certain cadres about the possibility of DPA involvement.

Such speculation was taken seriously, and caused a case long buried since way back 1977 to surface. This was the complete wipeout of the whole party regional committee which included such celebrated cadres as Leticia Pascual, Jessica Sales, Rizalina Ilagan, Cristina Catalla, and Bong Sison. The mystery behind this case thus constituted the so-called “missing link”—the direction of which, they surmised, pointed to DPA involvement. The result of this speculation was the creation of a Task Force to implement the Oplan Missing Link. It was headed by none other than the cadre who brought out the DPA scare in the first place, Kenneth. He appointed other junior party officials to compose the Task Force that would carry the operation to its bloody peak.

The Task Force initiated the arrest of individuals who were directly connected with the failed partisan military operation in Biñan. They set up camp within the Sierra Madre guerrilla base and implemented the whole operation there. The suspects were subjected to intense interrogation, but none came out of it. Frustrated, the Task Force gave up on the baited questions and verbal threats. They began roughing up the suspects. Slaps led to punches, then to kicks, hanging by the wrists, and searing of the skin. The torturers got more and more creative as the bodies rolled.

Under extreme pain and terror, the victims were left with no choice but to "confess" what the interrogator wanted to hear. They wove false testimonies and contrived exploits, in the process relieving themselves, implicating them deeper, and affording the interrogators a bizarre sense of triumph.

What made it worse was that the suspects were forced to cough out other names, creating a murderous domino that raged uncontrollably. Eventually, no one felt safe—not even the interrogators, not even high-ranking party officials—from whose ranks many victims came. It was just a matter of who gets implicated next. A blanket of paranoia engulfed the whole camp—a morbid fear that one's company might be one's enemy, and a far worse fear that one might be suspected as THE enemy.
That paranoia coexisted with an unbridled exercise of power. The ones at the helm wielded absolute dominion and control and made sure that the victims were rendered powerless. The use of chains was just one of the ways.

Absolute power and aberrant paranoia, with war as backdrop and the constant threat of annihilation a reality, proved to be a volatile combination.

At roughly the same time, the DPA preoccupation took on a national character.

That very same year, by a cruel twist of fate, the party’s central leadership extended the anti-infiltration campaign nationwide. Declaring as a clear and present danger the existence of extensive military infiltration into the party and the revolutionary mass organizations, it put these organizations under a state of emergency. (Arguelles 1995)

Then came the creation of a committee for this operation, called Olympia, which oversaw the anti-infiltration operations covering Central Luzon, Cordillera, Leyte, Cebu, and the National Capital Region.

That, it turned out, was another fundamental flaw in the conduct of the anti-infiltration operation—making it a mass campaign. Such act only succeeded in turning it to mass hysteria, sowing internal distrust in a movement that has withstood decades of external onslaught from its real enemy.

At the height of Olympia, the sudden disappearance of prominent urban cadres alerted friends and relatives who thought they were taken by the military. They even mounted a national campaign demanding the release of these missing persons.

By now, the OPML of Southern Tagalog and the Olympia for the other regions became simultaneous anti-infiltration operations that were both turning haywire. Both threatened to raze the whole party machinery and consume even the very top leadership.

The paranoia and dementia was such that one top cadre in the Southern Tagalog region, Ka Carding, declared: “Peke ang rebolusyong ito!” (This revolution is a fake!) A Task Force was hastily organized, with Ka Carding
on top, for a mission called “Save the Center.” They intended to stage a
heroic act of “rescuing” those perceived loyal party cadres, particularly at
the Central Committee, by plucking them from the clutches of enemy agents
and engaging the latter in armed combat if necessary. Fortunately, this plan
was stalled when Ka Carding, in a bizarre twist of events, accidentally shot
himself on the foot while testing his newly issued Micro-Uzi.

Where was the CPP Central Committee all this time? Most people believe
that full accountability rests on it being the highest leadership body of the
Party. They were there at the onset, and, according to Arguelles, not one
registered an outright and categorical opposition to the whole process.
One CC member, Ka Tomas, raised a solitary dissenting voice when the
number of suspects steadily increased. He was forced into silence however
when his wife began to be implicated too: he did not want it to appear that
his resistance had something to do with this situation.

On the whole, the CC’s state at the time was a leadership in disarray, caught
in the throes of indecision that saw its resolve shifting from hesitation to
outright creation of action teams and flying squads that intended to bring
the bloody operation to the urban sprawls of Metro Manila.

On such a floundering state, the overzealous lieutenants’ role became
especially significant. At the stage when normal processes were disrupted
and overturned, and the leadership lost touch with reality, the de facto
engineers were given full rein. As the Central Committee members hemmed
and hawed, the middle level cadres proved their worth with impunity and
reckless abandon, carrying the operations into its murderous lengths, and
it was all the leadership could do to catch up.

Most of the Central Committee members, though fully aware of the
developments, maintained a certain distance from the anti-infiltration
activities. One member—Ka Pedro—chose to be actively involved. He
gave his full support to the actions of the investigators, and in many cases
participated in the actual torture and interrogations.

There came a point, finally, when the central leadership was somehow
jolted and made aware of the iniquity happening right under their noses.
In November 1988, they ordered a stop to the anti-infiltration operations,
but this was not immediately heeded by the Task Force members who were
growing more and more arbitrary and independent in their ways.
The leaders of OPML managed to arrest and torture a few more individuals in November before finally acceding to the Central Committee's directive. A review process was immediately set up, and the detainees were interviewed anew. Each one was allowed to retract his damning statements under duress, upon which the committee came face to face with the full extent of the damage. One by one, the OPML detainees were released.

Meanwhile, the Olympia continued, despite the directive. The captives from the United Front Commission, particularly, were brought all the way to Ifugao where they were detained indefinitely till all this was resolved. It was formally put to an end in a Politburo meeting in April 1989.

Finally, the Party came up with a more realistic, albeit cut short, assessment of its anti-infiltration campaigns. There could have been a more thoroughgoing study of this phenomenon by the Party itself had it not been racked and sidetracked by the division caused by the Reaffirm-Reject debate.

"Challenged to Kill"

Among the persons interviewed for this study was Janis, one of the members of Task Force Missing Link. She said that at first she was called to a certain “meeting” where there was a briefing of the “DPA situation,” which was painted as very grim. In the meeting, she was informed that she would be one of the "documentors" of the investigations being done in the countryside.

In a few weeks, she, together with the other documentors, went to the guerrilla zone where they saw some detainees. The operation was already well under way. As instructed, she documented the interrogation process, though she was initially not part of the actual investigation.

As the number of detainees increased, the documentors were given more tasks. They began participating in the interrogation and throwing their own questions at the suspects.

I followed the same pattern of questioning. We also had a manual of operations. We got carried away in the process. We had feelings of betrayal whenever we got a confession. We justified
the use of torture because *hindi naman grabe* (it was not severe). Our justification was that we wanted to save the movement.

Initially, I had doubts when persons I personally knew became suspects. But later, I tried to rationalize the situation and tried to picture the possibility. For example, I reasoned that he was gone for a long time—many things could have happened, and so forth.

As the prisoners increased, there came a need to unload. Thus, some will have to be executed. From being a mere documentor, they later involved me in the decision-making process. I found myself being part of the committee that decided which persons were to be killed. At first, my conscience bothered me. But as the killings continued, I got used to it.

Janis said that, at first, only two or three persons were tasked with delivering the death sentence. But when the number of persons they were killing mounted, the Task Force worried about its possible “psychological effect” on the executioners. Thus, the task will have to be spread to more people. That was when the commitment of the other Task Force members was again tested. Said Janis:

> We were challenged to kill some of the prisoners. I decided to do it in cases where I was completely convinced that the person was a DPA. In cases when I was in doubt, I let the others do it.

**CECIL, WITH MARIO**

My involvement with the Party began when I was still in high school, having been exposed to political issues and personalities through my friends’ families. I had minor tasks then, like serving as a courier, passing on such items as a secret note or a gun between comrades.

I went to Mt. Banahaw in 1981, accepted deployment there and met Ka Mario, a former student leader who was then already a Party official. Ka Mario and I eventually got married and would later share much more than what a couple normally does.
Agreeing to be deployed in Batangas was considered a courageous act since it was a feared place, a province isolated from the rest of Southern Tagalog. Batanguenos have been known to be palaban (aggressive). Most of them had guns, NPA or not. It was a difficult area to do organizing work. I operated in the urban area of Batangas from 1982 to 1985. Mario, meanwhile, worked within the guerrilla zone.

According to Mario, as early as 1985 comrades who were suspected infiltrators or deep penetration agents were brought to his area either for surveillance or safekeeping. He was unaware that executions were already happening at that time. He was much less aware that such practice would hit closer home.

In 1986 I got pregnant. At this time I was transferred to the industrial zone of Laguna where I got to work with workers and student activists. After I gave birth, I went back to my official unit and found my comrades deep into the process of screening possible spies within the movement. The Oplan Missing Link was already in full swing, and many of their suspects were from my own territory.

Individuals in my district were being brought in for questioning. Each of their autobiographies was being scrutinized (an autobiography is normally submitted by each member of the Party to the higher organ).

I felt uneasy with this process, increasingly so as the numbers rose steadily. "These were all DPAs?" I asked myself. Much as I wanted to disagree, I could not because I did not have full knowledge of the persons they were investigating.

Later, the suspects were brought inside the guerrilla zone for detention.

I never expected that I would also come under scrutiny. I fancied myself to be a good soldier even though on occasion I threw questions and disagreements.

It was in 1988 when I was instructed to go to a guerrilla camp. Mario and I had a serious argument about this. What I wanted was to
simply get away from it all—it was getting much too complex—but Mario convinced me that it was wrong to run away from a problem.

He asked me to face it, and if I knew anything or if I had questions I should not sacrifice my whole collective by running away.

So we left our kids with my in-laws and went to the countryside. It was a tough trail. I could barely catch up with their pace, made worse by a military unit in dogged pursuit behind us.

The difficulty for me was such that our argument on the correctness of the decision came up again. Mario still prevailed. He later proceed to his area while I, by my lonesome, entered the camp where the OPML was under way. This was in October 1988. The whole operation was being directed by a Task Force organized in 1987.

When I came in, the Task Force members were taken aback. Why was I alone? Where was my collective? I said I came in to help in the process, especially with my people being involved. I asked them where Sonny and Ely, two of my people, were. They said Ely tried to escape and was killed. I could not believe this.

The atmosphere inside the camp was very different. I had the impression that something was very wrong, and that I wouldn’t come out of it alive. Even Ka Pedro, one top Party official whom I had known since I was a child, acted strangely. His attitude toward me was superficial and cold—which angered me so much since I was one of those who helped him when he escaped prison.

I wasn’t issued a firearm. A guard was assigned to me supposedly for security reasons. He was always there, even when I took a bath. They examined the pocketbook I was reading before I slept. The tell-tale signs were all there and I knew it was just a matter time when they would eventually pounce on me.

It didn’t take long. On the second day of my arrival I was called to a meeting inside one of the huts. There I was arrested by the comrades. In a way I was prepared for whatever was coming. I
didn’t cry immediately but instead steeled my nerves in righteous indignation.

The person who arrested me was Toto, who asked, “in the name of the Communist Party,” what I had to say. I was given an opportunity to talk to anyone I wanted. I chose Ka Rene, a top-ranking cadre well-known in the Party, the military, and the public. He and his wife were close family friends, Mario and I had nothing to hide from them. Ka Rene was the one who recruited me to Southern Tagalog from Manila. Whenever he visited Manila, my mother provided for his needs and security. This was at least one person who could vouch for me, I thought.

But Ka Rene told me that he could not do anything “with people like us.” That was when I cried, cursing and reminding him of all that we’ve been through together. First it was Ka Pedro and now Ka Rene. I lost all hope.

Arrested at the same time was Ka Lala, a high-ranking regional cadre who had already spent more than twenty years with the movement. Lala and I were handcuffed and our ankles were chained as we were transferred to the main camp. With the hilly, muddy terrain, the intermittent rain and the chains, the walk was terribly difficult.

Lala talked about escaping but I told her it was futile. We’ll just get ourselves killed. Besides I wanted to see my comrades who were previously detained.

Reaching the main camp, we were immediately brought to a small but and hung by our wrists. Our feet touched the ground but we could not sit or lie down. We were tied in this position till the following day, while they awaited final decision about what to do with us.

Later on I was asked to identify some comrades brought before me. I could barely recognize them because they were severely beaten. The hair of one was cut like rice terraces, another was hideously emaciated and had wounds all over. One, worn out and eyebrows shaven, turned out to be a close family friend. As I failed to identify
him, I was hit, kicked and clapped over the ears. The pain in my ears and abdomen lingers to this day.

For added terror, they made me watch the mauling of other comrades. They also got hold of an audio tape of my children’s voices which Mario and I made before. I was made to listen to this while I was being tortured. I’d get to see them and Mario alive if I confessed, I was told.

Through all this, I would comfort myself by thinking about Mario and the children, that they were well. In darker times, however, I agonized over the thought of not seeing them ever again. How I wished the people here would finally realize what they were doing. I knew the suspects were owning up to things they did not commit and they saw no other way out.

Another victim brought to me was Ka Andy. His wife was one of the interrogators, a member of the Task Force. I recognized the polo shirt he was wearing, which formerly belonged to my husband. He told me: “Confess to your sins. We all confessed already. Spare yourself from more pain. You won’t be able to bear it. We weren’t.”

He was then taken away to be hung and beaten further where I can see it. After a while they’l bring him back again to talk to me. For three days he was alternately tortured and ordered to convince me to confess.

And then there was Ka Anton, a former schoolmate who was also in detention. He told me he had already confessed, and because of this he would be rewarded with a “rehabilitation” program in another guerrilla base. Or so they said, and he believed them. He cried all night and didn’t sleep.

The following morning he was so happy. He bade goodbye to us. His chains were removed, he was given a backpack and stuff, he saluted to the guards, and then he was off. I was sure that he was killed then, as confirmed much, much later.
I didn’t believe in the “rehab” crap because I sat in the meetings about OPML before I was detained. But many of the detainees did. After what they have been through, there’s nothing left but to hope for something.

The torture methods they used were varied. Apart from being mauled and hit by a rifle butt, some went through the “split,” where the legs were spread wider and wider apart till you admit to practically every sin you can think of. For the men, their sex organs were “zipped” through and then poured with alcohol. Most went through the “flag ceremony”—being hung by the wrists and raised higher and higher with each question. The ropes bit through the skin.

The interrogators were not beyond sexual molestation. Some female detainees were stripped in front of the others. When I was in “flag ceremony,” they bared my upper body. My menstruation at the time discouraged them from pulling down my lower clothing.

I finally gave my “confession,” crafted in my mind while I was in isolation. But I fainted midway, snapping the ropes that hung me and dropping me in a heap. They then poured pails of water over me to wake me up, stinging the wounds on my back.

It was hard to bear the tragedy of giving a false confession about yourself, especially when other detainees were around. I remember the moment they presented Ka Manny, a younger comrade-detainee, to me. They had him salute me while I was being raised like a flag, making a parody of my supposed higher rank in the military. He couldn’t stop crying while in salute.

The story I told was how Mario and I were supposedly recruited as DPAs in 1980 when we were still in Manila, and how our whole group of DPAs proceeded to operate in Southern Tagalog. In fact, much of my story virtually came from the interrogators—I was just second-guessing what they wanted to hear.

I was in detention about a week and a half when Mario was brought in, also in chains. We were allowed a brief conversation in the company
of other detainees. I cried when I saw him and told him the inevitable: he had to confess. He had to go with my story. I saw his confusion, discomfort, and anger. He even cursed me. I wasn’t able to explain the whole situation as I was taken away in handcuffs. Fortunately, realization came early for Mario so he was able to immediately spin his own tale, sparing him from physical torture.

Mario narrated his being an “Army lieutenant during my student days.” Not knowing any military stuff, he invented such ridiculous accounts as recruiting whole barrios and a serial number for himself. The interrogators trembled with excitement at these fresh “revelations.”

While Mario did not go through the heavy-handed treatment most of us received, he was not spared the deeper psychological pain of being punished by our comrades. He hated the fact that the persons guarding him, even the ones interrogating him, were among those he recruited to the movement in the first place.

As Mario puts it: “I left my family just to die here like a chicken wing. I will be cursed by my parents. This is exactly like the Russian Gulag.”

Mario and I did not get another opportunity to speak to each other. Once in a while, we would get glimpses of each other in the mornings when I was assigned as a cleaner. Much later, we had a chance to hold each other close. This was during moments when the guards made fun of the prisoners—we were ordered to dance while they watched and hooted.

I had no doubt in my mind that both of us will be killed anyway, so it was simply a matter of coming up with ways to prolong our lives. Ironically, the military threat offered a possibility for escape. A military confrontation, we deemed then, might just spare some of us.

Later on we saw some hope. A review process was immediately set up. All of us had the chance to retract our testimonies. One by one, we were released and allowed to get back to our respective homes and nurse our wounds.
For the urban cadres arrested under Olympia, the use of psychological torture was favored over the physical, except for certain individuals. Ka Basil, one of the captives, for example, was mauled heavily, stripped, and tied to a post. Lyn, another victim, told me how she was hit in the face with a telephone directory during her interrogator's outburst. The others were slapped and punched once in a while, but mostly they were treated with threats and verbal abuses.

Meanwhile, the bulk of Southern Tagalog's implementation of the OPML was done in the countryside, where the interrogation officials exercised wider control and given freer rein. They were much less mindful of security precautions, being less vulnerable to exposure. There were also a good number of guerrilla forces ready to implement standing orders and serve as guards and technical workforce.

Arrests in the countryside were done in a fairly similar fashion. Premium was given to neutralizing the suspects' capacity to defend themselves. This was explicitly stated in the Party document assessing the anti-infiltration campaign in the Southern Tagalog region in 1982, which stood as the official anti-DPA guideline for some time. In the part providing instructions on the proper way to arrest infiltrators, the following were stated:

In taking infiltrators from their place of operation to the area of detention, for interrogation prior to punishment, it is important to use a credible explanation, such as a "meeting with the higher organ for a new disposition"...

Prior to the infiltrator's arrival to the detention center, the place where he is to be ordered to lie down and tied up should be identified. The comrades should be in their proper positions in order to prevent him from running away. The rope and the person to tie him up should also be ready...

Make sure that the weapon of the infiltrator is no longer with him before he is put down and tied up.
For the noncombatants, this task was reasonably easier. A pretext was all that was needed, and the other technical requirements would follow. The other suspects, being armed and having previous combat experience, made the task more complicated.

While the arrests of some were done verbally and with reasonable restraint, for others it was not as subtle. Some were suddenly kicked in the back of the knee and held down at gunpoint. A few were surprised from behind with a “marine hold”—a form of military wrestle done on the neck that can easily immobilize an adversary or, with additional pressure, kill him instantly.

All these forms of arrest necessitated orchestrating an elaborate scheme combining deceit, surprise, force, and psychological maneuvers.

What was the basis for arresting someone? In their book, if a person was mentioned in the testimonies of at least three suspects, that constituted a solid basis. The fact that these confessions were done under duress was immaterial to the case.

Torture has never really been standard practice within the Philippine revolutionary movement—even within the ranks of the New People's Army. While it is true that guerrillas engage the military in armed hostility as a matter of course, this is within the context of a raging war, and care is given to ensure that it is waged within the parameters of international rules of combat.

The Melito Glor Command and other regional NPA formations often hogged the headlines in the past whenever they captured AFP soldiers. The latter's statements upon their release had always been the same: "We were treated as humans."

The NPA officials always explained in public statements that this was just in keeping with the just and humane war they were waging. Furthermore, they adhere to the tenets of the Geneva Conventions. Thus, the rights of prisoners-of-war are always recognized and respected even in the midst of battle. Part of this, of course, was propaganda. But the other part was a genuine desire to prove sincerity in struggle.
It is thus the cruelest of ironies that the moments when the revolutionaries actually engaged in torture were those when they were dealing with their own comrades. Arguably, the military used more sophisticated methods (electrocution, water cure, ice treatment, and so forth), but the rebels' ways cannot also be considered benign, as the testimonies illustrate.

One of the interrogation methods used in the purges was what is popularly known as the "good cop-bad cop technique," which is designed to weaken a victim's defenses through psychological manipulation. One interrogator plays the role of the rough and brutal torturer who employs cruelty and physical attacks to pry out information. The other plays the nice and sensitive partner who treats the prisoner well and begs and cajoles him to talk so as to ease the suffering.

Joey had a first hand experience of this during his first day of interrogation, "with one interrogator offering me cigarettes and food while pleading with me to 'cooperate'; and another beating me black and blue."

A variation of this is what Solzhenitsyn termed "psychological contrast," or a reversal of tone. This was one of the "light" interrogation tactics used by the Soviets he described in The Gulag Archipelago.

I got a taste of this disorienting procedure from the former nun. After being slapped around by her interrogation partner, she patiently egged me to cooperate. She elaborated on Protocol II of the Geneva Convention, which supposedly denied "spies" prisoner-of-war status, thus according us no rights whatsoever.

When I refused, she suddenly flared up and continued the physical harassment. The desired effect, seemingly, was for me to realize that I should not waste that kind of kindness because it was few and far between. I was to deserve it by doing what they wanted.

One thing we observed in the whole operation, though, was that the perpetrators could not really play the "good cop" role with good measure as everyone was expected to be "bad." There developed an unwritten "policy of cruelty" that everyone was expected to observe. Some would attribute this to the "collective paranoia" that infected everyone, from the highest-ranking official to the lowliest guard.
There was at least one exception to the contagion of cruelty: Ka Jerry, another member of the OPML Task Force. I knew him from way before. He was the typical senior cadre who took revolutionary principles to heart.

I remember him sporting unruly hair and a bushy mustache. He always had that famished, emaciated look, but he was constantly ready with a joke or two and a hearty laugh. During the Southern Tagalog purge, he refused to be drawn into the whirlpool of violence. While he participated in the investigations, many attested that he never lifted a finger.

Alas, that might have been his undoing. He soon earned the suspicion of the other members of the Task Force. Some detainees said that the process of Ka Jerry's investigation was "fast-tracked" because the officers sensed that he was cooking up something—possibly an escape plan or a mutiny. In a short while, he was also detained and tortured. I did not see him at the camp though, for before I was captured myself, he was already executed. The fact that he was Ka Kenneth's first cousin did not help him at all.

For the rest of the Task Force members, it was all a matter of keeping in step and learning by rote. Various forms of cruelty were necessarily developed. The standard methods of torture were the "flag ceremony" (the victim tied at the wrists, elevated from the ground at tiptoe level, lasting from a few hours to a few days) mauling, and slapping. Apart from these, the arena was open: they slit the skin of some detainees with a knife, shaved off eyebrows for fun, split their legs apart and sat on their thighs, seared the skin with a lamp, and so forth.

They also experimented with various combinations of physical and psychological terror tactics. Cecil's testimony bares a whole gamut of this as she described how they alternated between hitting her, hanging her on a tree, showing her how they beat up the other victims, undressing her, and making her listen to the taped voices of her children. The last one particularly—threatening the family itself—is reminiscent of Nikolai Bukharin's prison experience under Stalin.

Throughout all this, the interrogators either used their own hands or ordered subordinates to inflict the punishment. Meanwhile, the detention guards (many of them used to be shy and gentle guerrillas) believed they needed to be "proactive" to prove their worth and to avoid suspicion. They treated us with utmost revulsion, cursing and shouting at us at will, making
One of the worst punishments we endured was the denial of food. We were fed just enough to remain alive—no more than a teaspoonful of rice. The rains were partly a blessing, for one could drink from the pools of collected water. All became skin and bones in a matter of time. During idle moments, we dreamed of food, getting delirious with the vaguely familiar concept of eating. We spared not a single grain of rice. Some begged the guards for their leftover fish tails and bones.

The choices had been utterly reduced: own up to the accusation or endure the suffering until one dies from it. The process became so predictable that the earlier victims made it a standard advice to the newly captured: Come up with your tale at once, lest they hurt you further.

Those who did not catch on to this, or else refused to “cooperate” altogether, were eventually killed. This was also utilized as a psychological weapon, meticulously designed to terrorize the uncooperative ones to submission. One of the early detainees, Ka Paulito, had endured torture for two months. Still, he held on, believing that all would be cleared at the end of it, and he would finally be proven innocent. The last straw for him was when he was made to witness murder in cold blood.

I was brought to the execution site together with a handful of other detainees. At that time, my senses were almost deadened by the torture I received. I can barely feel them anymore. But what I saw brought me new shock and completely erased any hope I had that all this would turn out alright in the end.

One of our companions was brought in front of us. They then turned him around while we waited in suspense. Next thing we knew, the back of his head was hit with a large wooden club. He fell down, then shouted: “Wala akong kasalanan, mga kasama!” (Comrades, I’m innocent!) He repeated this line incessantly, as if in a chant. Groggily, he was able to stand up. Again, he was hit on the same spot but he remained standing. With the third blow on his head, his skull cracked open, and he lay dead on the ground.
I wasn't able to utter a single word after that. It would have been more bearable a sight if they shot him or even stabbed him, but that was such a gruesome spectacle. At that point I brought down all my defenses and decided to spin whatever story I could think of.

As the executions became more frequent, the Task Force coined a term for it—pen pen. It is characteristic of the world of torture and atrocity that the perpetrators uncannily develop a language unique to this environment. The pen pen, a popular folk jingle for kids, was adopted by the executioners as a grotesquely playful method of picking the next candidate to the grave, a la eenie-menie-miny-moe. Furthermore, it was used as a deceptive device to create a semblance of luck- or chance-based survival, whereas the fact was that the victims to be killed had already been predetermined.

What this merely shows is that even the meting out of the death sentence was elaborately staged and took the form of a sick parody, a death ritual reminiscent of William Golding's imagined world in Lord of the Flies. As Lina shared:

At the pen pen site, some were killed and some were spared—the latter brought there for the desired terror effect. We were all asked to say our last words. Almost all said, "Don't let our parents know that our comrades did this to us." One of us was quite combative. He spit on the guards and tried to kick them. His neck took the first knife.

I was brought to the pen pen session more than once and thus was witness to a variety of ways of killing human beings. They forced us to look. One was strangled from behind using what they called the "marine hold." At one time I looked away—I just heard the victim scream like a pig being butchered. He struggled for air. He was kicked in the face. His color had already darkened but he was still alive. His last words were: "Maglagom kayo, mga kasama!" (Comrades, learn your history!) He was stabbed and his blood was smeared on my face.

Apart from those who refused to speak, candidates for execution were the ones who "talked enough." They had said everything the interrogators needed to hear, and they had no further use.
We were not aware though that all of us were doomed to die at the time. They told us that “rehabilitation” awaited us after we cooperated completely. This was, in fact, another interrogation tactic they employed—the peddling of hope. Most of us bought the idea of “rehab” because there was little else to cling to. It offered a certain chance to go on living, a glimmer of hope. Some captives were in fact marched off to rehab, to the wide applause of guards and other detainees. It was confirmed much later that they simply marched to their graves.

Not all detainees bought the rehab hoax though. Some detainees were former interrogators themselves, like Ka Igan, who was notorious for his viciousness in interrogation and torture. Many detainees were glad that he was also arrested. He went through the same procedures he brought upon the earlier victims. He thus knew all would be killed eventually, rehab or no rehab.

It took a lot of convincing for him to be disabused of his fear, long after the process was already completely overturned. Long after we were unchained. Only when we were on the road to our homes did he come to believe that, truly, we were finally free.

5. Contingencies of Survival

Emotional Phases

The strangeness of the situation we faced at the time of capture easily led to complete emotional turbulence, something probably approaching derangement. In a feeble attempt to capture that state in words, I outlined them in a rough set of what I refer to here as “emotional phases.” The reality was by no means linear as this might suggest, nor does this mirror the entirety of emotions. It merely approximates the volatile emotional state each of us went through at the time.
Shock/Incredulity

Rage

Depression/Regret/Pain

Resignation/Numbness

Learning the Ropes/Survival Mechanisms

First is the inevitable shock. While as revolutionaries we were by and large psychologically prepared for the real dangers inherent in that state, we were totally unprepared to experience adversity under comrades' hands. This particularly rang true for the earlier victims—who did not get a chance to foreshadow such outcome.

Those who were arrested later, especially those who were either privy to the operation or had witnessed the escalation of the paranoia, had more or less seen it coming, thus the attendant shock effect has been considerably lessened. Nevertheless, the incredulity at such a thing actually happening had been common to all.

After getting over the initial shock comes either rage or fear. A lot more have been gripped by fear rather than consumed by anger because of the proximity of pain and death. Furthermore, the interrogators had very little patience to indulge outbursts of rage, and they dealt with these swiftly and definitively.

The pulsating fear or anger soon degenerated into the lowest levels of depression, regret, and self-pity. As Cecil shared: “I felt sorry for my life. I often went back to how I began getting involved with the movement—how easily I decided and how quickly I left my family. I had so many struggles with them. My father beat me up. I chose the movement over my family and this is where I end up.”

“What have I done to deserve this?” lamented the others. “All my sacrifices amount to this?” Such were the depths of self-pity that many felt a growing emotional numbness and hardening of disposition.
Thus from the clutches of self-pity and regret, emotion continued to drop to the lower rungs of submission and fatalistic resignation. With integrity snatched away, sense of trust completely shattered, infliction of pain and threat constant and imminent, and disempowerment complete, a kind of numb acceptance kicked in.

"It's okay for me to die," said Cecil. "I already assumed I could no longer see my children. All I wanted was for my tormentors to eventually realize the truth behind this thing that I could not for the life of me accept."

"If I should go this way, then so be it," sighed the rest.

In spite of such fatalist acceptance, however, the human instinct for survival remained intact. As such, amidst the sea of helplessness, despair, and resignation came ways and means to carry through the adversity.

Survival Tools

1. Rediscovering Lost Faith

One of Marx's oft-quoted pronouncements is that religion is the opiate of the masses. Marxist tracts and national democratic discourse have variously criticized the church as clerico-fascist, conservative, or a tool of the CIA.

Strictly speaking, Marxist ideology is incompatible with religious faith. Dialectical historical materialism in its pure sense does not provide space for the idealist belief in the supernatural, the paranormal, the spiritual, or anything that crosses the scientific realm. The well-recognized communist anthem "Internationale" very well expresses it:

"Wala tayong maaasahang bathala o manunubos, kaya ang ating kaligtasa'y nasa ating pagkilos" (We have no God or savior to turn to. Hence our salvation lies in our struggle).

Radical religious thinkers, meanwhile, found a meeting ground through the so-called "theology of liberation." Some segments of the revolutionary left treated this innovation as nothing more than a mere tactic to woo in
church people and the religious laity into the revolutionary fold. But a considerable number of radicals took the concept seriously and developed a comprehensive revolutionary discourse along religious lines.

In short, while many revolutionaries relinquished religious faith completely, some preserved it and saw no contradiction.

As it were, the revolutionary purges became occasions for the captives to either rediscover lost faith or strengthen it further. Lina, who had always been a devout Catholic, went back to the traditional form of prayer:

I prayed three Our Fathers, three Hail Marys, three Glory Bes. I prayed when they were about to kill me. I think I felt a miracle—I saw some light and sensed some warmth above: I felt some sort of a halo. I said to God that I didn't want to die this way, and hoped that I could help in fixing this problem.

Lyn, during the darkest moments of her detention, attempted suicide by slashing her wrist with the steel wires protruding from her iron bed. The wires were not sharp enough though, and she only succeeded in making crude cuts on her skin. Then one night she went through what she considers a mystical experience:

I dreamt that I was in a boat gliding through a black river. I suddenly fell off the boat and plunged into the total darkness below. Next thing I knew, a pair of hands reached into the water, grabbed me, and hauled me back to the boat. I felt much lighter when I woke up.

Others turned to prayer but did not exactly shake off the skepticism. I remember spending nights in detention listening to murmured prayers from above. I managed to quietly follow on, calling out and invoking: "Lord, if indeed you're really out there, please help us."

People are sometimes criticized when they find faith only in times of adversity. But that may be the most natural thing in the world. It constituted one of the remaining strands of hope. For all it was worth, it gave us something to turn to. Faith may as well have been the opiate of tortured rebels.
2. Sustaining Human Relations

Relationships also figured significantly in surviving the tragedy. Having no one to turn to but neighbors who shared a common station, we looked to each other for comfort and mutual assistance. Comradely relationships were already strong and deep to begin with, but this made the bond even stronger.

On my first night of detention, I found myself in the company of longer-staying captives. I was thoroughly confused at the time and initially thought that these people were real enemies after all, and I was just implicated.

Despite the confusion and misgivings, however, and having just gone through my first night of torture, I turned to the person beside me, Ka Carlo, and asked for guidance. He gave me the standard advice to survive by lying, suggesting pointers to help me pull it through.

It is in the nature of humans to seek connection with fellow beings. This fundamental need gets especially strong in difficult times. Such human connection, however temporary and however fragile, was what we tried to sustain and nurture. The comradely bond that was completely lost on the interrogators and guards became even more pronounced among the captives, helping each other in many opportunities. As Paulito shared:

One day I was ordered to clean up the detention area’s surroundings. At that time one detainee, Ka Emil, was in “flag ceremonies.” His chains were suspended so high up on the tree branch that he had to struggle to stand on tiptoe. If he slackened, the rope on his hands would become too tight and would cut blood circulation to his hands. When I got near him and saw some loose soil, an idea struck me: I can elevate his ground!

So whenever the guard wasn’t looking, I would kick in some soil under his feet to somehow alleviate the pressure from his limbs. I overdid my job. I’ve piled up so much soil under him that he was able to unhook his hands from the branch. He quickly lunged at the guard’s AK-47 that was carelessly lying nearby. Everyone thought that what he tried to do was escape, but I clearly saw that it was a suicide attempt. The barrel was pointed at his mouth.
and he was fumbling over the trigger when the guards pounced on him.

There were many other tales of courage and selflessness. Lina, who had a severely deformed spine, was carefully guided by the other detainees during long treks in rough terrain made worse by the fact that our chains were not removed even during these times. Val, whose hands became completely numb and immobile, needed someone else’s hands for his daily chores, such as urination. His brothers-in-chains were all too willing to literally lend a helping hand.

Such bond might have been seen as a threat for the Task Force employed various means to overturn it by sowing division and hatred among the victims. They pitted us against each other, using the testimonies to create intrigues and distrust (more on this later). They also ordered detainees to strike other detainees, sometimes before the latter were killed.

Even food became a source of tension among the detainees, were it not for the modicum of civility that was somehow sustained. Two people were often made to share a mouthful of rice and a pinch of salt. Each pair tried to divide the food as equally as possible (sometimes up to the last single grain), but there was the occasional “bad little finger,” as it was playfully referred to later, which snatched a few grains when the other wasn’t looking.

Despite these points of entanglement, the detainees inadvertently developed a natural cohesion. There is nothing like shared tragedy to bring people together. We looked to each other’s support for all it was worth. The detained couples felt their feelings for each other grow stronger, though one could do no more than look at the general direction of the other.

Mario felt pangs of sorrow knowing that Cecil was only a few paces away, but for the chains. Cecil looked forward to the occasions when she was asked to sweep the grounds, for then she could steal a glance at Mario at the other detention center. She was also not one to complain when the guards made fun at their expense. “On occasion, they made us dance while they watched and hooted. But those were the only moments when we got to hold each other close.”

During droll, uneventful moments, the detainees dared dream out loud. “I encouraged the others to keep on thinking that we will live. We dreamed
up scenarios, like putting up a peanut business or selling cassava (many of them were rural folk). Those brief, idle talks were already our happy moments," recounted Cecil.

Idle talk was possible only when the guards allowed it, with topics strictly screened. The only allowable topic was food, or things related to it. The discussions were so closely guarded that Ka Arnel and I sneaked conversations in English when the guards were within hearing distance.

Much as the opportunities for heart-to-heart conversation were severely restricted, the rare moments of light, insignificant prattle became occasions to establish connections and affirm whatever was left of our humanity. The human animal just had to talk, no matter what.

So talk we did. One shared her recipe for making peanut butter, another revealed her secret for cooking the best ginataang isda. Still another volunteered pinaupong manok. These went on for days on end, sometimes firing up our gastronomic imagination so much that we wondered if such an exercise was also a form of torture.

More than talking, we sang. If talking about food fanned our hunger, our choice of music fueled our longing for home. In those moments when the guards permitted guitar playing, everybody chorused over John Denver’s “Take Me Home, Country Roads,” Paul Simon’s “Homeward Bound,” Peter, Paul and Mary’s “Cruel War,” even Rod Stewart’s “I Don’t Wanna Talk About It.” The lyrics stung, but hell, we were not in the mood to sing revolutionary songs. Those who did not know the words just hummed, others softly cried.

3. Making up Tales

As explained previously, inventing stories became an indispensable tool for survival. The lies were resorted to mainly as a stopgap measure against the continuance of torture—they were preventive rather than purposive. As such, the lies needed to be credible, which made it necessary for them to be as close to the truth as possible.

Contrary to what Ka Neil thought, making up tales proved to be easier than it seemed. One just had to go back to his recent history, cite problems, failures, setbacks, or security lapses (which were legion) and attribute them
to conscious intent. Unfortunately, such ease might have also contributed to the tragedy’s domino effect.

The lies were not homogeneous—they were as varied as the ones who made them up. Some were complete admissions, some partial, some were positively ridiculous, and some were deliberately thought up to make a mockery of the whole affair.

As a tool for surviving, the method of giving false testimonies developed into a skill in itself. Those who stood their ground and refused to give damning statements were killed, but those who gave “complete” testimonies that satisfied the interrogators were also killed. As such, some detainees developed an uncanny ability to provide just enough false information to prevent further torture but leave the investigators wanting for more, thus prolonging their life. In many ways it has become a psychological cat-and-mouse game of death.

For many though, the incompleteness and inconsistency of the tales were simply a result of the lies getting tangled up—the strings just could not possibly mix and match. While it was easy enough to invent one’s crimes, it became much more complicated when different testimonies were compared. Obviously, the stories must jibe with each other to be acceptable, and in a farce of an investigation where a hundred individuals gush forth a hundred different sets of fabrications dreamed up independently, one could only imagine the resulting convolution. The TF members must have felt like Sherlock Holmes trying to unweave all this and getting to the crux of the matter. Fired up with such challenge and enjoying all power in their hands, they labored over the growing mound of false data and, in moments of frustration, made the detainees confront each other and challenge each other’s testimonies.

Such was the problem I faced after I sneaked a secret conversation with Ka Mel and the others while we were on the river. A similar thing happened to Mario and his buddy Carlo. “I was brought face to face with my kumpare. In his previous statement, he said I recruited him. In mine though, I said I just accompanied him to the area, but did not recruit him. Damn! Our stories did not match. When he was made to confront me, he was tearful begging me: ‘Pare, please admit it.’”
They also had fun recalling this episode much, much later.

Inventiveness, creativity, sensitivity, and flexibility became the most crucial talents to possess at the time. Ironically, the more we succeeded in weaving the most credible lies, the worse we felt about ourselves and about the pathetic state we had fallen into—that the key to our survival was our ability to convincingly paint ourselves as the wicked enemy whom until then we had fought mightily against.

4. Mind Tricks

One can only marvel at the capacities of the human mind. While it can and does snap with enough pressure, it has to endure so much before it does. In the middle of the purge operations, our minds had to work double time to keep from going overboard. Many succeeded, a number did not.

Apart from prayers, fantasies came in handy. Reality became so unbearable we attempted to exist in another world. Many of those detained under Olympia were blindfolded for weeks on end that some experienced hallucinations. One, according to Lyn, acted as though he was a ship captain, hollering and ordering his crew around.

In my case, imagination proved helpful. I let it run wild as I leapt back to childhood dreams about superheroes who nipped adversity with their superhuman strength. I imagined snapping my chains and flying off to freedom.

Some discarded fantasies altogether and openly welcomed death as inevitable and waited for it in peace. Others like Paulito and Cecil told themselves incessantly that everything would turn out all right in the end.

That hopeful longing manifested itself in various forms, one of which was belief in the rehab hoax played up by the Task Force. Many looked forward to the hard labor (breaking stones in Atimonan or doing farm work in the Cordillera—we were told) supposedly awaiting us after detention as part of rehab.
Others were not deluded by this, but instead hoped for direct engagement with the military. Leni’s heart skipped a beat whenever the roar of an approaching helicopter was heard. “Let there be an encounter,” she wished, “We just might make it.”

Tough life it was. Some survived, some died, much like a fast-forwarded Darwinian process of natural selection. But while the possession of certain adaptive skills, resilience, and other relevant attributes proved helpful, it became not so much a question of survival of the fittest, but of luck. It became more a matter of who got hit and who were missed.

And as it turned out, problems came beyond mere surviving them.

6. **Trauma and Tribulation**

An atmosphere of elation and euphoria visited the whole OPML camp at its conclusion. Each detainee was gripped with a sense of exhilaration upon release. The run-up to eventual freedom was not without drama. The detainee was first called and brought, accompanied by a guard, to a certain spot. Next the chains were ceremoniously unlocked. Then he was guided along to the pinalayang purok (liberated area), where he is welcomed with a resounding applause from those previously released.

At this point, the TF members were judiciously isolated from the released victims to avoid possible acts of vengeance. But we were not inclined towards retribution at this time—the fact of actually coming out of it alive was enough to drown out all other considerations. Except in a very few, rage has not yet set in.

In the middle of all this meticulous releasing process, Pedro, the highest-ranking Party cadre directly involved in the operation, got up his nerve to talk to some of the victims and apologize, his tears welling up as he acknowledged the mistake. But we had more important things in mind than put up with the perceived theatrics of a perpetrator wishing to get off lightly, and so he was not so much forgiven as ignored.
then came the celebration. A program was quickly put up, with speeches, singing, even reenactments. It is very typically Filipino to be able to do these things in the wake of a recent mayhem. Still, in the midst of the reverie was the strong yearning for home. This was arranged in a matter of days and we, one by one, packed what remained of our belongings and hiked down from the hillside to the cities and to our respective families.

We would have wanted that “all’s well that ends well,” but it wouldn’t be. The physical wounds lingered, the psychological ones stayed longer. When the euphoria had faded, the recurrent symptoms of trauma began to set in, figuring into the old life we returned to or to the new ones the others tried to build. The deep-seated effects of torture slowly began to manifest in the many facets of our renewed existence.

1. Fear

The greatest fear that lingered in the hearts of the victims was the possibility of recurrence. In the experience of some, that fear had real basis, as shared by Lina: “I know of one person who had nowhere else to go to after he was released from detention. He went back to his former unit and was reunited with the people who tortured him. The distrust was still there. Even while at rest, he remained alone, constantly clutching his gun. He was still regarded as an enemy.”

For many of the victims, though, it was a phantom dread. I, for one, did not go through the same treatment as Lina’s friend when I went back to the Sierra Madre. The comrades welcomed me warmly, if awkwardly. Still I wasn’t able to shake off the anxiety and paranoia that lingered in my consciousness, as though the old familiar atmosphere was still there. It made me unreasonably conscious and guarded with every move, thinking that the slightest miscue might again be construed another way. After three months of this unbearable anxiety, I decided to end it. I left the hills for good.

Lyn experienced the same lingering paranoia when she was on the way to Visayas after her release from the Olympia operation. Before she met up with her new unit, the whole Visayan Party leadership was arrested, leaving her terrified that another round of suspicion and arrest would ensue.
The experience of being threatened with life and the actual infliction of bodily harm engendered in the victims a permanent feeling of vulnerability. One of the consequences was that the ability to trust in a caring and protective world was compromised, perhaps forever.

2. Rage and Retribution

Uncontrolled anger was among the more common post-traumatic symptoms. One victimized couple of the OPML, Caloy and Nina, shared how both of them would suddenly and simultaneously erupt in anger and fight for absolutely no reason at all. These usually came about in the most unexpected moments.

Lyn's relationship with her husband was severely affected. She used to have a laid-back personality that was noticeably altered after the experience. She became short-tempered, with her husband usually receiving her uncontrolled outbursts.

Lina, during the early months after her release, often felt a very strong urge to throw the bottles in their store, trembling violently as she tried to control herself. She also lost her temper more often, getting impatient over trivial matters. She felt she had lost control of herself.

Mario, in the early months after the release, tended to vent his ire against their children. In a few occasions he forced them to eat when they refused.

In the different case of Joey, who belatedly discovered the identity of his tormentors, the rage was even more heightened and sustained. The suffering he endured in 1985 was aggravated by the deception he came to realize seven years after.

When someone told me what really happened, I was fuming mad. I was wild for several weeks. Each time I saw a former comrade, I revealed everything, giving instructions for them to tell all. I had an illusion that I suffered for a noble cause, believing all the while that enemy soldiers were responsible for my abduction. What made it worse was that the torture inadvertently continued because of my forced exile to another country.
What was really painful was the lie. I cannot even be proud of my suffering. I thought all the while that I carried a badge of honor, thinking I was a "political prisoner" in the normal sense. I felt so ashamed. I realized that everything was useless—the suffering, the exile, the commitment to the Party. A Party that had no regard for human life.

Generally, we held our deepest contempt for those who did the actual torture and interrogations—from the top Party officials to the guards. It was a seething rage, knowing we were wronged in a major way. I wasn't able to contain this anger when Sabeth, a member of the Task Force, called me up in my home a few days after I was released. At the start, I kept my calm and inquired if they had realized the grave mistake that had been committed. When she said she still believed they did the right thing, I exploded in anger and spewed out the worst invectives I could think of. I then banged the phone and tried to catch my breath.

Months after that, my anger took on a more systematic expression. Together with a few other surviving victims, we seriously considered committing a vindictive act. I now think it's a good thing this did not materialize.

Beyond the gut level desire for vengeance, though, remains a yet unheeded sense of justice and need for reckoning. Everybody believes that a clear injustice was committed, but nobody owns up to it, and there is no attempt whatever to address it squarely. What happened, and continues to happen, was an aggravating process of finger-pointing that drowned the issue under an assortment of meaningless slogans.

"I eventually got tired of rehearsing what I'd do to the persons who tortured me. How I would torment them in turn. I thought of maybe just killing them," said Joey in exasperation.

Most of the victims hold the entire Party machinery accountable for the atrocity. As Joey pursued his point: "The Party is led by people with blood in their hands. Moral turpitude is their case. They should never in their lifetimes be allowed to hold any position of influence or power." He further believes that the victims should be justly compensated.
... never mind the apologies. Give me a check. Seriously, should there ever be an indemnification process, I'll apply for one. I spent eleven years of my life for this movement.

Lina is of the same mind. She hopes that, should she be gone in the future, her nieces, nephews, and godchildren could claim for the damages done against her. But punishment of the guilty does not much concern her this time: "I don't want them killed because they learned their lesson. What would satisfy me is that whatever rectification to be done—whether by the RA or the RJ—whoever should continue the revolution must bear in mind that humans are humans."

3. Regret

A given fact about revolution is that joining it entails sacrifice. A deep sense of regret, thus, is engendered when the very thing for which one's sacrifices were meant becomes the very thing that persecutes him. As I wrote in a previous article:

When we decided to join the movement, we had accepted the probability of either being killed in battle, being arrested and tortured by the enemy, or losing our beloved friends. But nothing prepared us for OPML. You may not regret joining the movement while your balls are being electrocuted by a military officer—your commitment may even be fired up all the more. But it's infinitely more painful when people you had placed in high regard are pointing M-16s at your head and screaming, "Run!"

Cecil echoes a similar lament, recalling how her parents were deeply hurt by her decision to go underground. How her father had actually hit her for forsaking her family. The feeling of pagsisisi was at its most intense during actual detention, when it dawned upon us how everything came down to this—that this was all our sacrifices amounted to. Such feeling lessened somewhat when we were freed and went back to normal life. A few of us even went back to the countryside, while others left for good but still considered revolution, detention, and torture as learning experiences, albeit painful ones, that made them stronger.
But still the feeling of regret remained in the inner consciousness. For many, regret was no longer against joining the movement, but against the fact that the movement allowed it to happen. This was manifest in the victims' inability to share the experience with their immediate family. I myself found it impossible to tell my parents and siblings what the movement I fiercely defended during family debates actually did. Cecil and Mario could not think of ways to explain to their fast-growing children how they both carried rifles as guerrillas, and worse, what happened to them inside.

In fact, almost all of the respondents said they had not shared the experience with their families. Why, I do not know. I can only hazard a few guesses.

The family is arguably the last set of people to be convinced of the idea of one of their members going underground. They are also the angriest, and the most hurt, when one pursues it nevertheless. Thus, one possible reason for the victims' inability or unwillingness to confide to her family is to avoid the chastisement that goes with a perceived "wrong decision," to escape blame, the specter of words like "we told you so." Another reason may be that they want to spare their family from further pain. Or that they do not want to call attention and sympathy to themselves, preferring to maintain the distance and detachment from a traumatic experience by avoiding emotional encounters brought by confidences of such nature.

It is well known that many people who have been subjected to torture do not readily speak about their experiences. The reasons seem to be many and varied: denial of their reality, guilt, fear of being labeled "different" or "ill," repression, use of the rationalisation that it would be too painful for others to hear, etc. (Baker 1992)

Whatever the reason, what is most apparent is that the traumatic experience has profoundly affected the basic human relations that surround the victims, bearing upon the willingness to trust, to confide, and to invite sympathy and care from loved ones.
4. Displacement

Among the most distinct impacts of being persecuted by one's own community is the severe dislocation of one's sense of belonging and identity. This distinguishes the purge from the trauma associated with persecution by a clearly defined enemy. For the latter, the battle lines are clearly drawn, you know where you stand, and you struggle to survive being fully aware of your place and theirs in the whole scheme of things.

Generally, according to Judith Herman,

> Traumatized people suffer damage to the basic structures of the self. They lose their trust in themselves, in other people, and in God. Their self-esteem is assaulted by experiences of humiliation, guilt, and helplessness...The identity they have formed prior to the trauma is irrevocably destroyed.

In the case of the anti-infiltration hysteria, this destruction of identity was even more pronounced, for the heretofore familiar lines have become completely obliterated. The comfort and security of knowing one's place no longer held; the definition of enemy and friend were no longer operative. A twisted sense of reality took its place, distorting the very conception of the self.

Such condition was most vivid in Lina's case. “While I was in detention and I began cooperating, I sometimes thought if I was really, in fact, an enemy, I was terribly at a loss with myself, feeling completely devoid of my own identity.”

Life after detention did not offer any renewed clarity, except for some who resolved their personal doubts by renewing their fundamental commitment to the revolution. A handful, while unwilling to go back to the movement, found themselves unable to reintegrate into society's mainstream. There were a number who continued to operate outside the bounds of law, having found their capacities for economic survival in society severely limited. They were compelled to use their inherent daring and familiarity with weapons to undertake such acts as robberies and hold-ups. Tragically, these few had been arrested and/or killed in the course of their criminal activities.
The irony could not be ignored: they started out as ordinary persons who chose a life of extraordinary sacrifice, compassion, and commitment to a movement. That movement turned violently against them. They ended up dead as uncelebrated common criminals. Such is the paradox of human life.

The rest of us were fortunately spared from such fate. Many of us went “above-ground,” while still doing what we considered to be people-oriented work. Many of us began to question the correctness of the once too secure tenets of revolutionary doctrine. The purge was a turning point for most, the node that marked the disengagement from our accepted paradigm. It may of course be argued that such dislocation was not limited to the victims of the purges. Almost all who were one way or another involved with the revolution went through it. Everyone, at one point, became a critical inquirer into the fundamentals of revolutionary thought, which was only highlighted during the infamous Reaffirm-Reject, or RA-RJ, split. It was simply characteristic of the times—a postmodern feature of fragmentation and indeterminacy—everyone feeling at a loss.

This may be true. It's just that we suffer the burden of experience. The onerous reality of going through atrocity at the height of doing revolutionary work, from the hands of co-revolutionaries, could not but impact on our new outlook. The laborious critique of revolutionary thought and practice was not a cerebral exercise for us—it took on a very physical edge.

This led to insurmountable levels of skepticism, even bitterness. A lot of us have found it doubly difficult to fully commit to anything. Many have become eternally wary and cynical about anything that purports to offer directions or enlightenment.

The damage to the survivors' faith and sense of community is particularly severe when the traumatic events themselves involve the betrayal of important relationships. (Herman 1992)

5. The Struggle for Normalcy

Curiously, despite what happened, many victims did not declare a blanket condemnation of the entire movement. Many saw the tragedy as an
aberration in an otherwise humane revolutionary formation. Others saw it as an accident that was just waiting to happen, attributing it to structural flaws that needed to be addressed.

However they looked at it, all the victims went through an arduous climb trying to rebuild a life that was almost lost. The difficulty was mainly because we had already repudiated that kind of life in the first place. Many of us left schooling as a matter of choice. Many others had never experienced working for wages. Some had replaced traditional friendships with comradely kinship.

With the revolutionary ordeal right behind us, new crossroads reminiscent of old predicaments stared us in the face. Understandably, many refused to go back to the revolutionary fold, though a lot still wanted to pursue the activist way of life.

I spent the first months after my release bumming around. I sought out friends within and outside the movement and spent days drinking with buddies, watching movies, playing basketball—generally taking my sweet time.

In a few months I got tired of this, then found myself hiking back to the hills. But saddled by boredom (life in the hills is characterized by long, grinding spells of inactivity punctuated by sudden eruptions) and disquieted by the lingering paranoia, I left for good. I decided to finish any college degree and later worked in a nongovernment organization.

Lina also worked in one. "I joined an NGO for my catharsis, but got tired of it. I then went to selling ethnic products." Lina currently works for another NGO on women's concerns, and is seriously considering doing a study on the gender questions that figured in the purge campaigns.

Cecil and Mario found their relationship strengthened after the ordeal:

We had a chance to think about ourselves, to dream about our future and not just continue negotiating our lives within the context of revolution. When we returned, we helped in constructing my in-laws' house, ventured into some small decors business, starting with a meager capital of P3,000.
We realized that economic survival is just as difficult as engaging in revolution. When we were in the movement, we did not earn any money and took pride in the fact that we did what we did in service of the greater good, unmindful of our own economic well-being. Now we know that it is not that simple—ordinary people also struggle hard to eke out a living. It is not a bourgeois matter to earn your upkeep.

For her part, Cecil realized the importance of old relations: "I realized that I still had friends. I thought I had lost all of them when I was in the movement. Now I realize their importance."

She initially found some difficulty in finding work because she did not graduate from college. But she has surmounted this difficulty and went on to hold a responsible post in an international NGO.

Mario and Cecil resumed going to church regularly, which they said was more for the socialization of their children with the community.

Lina went back to her religious practices. She resumed her nightly prayers and occasional church visits.

Joey, who was at the time convinced that the military was responsible for his abduction, flew to Australia to escape further harassments. There, he rued the lost opportunity to be part of the political upheavals here in 1986. He also lamented his difficulties as a virtual political exile:

Life out of the country was terrible. It was, in the first place, completely unplanned. My wife particularly had a hard time as she was adamantly against leaving.

Right now, my primary concern is making a living. For a long time, I felt like a complete outsider. I'm trying to go back to the mainstream, having never really tried the "normal life," the normal middle class. I've always lived my life under cover, behind a front. At the university, at the office, even my whole work in Australia was not mainstream. I'm maladjusted at thirty-seven, trying to discover what is ordinary. They took away my youth.
Lyn, who endured four months in limbo under the Olympia, was not able to return to her family for one more year after her ordeal. The military was reportedly hot on her trail, being fully aware of her circumstances at the time.

She headed straight to the Visayas instead, wanting to plunge right into work as her way of undertaking her own “rehabilitation.” But as military arrests happened in the region even before she arrived, she was stuck in her jump-off point at Cebu where she again faced months of uncertainty. For six months, she whiled away her time playing Pacman in the malls. She finally found work later organizing a human rights concert and returned to Manila in December 1989.

Here, Lyn met one of her interrogators by chance. She felt hot and cold flashes in an instant. But before she could even collect her feelings, the man knelt before her, shed copious tears and sought forgiveness. The interrogator’s guilt cut deep and was in dire need of assuaging, which she willingly granted.

As a whole, the guilt question crisscrossed the web of human interactions among the plethora of players in the anti-infiltration drives. For those involved in the interrogation and torture, guilt was either acknowledged or ignored. While some interrogators faced up to their offense, many others were unable to bear the brunt of such responsibility and refused to face the question squarely. Some, such as Pedro, who was tearfully in remorse at OPML’s end, was reportedly crowing years later that had it not been for him, more lives would have been lost.

While such statements were largely considered repugnant coming from a person everybody knew was among the top supervisors of the operation, other remarks were even more revolting. Kenneth remained unmoved and unconvinced that he did something wrong. He resolutely defended their position, taking the Party leadership to task for having halted it and laying all their efforts to waste. Mela, another top-ranking regional cadre, even defended the use of torture. “How else would they have spoken?” she said.

Not all the perpetrators felt this way, though. Janis, who gave me an interview, confessed that she went through a period of denial for more than a decade, but was now willing to face it. She wanted to seek out all
the victims she was somehow involved with and apologize. Similarly, Neil acknowledged his accountability and participation as leader of the Party at the time, and was willing to go through a process of restitution or whatever form of redress.

Some of the victims also felt some sense of guilt. Many were conscious that their being forced to implicate other innocent comrades facilitated the bloody multiplier effect of the investigations. Despite the fact that such things happened under duress, the unpleasant feeling remained difficult to scuttle because it involved familiar people.

Joey never forgave himself for the betrayal he felt he committed against his wife, even though he was merely tricked into divulging their residence under interrogation. Similarly, Lyn took it against herself that she identified so many of her colleagues. Upon her release, she sought them out individually and apologized.

Apologies were never expected from the victims though, for everyone understood the whole context upon which these happened. Everyone knew that, one way or another, he or she was implicated in the worst form of dementia that had ever afflicted the revolutionary movement.
My physical constitution did not prevent me from leading a hard, revolutionary life. I am barely four feet tall. My spine, suffering from an extreme curvature, is deformed and broken. I come from a very poor background, but I managed to finish college in a state university. After finishing my undergrad years, I went underground.

What I will recount are the circumstances that led to the horrible things I went through that had nothing to do with, or were done to me in spite of, my physical deformity.

I used to work with an NGO for tribal communities. Then I organized fisherfolk and farmers. After going through spinal surgery, I was deployed to Bulacan where I could do light Party work while having some time to rest. In the second quarter of 1985, after two years in that area, I was ready to return to my former underground headquarters.

When I arrived at the UG house at seven in the evening, I was surprised to discover that it had just been raided by the military. Members of my collective, Gardo and Osang, had been arrested that morning, according to Osang's babysitter.

I entered our room and found it in disarray. Some of my things were confiscated as well. The young babysitter frantically egged me to escape. Thus, not bothering to fix the place, I walked away. I noticed some men standing by the nearby store. I could tell they were from the military and I wanted to see their faces so I'd be able to describe them to my comrades. I nervously went to the store and bought some candy. As I walked away, I disposed of the neatly folded letters and telephone numbers in my possession. I later reported this incident to my comrades. I would much later learn that this narrow escape has raised suspicions among my comrades.

The suspicion against me was further bolstered by the fact that Jojo, a relative of mine, was also arrested and used as an asset by the military. He set up a meeting with me, but I was not arrested. He set
up a second meeting but contacted my friends so that they could warn me against going to the meeting place.

Other incidents took place, such as the arrest and subsequent disappearance of Osang’s husband Ricardo. He was with the higher organ of a partisan unit, and he used to come home to our UG house. He was accosted a few days after he went to my best friend’s house, which they used as a communications post. My friend managed to escape, but Ricardo remains missing to this day.

There were other close brushes—I told them all, not knowing these would make me guiltier in the eyes of my comrades. I had always been honest, holding nothing back. Only much later would I realize how trusting I had been, how I gave total commitment to a movement that never trusted me back.

Apparently, Lisa’s arrest had intensified military activity: The UG house was staked out, comrades were tailed. With all these taking place, I was moved from one house to another because I was allegedly being sought by the military. I was even made to stay with people I did not know. In November 1985, I was informed that I would be assigned to an armed partisan unit.

I was astonished. I was not interested and never expected this kind of work. I was not battle-trained and obviously incapable of the physical demands it would entail. With my physical state, did they expect me to gun it out with the police? But they said I was to do administrative work so I accepted the new post. Days later, I was informed that I was to go to an exposure trip to a guerrilla base. Having no time to prepare, I asked for one more day since my clothes had been carted off by the military. This “delay” was also counted against me.

The trek to the guerrilla base was extremely difficult for me. As I just had a recent spinal surgery, my doctors advised against any strenuous physical activity. Still, I had to walk from 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. in tortuous terrain. With all my things on my fragile back I was almost crawling. I wanted to be carried, but was too shy to ask.
At the base, I noticed that I had been isolated from my comrades. I asked for information but the commander refused to see me. I thought that perhaps this was mere standard operating procedure for noncombatant newcomers. For seven days no one spoke to me.

After three months I was told to join the armed propaganda unit. But I proved to be such a liability, slowing them down by at least a third of their pace. I decided to stay within four communities where I was more productive.

I was allowed to leave the guerrilla zone when the ceasefire between government and the CPP-NPA was declared. I proceeded to the home of a best friend where I was shocked to learn the truth—that comrades believed all along that I was an enemy. “Had I not known you better, I would have believed it too,” said my friend. I discovered further that the typewriter I borrowed had already been confiscated and my clothes were left to be eaten by rats.

After less than a week, I decided to go back to the guerrilla zone. The commander told me that they wouldn’t have cared less had I left for good. He said that I was brought to the hills to be killed, but no one simply had the nerve. After all, I couldn’t even carry a gun and was considered harmless. But I wouldn’t take this sitting down. I wrote all my comrades and asked them to submit their evaluation of me. Nothing came, not a single one for three years.

It was a peculiar situation: I was considered an enemy but was allowed to oversee four communities. I coordinated and facilitated activists and would-be guerrillas. The people I led served as guides of the kasamas inside the guerrilla base. The house where I was staying was even used as a drop-off for supplies. I took notes, frequently taught the Basic Mass Course and even the Basic Party Course. I was entrusted with huge sums of money. One might think that all this should have cleared me. But I remained under observation.

One might ask further: With such distrust, why did I continue? I told myself I had to fight this, to seek justice within. I didn’t want to leave
with this dirty label stuck on my back. I strongly believed I could still contribute a lot to the cause.

The day came when I was asked to go to a far-flung community, where I was supposed to do some teaching. They said I need not bother to prepare my things for it would just be a short visit. As I sat down to rest, someone came from behind and I found myself surrounded by young women who looked like college students. “In the name of the Communist Party of the Philippines...” someone recited. I was dumbfounded. They confiscated my personal belongings. My tears flowed. And then I saw a former HO (higher organ) and thought for a moment that I was summoned at last to be cleared. But then I realized what was really happening. I asked them why they were doing this, and they told me to say no more, as I was an enemy. Three young women brought me to a certain spot and made me sit. The interrogators were called next—about four women and two men. The big man said something about Protocol 2 that I couldn’t comprehend. Something about how I should be treated, as a verdict has already been reached.

I was blindfolded and brought to the detention center. There I saw many detainees, some of them hanging by their wrists—one was an old man. I was handcuffed and made to lie down on a stretcher. I was totally confused, I could not figure out if my co-detainees were real comrades or enemies. I couldn’t stop crying. I couldn’t eat. The other detainees gave comforting words: “You’ll get used to it.” They told me I should eat if I was to survive interrogation.

I felt utterly alone and defenseless. I did not expect to live. What was most odd was that I felt shame! Young guerrillas, serving as camp guards, were there. They came from my area and I used to teach Party courses to some of them. Before I was their idol, now I’m dirt, the object of their invectives.

They used psychological tricks in the course of interrogation, dwelling on my religious background when I was younger. They demanded that I name names, to narrate my history in the movement. Failing to respond, they hung me by my wrists. By this time I was already
very weak because of my refusal to eat, made even worse by my menstrual period. I was left hanging for a day and a half. At first I thought that I could bear it because I was on tiptoe. But later they raised me further.

While I was hanging, I thought of any possible way out. I hated to die—not like this, as a traitor. I wanted to live to tell the truth. They kept feeding me Gardo’s name, forcing me to admit that he was an enemy. I then decided that I would concur with whatever they were feeding. “Okay, I’ll talk.” They brought me down and fed me some porridge. “Yes, Gardo’s an enemy,” I told them. The problem was I could not sustain this, could not think of anything else to say beyond it. So they brought me to the pen pen.

There were freshly dug sites—ready for those who refuse to “cooperate.” We were all chained together when we were brought there to face our prospective graves. At the penpen site, some were killed and some were spared—those brought there for the desired terror effect. We were all asked to say our last words. Some shouted: “Long live the CPP-NPA!” I uttered, “History will tell the truth.” One of us was quite combative. He spit on the guards and tried to kick them. His neck took the first knife.

I was brought to the pen pen session more than once and thus was witness to a variety of ways of killing human beings. They forced us to look. One was strangled from behind using what they called the “marine hold.” Once I looked away—I just heard the victim’s scream like a pig being butchered. He struggled for air. He was kicked down into the grave. His color has already darkened but he was still alive. His last words were: “Maglagom kayo, mga kasama!” (“Comrades, learn your lessons!) He was stabbed and his blood was smeared on my face.

I felt like I was afloat. I felt numb. I was no longer afraid to die. I was interrogated again.

Then one afternoon, at dusk, they brought me to a place farther away, together with three men and one woman. I saw four freshly dug sites.
I was made to kneel down. The three men were stabbed in front of me. The pants of one were taken off, and then the three dead men were thrown to their respective graves and covered with soil. The other woman was crying behind me. She said: “Don’t tell my parents that you were the ones who killed me.” I was no longer fully aware at the time, and I did not know if they killed her then. I only remember that the interrogator kept asking me questions, and I only tried to answer the best I can under the circumstances.

At the detention center, we weren’t allowed to talk. Sometimes the guards left and we were able to sneak in a few words to each other. I remember one kindly guard who often gave us some water. That did him in. He was arrested and, much later, brought in front of us, gagged and handcuffed. He was also killed.

We were often moved from one camp to another. Our captors told us that, should we meet enemy troops on the trail, we would be killed first. The trails were muddy and deep, and we were all chained to each other, which made it infinitely more difficult. I would not have been able to keep in step had my co-detainees not pulled me alongside them.

We were fed one teaspoonful of rice. The women were made to dance. One was touched and stripped. Subordinates were ordered to beat up their superiors. They were crying while they were hitting each other.

I lived through this torment all of three months, not counting the past three years that I was under observation. I lost all hope that it would ever end, but it did. Somehow it did.
The team discovers and exhumes Jess's and Nida's remains after days of digging and searching.
The team offers prayers for Jess and Nida Libre.
PART THREE

the rot in the root
The recurrent character of the anti-infiltration campaigns indicates that it was not an aberration. There must be something fundamental, endemic, or otherwise imbedded in the movement for it to be vulnerable to, or capable of, excesses of this magnitude.

What or who was the culprit? Was it an ideology that romanticized violence? Was it the vertically constructed Party structure? Could it be the self-contained leadership, or the subservient pool of followers? Much as it is too tempting to single out the major cause of the tragedy, it would be erroneous to fall into such simplistic attribution. No single factor can by its lonesome be able to effect such magnitude of human tribulation. Not even Hitler could have perpetuated the mass murder of Jews without the socio-historical circumstances of Nazi Germany and its people at the time. Like every other human action of overwhelming impact, the anti-infiltration tragedy was the result of a multiplicity of factors that converged and interacted at a given historical frame.

It is the purpose of this part of the book to look into these factors individually and in conjunction with the others.

1. Seeds of Atrocity on Fertile Soil

What compels a person to intentionally hurt another? Human motivation in this regard is multifarious: for revenge, for punishment, to drive home a point, to feel good, to “show one’s love,” to get information, to teach or learn a lesson, to attain a “greater good,” and so forth.

The controversial study conducted by Dr. Stanley Milgram, where he put forty male volunteers to an experimental test on obedience and violence, demonstrated the ease by which individuals can be compelled to inflict pain on another person so long as there is sufficient cause to do so.9

The anti-infiltration purges of the CPP-NPA demonstrate in far more vivid detail how possible it is to motivate sober and rational people to hurt and kill, so long as they believed it was the right thing to do, that such acts were perfectly reasonable when done against enemies. The comrades were
convinced that those on the side of the *kaaway* just had to face the painful consequences of going against the revolutionary tide and should be dealt with appropriate revolutionary justice.

This could be understood within the context of a revolutionary war, except for an anomaly: the more obvious enemies—the military soldiers—were generally treated better in captivity. They were never tortured. In fact, torture has never been standard practice within the CPP-NPA. It has never been a part of revolutionary tradition.

Except during purges of perceived infiltrators. It is important to reiterate here the supreme irony that the movement employed torture only during those moments when they were dealing with comrades under suspicion. But why this particular distinction? How do we explain this aberration? It would have been more logical and easier to comprehend (though not necessarily accept) if revolutionaries reserved their deepest hatred and, therefore, their cruelest acts, against enemy soldiers. But no, the torture and killings happened among people who not only knew each other, but people who were very close and people who depended on each other for their survival.

To sufficiently explain this conundrum, it is important to look at how the atrocity began. Specifically, how torture was introduced into the picture and how this made it possible for the contagion to infect the entire movement's population.

To begin with, the CPP-NPA had explicit and strictly enforced policy against torture of the enemy. The reasons for such ruling are sound, sensible, logical, and obvious. First and most important reason: the movement believes in the nobility of its goals. It seriously regards itself as the people's alternative to the oppressive, fascist, and brutal state and its military machinery. The military held a dismal human rights record; the CPP-NPA endeavored to be the complete opposite. The policy against torture was a direct expression of this ideal. It was, ostensibly, what separated the soldier from the guerrilla.

The NPA had normally been conscious of how it conducted its armed struggle. The exhortations of Mao Tse Tung were faithfully adhered to—particularly those on proper guerrilla conduct in relating with the masses; and how iron discipline and absolute commitment to serve and sacrifice
should be maintained. The international rules of combat, as stipulated in the Geneva Conventions and the succeeding Protocols, were consciously followed. These were all in keeping with the lofty goals and tradition of a "people's war."

Finally, the politics of appearance were just as crucial. The war between government and the CPP-NPA is only partly military, the more important component is the battle for hearts and minds. Appearing humane and compassionate has good propaganda value, thus treating military captives fairly makes for a positive spectacle and public image.

All this could have been so well and clear-cut, except for the complication brought about by an entirely distinct field of engagement—infilttration. The NPA knew what to do if the enemy were out there—evade them, engage them in battle, avoid capture (for, by experience, torture is inevitable in the hands of soldiers), and treat them properly when they are captured. But what if they were within?

Its resiliency and rapid growth notwithstanding, the movement remains extremely vulnerable. It is constantly under attack. In terms of numbers, it is weak compared to its adversary. Even at its peak, the number of full-time NPA guerrillas was but a fraction of the total number of military personnel. Which is of course expected, otherwise it should have already won. Which is also the reason why it engages in guerrilla warfare, the war of the weak against the strong—what Robert Taber appropriately calls a "war of the flea."

It is clandestine, illegal, a prime target of the state. Such intrinsic vulnerability makes paranoia, a lingering state of mind inside the organization, a veritable given. The one crucial thing going for it is the fabric of trust that glues everyone to a common cause. When this delicate fabric is torn, vulnerability increases tenfold and paranoia wreaks havoc.

Suspicion and distrust have often been an organization's bane. Such has been their impact historically that literature abounds on such a theme—from Greek mythology to Sherlock Holmes to Milan Kundera. There had always been a great deal of human fascination about how the mind gets warped and manipulated by malice and how this eventually destroys the best of relationships.
The moment the CPP-NPA looked seriously into the possibility of enemies within its ranks, it began to tread on dangerous ground. Espionage is a vastly different terrain. Even common sense would tell us that one needs to be surefooted, meticulous, intuitive and sharp if one were to investigate it.

The initial investigation of a few suspects was the first risky step, for it was already a tacit acknowledgment of the dreaded possibility. Unfortunately, two things went against the proper resolution of this problem:

- The movement does not recognize due process.
- It was ill-equipped with the sophisticated means of doing investigative work, especially of this nature.

In the absence of a clear, firm framework in addressing this phenomenon, internal Party dynamics came into play. To begin with, the revolutionary brand of justice within the Party had always been swift and arbitrary. The *Hukumang Bayan* (People's Court) afforded the suspects no right to question the accuser nor to defend himself. Due process was dismissed as a bourgeois, reformist concept. In fact, at the beginning of the purge investigations, the suggestion from some individuals to consider due process was easily shot down. It was a very weak voice; the proposition held no sway.

As such, investigations proceeded with no more than the accuser's unexamined experiences and baser instincts to guide them. With an inept and haphazard investigation at the onset, they failed to establish a definitive case against the first suspects. Neither were they willing to clear the suspects—the Party is, by and large, an inflexible body. They had already gone this far, impatience began to

Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, wrote about how the confession of suspected heretics was given highest importance by the Inquisition during medieval times. They regarded it as a "particularly strong proof, requiring for a conviction only a few additional clues, thus reducing to the minimum the work of investigation and the mechanics of demonstration... (the) confession was therefore highly valued; every possible coercion would be used to obtain it."
sink in, and there was that fear, that dreaded possibility that they had made a wrong accusation. Much like an arrogant driver who might have made a wrong turn, but decides to push on and find his way forward rather than turn back, the investigators pushed on by obtaining confessions at whatever cost.

'Torture was the only way left. When they finally began to employ it, a crucial threshold was crossed. Thus came the murderous cycle.'

And obtain confessions they did. One can imagine the triumphant glee of the investigators when, through what they were finally able to extract, they were "proven correct."

'The confession was not as highly valued when the captive was from the military. Apart from trying to obtain tactical enemy strategy and using the captive for propaganda purposes, the comrades did not see it as indispensable. The confession of a suspected DPA, however, was an imperative.

'The use of torture was the worst error in judgment during the course of the investigation. Had the movement developed real capacities for investigation, it should not have been an option at all. The officers would have been aware that such a tool could and does yield false information. Nothing more than common sense was needed, but there are times when even this becomes not at all that common.

More than the incompetence and inexperience in properly dealing with infiltration, the enticements of the exercise of power inevitably came into play. The investigators had in their hands completely powerless individuals whose fate depended on them. The detainees—manacled, unfed, and utterly defenseless—had no means to resist whatever fancied the interrogators. It was so easy to fall into the lure of playing hardball, with rich doses of *machismo* thrown in. They had jurisdiction and discretion, they possessed full command and authority, they wielded absolute power. And they had at their disposal people who might have been responsible for the movement's setbacks, but who refuse to speak up. Somehow it also became a challenge, a sort of battle where whoever breaks loses. And nothing prevented them from using torture. Foucault also described such a situation, where earning a confession is:
certainly a way of obtaining evidence, the most serious of all—the confession of the guilty person; but it was also the battle, and this victory of one adversary over the other, that “produced” truth according to a ritual. In torture employed to extract a confession, there was an element of the investigation; there also was an element of the duel.

And thus the seeds of torture were planted, hauling in more suspects as a result, fueling the fires of cruelty even more. What might have been another compelling factor for the relative ease with which comrades hurt their own kind was the notion of betrayal and deception. Deep levels of rage and hatred might have consumed the perpetrators by the very thought, and it was all just a matter of rendering the appropriate requital to a perceived wrong.

Finally, what was most terrifying was that the practice whetted their appetite. Committing atrocity as a matter of obligation was one thing, doing it with relish was another. It was apparent that many of the implementors had both going for them. Picture in your minds the sick thrill of being able to make a person say or do things by brute force: it is intoxicating, and positively addictive. It was perhaps one of the major reasons why the practice became rabidly infectious.

2. **Perpetuating Atrocity**

With the boundary crossed, it was then a matter of other ingredients jumping into the rampaging snowball. Paranoia fed itself, escalating to new levels, affecting and infecting the entire movement nationwide. Everyone was witness to paranoid behavior’s blinding effect on people. As suspicion and distrust aggravated, paranoia cut both ways—the fear that one’s comrades were DPAs, and the fear that one’s comrades would think him a DPA. Such hypnosis of fear spawned abnormal behavior: cadres became uncannily self-conscious, defensive, and observant to a fault. Everyone who was still involved with the movement in 1988—whether they were
in the countryside or in the cities—would know the feeling. It was a thick atmosphere of fear and dread and absolute uncertainty.

Such behavior proved to be fertile soil for atrocity to thrive and flourish. At the interrogation areas in the countryside, the practice of torture became standard operating procedure that involved more active players from the top to the bottom levels of the Party hierarchy. This contagion is what we will try to examine in this part.

1. The Contagion of Evil

One may imagine the torturer as someone who possesses despicable attributes and repulsive behavior: domineering, vulgar, drug-crazed, probably hates children, kicks pets. He or she may have had a bad childhood, does not pray, is a complete snob, uneducated, ugly. If one had any combination of these traits, it would not come as a surprise if he turns out to be a torturer.

But that would be too stereotypical, and in the history of humanity, nothing can be farther from the truth. Incidences of brutality on a mass scale have always been participated in by otherwise “normal” beings—persons who were reared up well and who were not much different from your next-door neighbor. Many Nazi soldiers were brought up as good Christians. A lot of Khmer Rouge cadres who bludgeoned Cambodian civilians to death used to be gentle peasants.

The Philippine revolutionary purge experience was not at all different. Janis, for one, was a soft-spoken, low-key student activist who excelled in her academics, graduating with honors from a prestigious university. She was easygoing and quick to laughter, and took her revolutionary tasks seriously, like all of us. Unfortunately, she was one of those chosen to be part of the Task Force Missing Link, and so had to do what the others did. As had all the rest, she followed orders. She was convinced that the torture and executions were justifiable under the circumstances, for these were being done against enemies and traitors.

Is she an evil person?
Those who engage in evil deeds rarely, if ever, see them as such. For the evil-doer, there is always sufficient justification to make the deed appear not only reasonable but absolutely necessary. (Zimbardo 1979)

Thus, while some violent actions are indeed expressions of extreme emotion such as hate and anger, "much collective violence is coolly instrumental—a means to an end." They are "not simply the actions of evil people but rather reflect the impact of evil situations on good, well-meaning individuals." (ibid.)

What motivates the ordinary person to commit inhuman acts, and a group to be convinced that such acts are a necessity? These are questions whose answers needed more than raw personal experience to draw from. I thus tried to supplement my direct insights with literature to identify the factors that make for atrocity's contagion. There may be others, but these are the factors I gathered:

a. Complete obedience to authority

When a legitimate authority is present, it makes it relatively easier for an individual to commit acts that are normally against his better judgment because the responsibility resides in another person. The guilt is somehow diffused when one can claim that "he's only following orders." (The culture of compliance within the movement is discussed in more detail on the next chapter.)

b. Objectification of individuals

When people are seen not as human beings, but as undesirable objects whose existence is inimical to one's goals, the hindrances to cruelty are more easily removed. This is called dehumanization, and it had always been instrumental in the perpetuation of atrocity through time. Humiliating, hurting, or killing individuals become possible even for "normal, morally upright, and idealistic people to perform under conditions in which people stop perceiving others as having the same feelings, impulses, thoughts, and purposes in life that they do." (Zimbardo)
I observed this most vividly in the way we were treated inside the detention centers. People we knew no longer regarded us as humans. We were dispensable. If not, it would have been unimaginable for the perpetrators to commit the acts described in this paper. It must have been a conscious effort on their part to be able to reduce the shackled human beings in front of them into creatures of revulsion.

In Zimbardo’s study of dehumanization, he outlined the different techniques for individuals to succeed in dehumanizing others:

**Relabeling.** Abominable acts are made more bearable if alternative terminology is used to name or describe them, like “to waste” for “to kill.”

Oplan Missing Link, for one, demonstrated the creative possibilities of substituting and evolving vocabulary. These are just some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row 4</th>
<th>The purge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flag ceremony</td>
<td>Hanging by the wrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pen pen</td>
<td>Execution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impil</td>
<td>Infiltrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peps</td>
<td>Infiltrator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intellectualization.** As explained previously, the perpetuators and participants of atrocity need to be fully convinced that it is the right thing to do. They need to rationalize, hide behind the region of logic. Emotions therefore are normally repressed, particularly pathos and empathy. The only emotion that seems to have an outlet these times is rage, which is conveniently directed against victims.

**Compartmentalization.** This is a technique whereby the individual attempts to isolate a situation of atrocity from the rest of his being. He tries to paint it as something of an aberration, and it does not constitute the entirety of his nature and existence.

The active players of the purges were convinced that it was a temporary cleansing operation that just had to be gotten over with. They told themselves that, after this task, they could go back to their old, compassionate selves to continue with the momentarily sidetracked course of revolution.
Withdrawal. If one is to succeed in dehumanizing another, the human connection must be severed. At the OPML, interaction with detainees was avoided as much as possible, especially with familiar ones. Eye contact was minimized, and references to persons were made as impersonal as possible.

One way of depersonalizing the detainees was by assigning us new names. Ka Brix was called Burnok, I was called Taruktok, Ka Lina was called Cubes (in derision of her deformed back). The mockery apparent in the name-calling was deliberate: it made us objects of ridicule, making it easier to treat us with disdain instead of pity. It also became an exercise in erasing our revolutionary identity and making the detachment of heretofore existing connections complete and final.

Social support and humor. Qualms are easier removed and guilt becomes more bearable if there is affirmation. This is why atrocity, once under way, spins out of control—it thrives in mutual reinforcement. Evil deeds become more acceptable when they are affirmed, obscuring their true essence, blurring them in the evanescent nature of social acceptability.

Social support in the case of the purges was manifested in the complete endorsement of the highest Party leadership to the operation. Apart from this, collegial affirmation among the investigators allowed it to escalate. Humor, meanwhile, makes light of things. It hides the true weight of a deplorable situation. In many ways, it helps people to cope with grave situations, as Filipinos are wont to do. Unfortunately, it also served as a cloak to hide the real anomaly behind the purges. The investigators still found something funny about the whole affair, coming up with jokes as the investigations proceeded, and thus effectively blurring the painful reality and the inevitable consequences of their actions.

c. Mob syndrome

While the nature of the anti-infiltration operations does not place them in the category of a mob situation, they shared many of the characteristics of mob violence. For example, the collective verbal attack during the initial interrogation of new suspects attempted to simulate mob behavior. This proved to be quite effective in inducing the uncontrollable build-up of
rage that characterizes mob violence. As fresh captives, we saw how the generated levels of hyper-arousal that normally exist in lynch mobs (I know the type—they exist even in rallies) were made to spread throughout the group, like a contagious disease.14

One other significant characteristic of the mob is the erasure of individual identity, or deindividuation, "a situation in which individuals behave as if they were 'submerged' in the group, experiencing a reduction in inner restraint and a heightened freedom to engage in aggressive and other deviant behaviors."

When deindividuation occurs, responsibility for the acts become widely diffused, diminishing self-awareness and self-regulation. "Its consequences appear to be poor monitoring of one's own behavior, less monitoring of relevant behavioral norms...and heightened attention to the immediate situation only." (Goldstein 1994)

d. Hypnosis of Fear

We have consistently emphasized in this paper how fear became a compelling force for the implementors to commit atrocious acts. That fear helped fuel the vicious cycle. One feared that the process would turn against him, and thus needed to prove that he was capable of hurting the "enemy." Cruelty begets cruelty. It was like a spell: the torture and killing of humans became not only a matter of choice but a veritable must.

The highest Party leadership was not spared from the spell, which turned into an unmanageable scale of paranoia throughout the organization. Many Party leaders also feared that the campaign would turn in their direction, and thus granted complete sanctions and leeway. Many of them wanted to appear that they were not curtailing any initiative to purge the Party of internal enemies, and thus gave their blessings. They practically fed the evil, part of it out of fear.

It was only much later when they eventually sensed that their continued endorsement of the operation was becoming more of a compulsion. They were Party leaders and they were afraid. How much more the rest who were merely following orders?
There had been a number of proposed explanations that offered reasons behind the tragedy of the anti-infiltration operations. Armando Liwanag, in so many words, cast the blame on "erroneous lines" carried by certain personages within the Party. He said that the Party had been infected with certain fundamental ills, such as "revisionism," "militarism," and "insurrectionism," which led to confusion on principal and secondary processes, and thus made certain leaders unable to judge what is right and what is wrong, as in the purges. What was needed, he asserted, was to "reaffirm" the basic Party principles as originally formulated and rectify these errors.

Party leaders who "rejected" Liwanag's proposition believed that what was instead needed was a comprehensive summing up that should go beyond blame-laying. The problem, they said, goes deeper and cannot be solved by mere polemical weapons as the "Reaffirm."

Meanwhile, in his brief study on the anti-infiltration campaigns, Walden Bello talked about the "instrumentalist" mindset of the CPP-NPA, which tends to view individuals as objects incidental to revolution rather than as human beings with their own individuality and inherent worth.

Randolph David also suggested that the Party's entire organizational structure and ethos was conducive for such a tragedy to happen. Lyn, one of the victims, believed that these excesses would not have happened in an otherwise healthy movement.

Joel Rocamora attributed this to the Maoist orientation of the Party, specifically its predisposition to extol the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" of Red China, thus its propensity to purge.

There are many more propositions, and there may be grains of truth in all of them. We will now look at these grains of truth individually, and see how they add up to constitute the potential for atrocity the movement has developed, and actualized more than once.
An Intolerant Ideology

I tend to agree with Walden Bello when he said that the ideology of the Party is instrumentalist. Probably not in the blanket sense, but surely it had this proclivity, and in moments of crisis like the DPA scare, such inclination goes into full throttle. Its response to the specter of infiltration was a manifestation of this instrumentalist tendency towards expedient solutions when threatened.

And then there is the movement's propensity to glorify violence and the premium it gives to the military aspect of the struggle. The movement, guided by its modernist framework, has been preoccupied with winning battles and expanding its areas of control, rather than building empowered communities and raising consciousness. The military aspect of the struggle had often been privileged. Joey's personal experiences within the movement made him reflect along these lines:

I believe the comrades' formation had Pol Potist tendencies, especially those who came from the middle and upper classes who were not tempered by real life. They became "lumpen ilustrados." It was too easy for them to say "Kill him!" I felt that kind of formation even within myself—someone once commented about how easy it was for me to dismiss life. There was this kind of training, what we call utak pulbura (literally, "gunpowder brains").

Also, I believe that the movement's modernist-reductionist mindset paints the world in black and white and, ergo, people as either friend or foe. The cadres were mired in the myth of objectivity—and in what Conrad de Quiros referred to as "fear of the subjective"—that often made them go against their instincts, feelings, and better judgment to favor pseudo-scientific appraisals of reality, or what is considered as material truth.

Ultimately, much as revolutionary texts consistently caution members against dogmatism and other ills, it remained steeped in its own dogma. The ideology precludes all other schools of thought and dismisses them as reactionary, reformist, or bourgeois. With its self-contained view of society and people, the movement maintains an inordinate level of intolerance that can be driven up to dangerous extremes. Notwithstanding its long drawn-out strategy of protracted people's war, the movement ironically has a
strong impatient streak that is expressed in a variety of ways: in conducting campaigns, engaging critics, facing up to divergent views, or dealing with perceived internal enemies.

Skewed Power Relations

The revolution thrives in its critique of iniquity and the hierarchical distribution of wealth, power, and decision-making in society. But the movement itself is patently hierarchical. The whole Party structure is vertically organized and all major decisions are done at the top. What makes this worse is the air of infallibility and finality that accompany such decisions.

One familiar joke among lower ranking revolutionaries goes like this: “Where do correct ideas come from?” The correct answer should be, according to Marxist philosophy, “the masses.” According to the quip, the answer is HO, or higher organ. Of course many leaders do not find this funny at all.

Clearly, the movement is chock-full of paradoxes. Even as rebellion and dissent were the movement’s self-ordained raison d’être, it was intolerant of dissent within. Many major blunders were a result of this inflexibility and unwillingness to listen or engage in dialogue. Much as internal relations among comrades are cordial, informal, even warm, official Party decisions are nevertheless rigid. These were formally enforced through the principle of democratic centralism, which critics often decry as a mere euphemism for centralized rule. The “democratic” is by and large illusory.

This is well illustrated by the decision to boycott the snap elections in 1986. Despite overwhelming currents to the contrary, the Party stubbornly persisted in its position. The boycott debacle, as it were, was but a miniscule approximation of the dire consequences of the Party’s monolithic thinking. The purges brought out its most lethal potential.

All this, of course does not suggest ill will nor evil intent on the part of the movement. On the contrary, most of the members carry in their hearts a genuine desire to serve, motivated in large part by altruistic intentions. But as the saying would tell us, good intentions often pave the path to perdition.
I remember, for example, when Ka Arnel and I were in detention. We were approached by Ka Pedro, the most actively involved Central Committee member in the OPML. In a soft voice, he admonished us for being brainwashed by the things we read, like the Reader's Digest—which he said teems with anti-communist hogwash. I no longer had the energy to argue with him, even though I was in fact no great fan of the magazine. (I liked its "Laughter" section though.)

So Ka Pedro ranted on, lamenting how the movement now had lost the fundamentals of revolution. He said what the movement needed to do was go back to the simple basics: Serve the people. He seemed seriously reflecting on these things while he oversaw the torture and killings of people around him.

Like Madame Khokhlakov, in Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov, who confessed that "I love mankind...but I am amazed at myself: the more I love mankind in general, the less I love people in particular, that is, individually, as separate persons."

The Demise of Critical Thought

A direct outcome of the movement's ideological intolerance and hierarchical structure is the ill-balanced formation of cadres who can criticize societal aggravations, challenge legitimate authority, and employ elaborate expressions of social rebellion but are ill-equipped to question their very own locus of struggle and existence. Critical thought had always been trained outward but seldom inward.

Submissiveness and obedience being the implicitly favored traits, cadres who faithfully carried Party directives were more easily promoted. Mavericks and dissenters were often criticized as troublesome. This resulted in a population of cadres who are more efficient in accomplishing tasks and facilitating implementation down the line of command rather than scrutinizing their nuances and merits.

Such lack of critical facility, again, reached its zenith during the anti-DPA campaigns. The complete subordination of independent will allowed the anomalous investigations to proceed unhampered. A rough sketch of the
members of the Task Force under the OPML, for example, shows them to be people of undoubted loyalty. The others were youthful activists from college—young, compliant, and eager to please—who can easily be egged or coerced into anything. I do not suggest, though, that all those arrested were mavericks and troublemakers. To be sure, many victims were vocal dissenters, and this fact inevitably contributed to their arrest. Nevertheless, many other detainees were themselves dedicated followers and they were victimized in spite of it.

As we have learned, the compulsion to abide and obey became an imperative for survival though it offered no absolute guarantee. It has become a mutated strain of the internal culture of conformity that spun into uncontrollable levels.

Seemingly benign habits of servility and subservience, it turns out, can insidiously develop into monstrous proportions if left unchecked.

**The Missing Individual**

...they insist on complete absence of individualism and that's just what they relish! Not to be themselves, to be as unlike themselves as they can. That's what they regard as the highest point of progress. (*Dostoyevsky, Crime and Punishment*)

Amid a hierarchical and centralized organization, the movement adheres to the principles of collectivity. It has built and operated through Party collectives that exist in each step of the organizational ladder.

In and of itself, collectivism is progressive. It is consistent with democratic ideals and ensures that selfish interests do not take precedence over the interests of the group. Managed well, it evokes the creative participation of members and surfaces a plenitude of viewpoints.

The movement's sense of collectivity, as it were, is the subsumation of the individual to the group. Personal interests are sacrificed for the greater good. Individual thoughts give way to group wisdom—though these are often mere elaboration of ideas generated above.

106 TO SUFFER THY COMRADES
One pitfall of collectivism, particularly when carried to the extreme, is the inadvertent stunting of independent thinking. Within the Party, individual judgments often fade into obscurity and get swallowed by the habitual desire to reach unity of thought. Critical thought, again, is compromised.

Obsession with collectivism renders a group vulnerable to the phenomenon called “groupthink,” which is “a mode of thinking that persons in highly cohesive groups engage in when they become so preoccupied with seeking and maintaining unanimity of thought that their critical thinking is rendered ineffective.”

In such a situation, the members are more concerned with reaching consensus, rather than weighing pros and cons and raising moral issues, which makes them vulnerable to serious blunders. People infected with groupthink tend to get to an early consensus and, once reached, “to force the members to support it for better or for worse.” (Zimbardo)

One particularly intrusive practice of the Party is called CSC, or Criticism-Self-Criticism. It is a session where all members of the collective take turns in criticizing themselves and having others criticize them individually. It is akin to confession—in this case done in front of one's collective in lieu of a priest, and is comparable to one aspect of the Catholic tradition which capitalizes on the complex of guilt to assert its own sense of morality.

The CSC is supposed to erase the vestiges of liberalism, bourgeois thoughts and practices, and individualism, though at times it can be particularly vicious. Being accusatory in tone, it often engenders a feeling of guilt among the participants and tends to elicit admissions of weakness rather than create space for defense. Oftentimes this practice, though arguably well-intentioned, became not so much a celebration of cadres' unique qualities than an occasion for debasement of individual self-worth.

Many people argue that the forced confessions during the purge investigations were but an undue elevation of this kind of dehumanizing tradition.

Thus, the Party's overemphasis on collectivism made it difficult for the individual to blossom as a complete person. Many members, having been recruited at the prime of their youth, were yet to ripen as full adults. The
movement, having enticed them to enter its life-world, was supposed to provide an alternative environment upon which they were to found the continuation of their maturation process. On this task, the movement was once more found wanting. In the words of Joey:

My youth was a factor (in joining the revolution). At seventeen or eighteen, my experience was very middle class, very male, very city. Many adolescent problems were yet unresolved. Then the movement entered the picture, with its promise of providing proper direction and full excitement, like the born-again Christians. The movement comprised the formative period of my life, including my intellectual formation...

The party took advantage of my weaknesses: my impetuosity, my youth. But they never really changed all that. How did I imagine being relevant? An agent of change when I never really understood what it was I wanted to change...

Many individuals joined the revolutionary struggle because they were looking for a new and different environment to grow into. Many had that psychological need for attachment and belonging, their development becoming co-dependent on something concrete and stable. The problem, though, was that the movement had grown enormously without an attendant growth in its capacity to nurture its brood. Its failings were apparent on other crucial domains of human inquiry, such as the value of the individual person and the idea of selfhood. The conflicts of the self, as they inevitably surfaced, were automatically conjoined to ideological concerns, and thereby understood using solely ideological premises. Said David Cooper (1968):

It seems to me that a cardinal failure of all past revolutions has been the dissociation of liberation on the mass social level...and liberation on the level of the individual and the concrete groups in which he is directly engaged.

The anti-infiltration campaigns thus occasioned the ultimate erasure of the individual person inside the movement. Guards and interrogators were no more than inanimate cogs in a machine running on its own steam, and suspects were no more than timber to be dispensed with when they used up their remaining worth.
4. **Some Steps Forward**

One of the major dilemmas I faced in writing this book was that it would lay bare the frailties of a movement that has already been drastically weakened by the setbacks in its recent history. The temptation to remain silent, to let bygones be bygones so to speak, was quite strong. But somehow this wouldn't be. Some kinds of itch need more than scratching to be satisfied.

The following propositions are still at the initial stage. More recommendations and suggested steps forward are expected to come out of the possible, and hoped for, renewal of interest in the subject.

The most significant act that the movement can do, not only for the sake of the victims but also for its own, is to publicly unburden itself of the offense. The thing cannot and will not be buried forever. The Party should issue an official apology to all victims and others indirectly affected and undertake measures for indemnity.

As mentioned, such act would also be to the movement's advantage. The Philippine government and military has never done this, even though official and public records of their atrocities abound. The movement owning up to its crimes and indemnifying the victims would give it the moral ascendancy and right to continue being a social movement and lay claim as a legitimate player in progressive discourse.

The Party should also pay special attention to those victims who had been socially and economically disenfranchised. These people gave a lot to the movement, and the movement has taken a lot from them in terms of opportunities for social growth, skills development, and basic survival facilities in the "normal world." It has a moral obligation to provide more tangible assistance. Some victims were permanently affected by the trauma and continue to suffer its consequences to this day.

The Party should learn from the experiences of other countries in facing up squarely with this experience. South Africa, for one, had its Truth Commission for the world to learn from. The Party can do a similar process, facilitating the submission of depositions from persons involved and organizing face-to-face meetings between victim and perpetrator.
Forgiveness and catharsis can only be possible when efforts at dialog and reparation come willingly from all players involved.

Ultimately, the people and society shall gain from this process of expiation. It would show that people would no longer take depravity sitting down. They will no longer bury unpleasant things for convenience or fear because of indifference, and that they are willing to exhume forgotten atrocities and suffer the stench if that is all it would take for justice and basic decency to once more prevail.
Appendices
One of the direct documentary sources I used was the CPP-NPA Southern Tagalog paper dated February 1983. Perusing the document, one could glean the dispassionate, almost clinical, treatment of the issue.

As explained previously, this document was used as the "proper guide" in implementing the Kampanyang Ahos in 1985-86. I was unable to establish if this document was also used during the OPML. In all likelihood, it was used there as well, for the patterns were very similar.

The following summarizes the contents of this document:

1. Describes how the border between Quezon and Bicol provinces became the target of intensive infiltration efforts between 1979 and 1982, explaining that infiltration was integral to the enemy's counter-insurgency warfare.

2. Outlines the supposed "missions" of infiltrators, such as: to identify leading cadres, steal Party documents, recruit other DPAs, sabotage programs and movements, etc. It says infiltrators normally would not kill other cadres, in order to remain within the organization, except for "action agents" with the precise mission of targeting key leaders and escaping after.

3. Explains how infiltrators were able to recruit individuals within the organization: by focusing on new activists, infiltrators' relatives, those with grievances, and those they share intimate relations with; utilizing propaganda and demoralization techniques; pointing out hardships within the movement; and bribery.

4. Enumerates the movements and habits of infiltrators, including deliberate defiance of mass line, poor performance, haphazard education work, sabotage and tipping of military actions, etc.

5. Describes how the Party was able to solve this security problem, initially through the discovery of agents and "ringleaders."
6. Provides the steps in the investigation, beginning with the creation of ITs (Investigating Teams) at the district level, cleansing at the village and Party level, and summing up of lessons at the end.

7. Categorized infiltrators into the following:

   a. the "dangerous" ones, such as ringleaders, AFP members, active recruiters, and those who intended to inflict or did actual damage. These were summarily punished.

   b. new recruits, who were considered "passive." The policy for them was neutralization, i.e. to expel from the Party, be stripped of responsibilities if they remain, or returned to the barrio.

From December 1981 to July 1982, thirty-two were punished, fifteen were neutralized, and nine escaped.

8. Discussed "Lessons on the Arrest, Detention, Interrogation and Punishment" of responsible agents. It began with the classification of suspects into the following:

   a. individuals identified by two or more suspects;

   b. those identified by one suspect; or proven, but not the "brain";

   c. those not identified, but had relations with other infiltrators, and with questionable personal background.

The document detailed the steps in arresting a suspected DPA: from using a false pretext, to disarming, to bonding.

For detention, it stressed the need for round-the-clock security, and the need to ensure that the hands and feet are tied securely. There was explicit instruction against cruelty to captives. Complete seclusion of the suspects was also instructed.

The task of interrogation fell on the Interrogation Group or IG. The document emphasized the need for the IG members to be coordinated in their actions, to be good at "psywar," and to clearly delineate their functions, i.e. who plays it nice ("mabait na ninong") and who acts as the vicious,
impatient one ("kilabot")—the classic “good cop-bad cop” technique. "Psy-war" devices included a promise of freedom, feeding of known information, bringing captives face-to-face, bringing them to the gravesite, etc.

The policy against physical abuse was reiterated, citing maltreatments in similar operations in the past. In these cases, according to the document, the suspects either gave false information or became more defiant.

When the IG concludes that all information are already given, the kind of punishment is then decided. These were some of the considerations for punishment: (a) should be done with extreme secrecy; (b) a ready gravesite should be ensured (in the past, it says, comrades procrastinated on this task); and (c) “sadistic” killings should be avoided.

The document noted some “errors” in punishing a few individuals “with no sufficient basis,” and those with lighter offenses who should have just been neutralized instead.

9. The last part talks about the Party’s errors and weaknesses which the enemy has taken advantage of. This included laxity in security, weaknesses in social investigation or SI, being duped by the DPAs’ show of eagerness in revolutionary work, liberalism in recruiting guerrillas from the activist ranks, carelessness in reintegrating cadres captured by the enemy, recklessness in cadre and guerrilla deployment, lack of summing up of the infiltration cases of 1976-77.

As seen in this entire document, we can forthwith see the gross inconsistencies between what was written and what was practiced. The policy against cruelty, for one, had often been violated, as shown by the study.

On the other hand, the document also clearly bares the mechanical way the Party attacked the infiltration question. This is apparent in the textbook manner by which individuals were considered suspects ("identified by two or more," etc.), the forms of punishment as elaborated, etc.

As a whole, the text represents the fundamental flaws in the CPP’s anti-infiltration campaigns, both from its inconsistencies and its underpinning valuation of human rights, human dignity, human decency and human life.
2. Replies to Specific Questions

These are some of the points raised after my presentation of the completed study at the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies on May 24, 2000.

A. Issues of Detail

1. Was Ka Dex an “amateur”? By your account of him, Ka Dex knew what he was doing. He even knew when to up the ante once you protested your innocence: he shifted to your skull.

Ka Dex was not an amateur, he was a revolutionary of long-standing and held a significant post in the red area. He was a locally developed cadre and had sufficient combat experience. He came from Quezon and seemed to have had enough formal education. He was often tapped as a trainor for the Batayang Kursong Militar (Basic Military Course) and Kursong Paniktik (Intelligence Course).

I agree that he knew what he was doing. He was methodical, though not particularly brilliant. He was one of those who was especially vicious (and, honestly, his brutish looks added to the terror effect). Basically a “good soldier,” he implemented policies and orders with dispatch, even with relish.

2. (You gave) an interesting insight on the dark side of intellectual/student-peasant interaction (referring to my description in Part One of life and interaction in the countryside between intellectuals and guerrillas recruited locally). But then again, it is best to be reminded of Dodong Nemenzo’s essay “Rectification Process and the Philippine Communist Movement,” where he argued that book knowledge blended well with experience.

Yes, I agree. In most cases there was this fine blend, and the relationship between them was more complementary than antagonistic. The intellectual divide, however, surfaces every now and then.
3. Why did Ka Neil feel more outraged than surprised when he knew that the use of torture could very well lead a person to lie instead of admitting his or her complicity? Ka Neil, as is stressed here, was himself a torture victim.

As mentioned in the text, Ka Neil was a torture victim of the military—which constitutes an altogether different context and thus affects victims differently. Furthermore, finding himself later in the opposite position—that of interrogator/torturer (and therefore, in a position of power) could have been a new and strange experience for him.

People see things, or fail to see things, from where they stand. "Where we stand depends on where we sit." His position in that scheme of power relations might have altered his perspective, and affected how he processed his torture experience in light of the new situation he was faced with.

Also, hearing confessions of such nature (under duress or otherwise) engenders a deep feeling of betrayal and resentment on the part of the interrogators. Such hatred blurred their thinking further and facilitated the commission of more cruel acts as it developed.

4. When did the CPP central leadership "extend the anti-infiltration campaign nationwide," and why did the leadership do it?

This was in mid-1988. It was one of the most destructive errors of judgment the Party committed, that is, making such a sensitive operation as anti-infiltration a MASS CAMPAIGN. That was like ordering a lynch mob to shoot enemies in a crowd with shotguns.

Why did they do it? Paranoia was a major culprit (though there were other interconnected ones as I expounded in the paper). The leadership became alarmed with the false conclusion that the entire Party swarmed with DPAs, and thought they had to mobilize the entire machinery to quell it.

5. What was Ka Carding complaining about when he said, "Peke ang rebolusyong ito!"? 
That was his outburst at the height of Oplan Missing Link, at the time when the Save the Center operation was being hatched. During this time, the operators of OPML arrived at the ridiculous conclusion that the entire movement—its entire history and development—had been piloted and populated by DPAs, from top to bottom. This was therefore a fake revolution, and what was needed was to rescue the handful of “true cadres” and start a new one.

From outside looking in, one can easily see the utter stupidity of this logic. But then again, the whole thing was no longer governed by reason. Life indeed seemed to imitate art, as we saw how scenes from the *Lord of the Flies* take shape.

6. *Where did the interrogators learn the “good cop-bad cop” technique?*

As I’ve said, the Party has an entire course on “Paniktik” (Intelligence). The good cop-bad cop was merely part of it, among other basic military intelligence texts. The armed movement has in fact incorporated a considerable amount of conventional military teachings into its own praxis.

7. *You need to describe this “policy of cruelty” more. What did it mean in the concrete?*

It was as simple as that: You have to be cruel to save your skin. You must never be found extending any visible signs of kindness toward the detainees—otherwise you were in real danger. Everyone was compelled to abide by this.

I’m sure many people would be incredulous with this idea. It is difficult to imagine a scenario where cruelty occurs on a mass scale, and that the compulsion affects each and everyone—but it did. Every single purge victim can corroborate this.

Of course everyone familiar with human history can understand this kind of aberration, for such phenomenon have been with us time and again, the best example being the holocaust.
B. Clarifications

1. Why was ST (Southern Tagalog) the prime target of infiltration?

Perhaps it is inaccurate to say that “ST was the prime target of infiltration,” but that it was—based on historical fact—among the most vulnerable regions to the DPA scare. Reasons for this I have yet no answer, and it definitely needs another round of research that would focus on, say, the peculiarities of areas that are prone to such kinds of hysteria.

2. If in 1982, the ST experience became the “proper guide” in the handling of DPAs for those engaged in Kahos, why did the killings happen in ST again in 1988? Did this mean that the “proper guide” experience was a failure?

It is important to reiterate that the 1982 anti-DPA operation in ST was in itself erroneous—though they did not know it at the time (nor during Kahos, OPML, and Olympia). They used it as the “proper guide” because they thought it was a success. It was only in 1989 when all these were adjudged wrong.

3. Regarding the lies “concocted” to end the torture—were they farther from the truth or nearer to it? Were they complete admission of charges or qualified ones designed to expose—even to the torturers—the irrationality of the charges against them, in the hope that upon “seeing” the irrationality, they would stop the torture?

The victims used the lies as a stop-gap measure against the continuance of torture—they were preventive rather than purposive. As such, the lies needed to be credible, which made it necessary for them to be as close to the truth as possible.

As I explained on the part titled “Making Up Tales”: “One just had to think of problems, failures, setbacks, or security lapses (which are legion) and attribute them to conscious intent.”

Of course the lies were not homogeneous—their characteristics were as varied as the ones who made them up. Some were complete admission, some partial, some were positively ridiculous, and well, some were
probably designed "to expose...the irrationality of the charges against them, in the hope that upon 'seeing' the irrationality, they would stop the torture."

4. When you were “celebrating” the end of your torture and detention, any sense as to what the captors felt while the victims were “celebrating?”

The members of the Task Force felt fear, particularly of retaliation. They were isolated from our group.

5. What exactly did you celebrate? Your freedom? But freedom from what?...

Freedom from captivity (as elaborated under “Trauma and Tribulation,” the immediate feeling was elation for having survived against the odds. Rage came in much later).

6. Your reintegration? But then again some were not really fully accepted?

I believe the “unaccepted” ones were an exception. The others who decided to go back were accepted.

7. Did these celebrations also include the necessary—and obligatory—criticism-self-criticism? Or a summing up? Why or why not?

There was an assessment and probably a sort of CSC (I wasn't there), but that obviously was not enough. A complete summing up has yet to be initiated.

8. If, going by the outrage of Ka Neil and Joey's later surprise as to why he was imprisoned and tortured, the victims were not really given the full answer as to why they were detained and tortured, what “official story” was given to them upon their release? Was this, in itself, a lie?

Joey was the only person I know from whom the truth was hidden after release (probably there were others). He was made to believe that the military abducted and tortured him (thus, a lie it was). The rest of us knew the story from the beginning.

9. You may want to expand further on this contradiction between Walden Bello's idea that the party is really nothing but an instrumentalist
organization, and Joel Rocamora’s argument of a radical fellowship which was shattered by the killings. How can an instrumentalist organization be also a fellowship? Or from the other end, how can a fraternal fellowship turn out to be a bunch of people just taking advantage of each other?

I still find it difficult to give a categorical description of the Party. It is hard to label the Party in black or white terms, for rather than mutually exclusive traits, it had what I called “proclivities.”

In the absence of a better analogy for now, perhaps it can be likened to a father who basically loves and protects his family, but beats up his wife and children nevertheless.

Having been part of the movement for quite a long time, I’ve seen elements of both within it (genuine fellowship on one side, brutal elimination on the other). This is not impossible: they can coexist—for the movement swims in an ever-shifting ocean that sometimes brings out its best and at other times awakens its vilest.

10. There is a need to give a representative profile (or profiles) of the torturers (as in Alex Laban Hinton’s portrait of the Khmer Rouge killer, or even Daniel Goldhagen’s). Social background? Actions? It seems that they seem to be less educated in certain cases, like limited familiarity with English. Were they peasants? Students?

The perpetuators were well-educated. Ranel and I spoke in English only if the guards (not the Task Force members) were within earshot.

I agree that there needs to be subsequent studies that focus on the perpetuators’ profile.

11. Why did the interrogators assume the guilt of the suspects? No due process. According to Ric, in the debates (I do not know where) over due process, there were those who said that the principle “innocent until proven guilty,” was a bourgeois concept and thus ought to be rejected in favor of its opposite—guilty until proven innocent. What was the basis for this? Did the proponents of this primitive proposition (actually regressing back to the Inquisition; although Stalin also used it extensively, and so did Mao) cite historical precedents?
12. You might want to explore this debate further because it also included discussions over the policy of torture. What was its origins? How was it justified by the CPP? Has any from the leadership (RA or RJ) given a background to this issue?

For numbers 11 and 12, I elaborated on these points in Part Three (how torture was introduced, due process ignored, and contagion spread within a movement that was full of contradictions).

13. To make stronger the paper's impact, you might want to add a section showing the parallel development of the torture process on the one hand, alongside the different (you counted five) emotional phases that the victims went through before either admitting their "crimes" or simply refusing to answer any more questions. This would highlight the pathology of the torture process itself but also the many ways in which the victims tried to resist what was being done to them.

This could really make for a good graphic presentation of the pathology of torture, though it would entail a more complicated schema than a parallel comparison. There was not exactly a linear progression nor a pattern of (one-to-one) correspondence between the escalation of torture and the emotional phases.

14. Which brings me to the issue of resistance. Many of the victims remained defiant till death, while others however were able to develop what Jim Scott calls "the weapons of the weak."

I fully concur with Scott's framework. Indeed the mechanisms of survival that evolved during the operations, from subtle verbal maneuvers, to the victims' cooperation, to direct defiance, constituted whatever weapons available to us at the time.
C. Other Considerations

1. The need to look at the experiences of other countries: I still think that a psycho-social evaluation of torture inside the movement must be supplemented by a study of the historical and structural conditions which led to such tragedies in specific regions.

That said, I also think that one way of ascertaining the impact of the tortures is to look at other experiences, notably that of the Khmer Rouge, the Bolshevik party under Stalin and the GPCR under Mao. Or, if we assume that the Partido has always had characteristics similar to the Catholic church, then we may gain some insights from the Inquisition launched by the Church against its enemies. For there are a lot of Church-like symbols in your paper—describing the movement as a cult, or attributing immutable traits to the Party as if it were God's organization, the use of moral arguments instead of ideology or politics; the resort to faith instead of the citing of Mao's Red Book, etc.

Walden Bello is right though; what made Kahos and the other tortures distinct was that they happened before the Party even came to power. They also occurred when there was yet no internal policing system in place (no Cheka, no KGB). So it was left to the NPA to do the internal cleansing, transforming the guerrilla army into a police force.

These are indeed important aspects of the study. I'm still willing to continue the study with consideration to these aspects.

2. There may also be a need to look at other perspectives within psychology. The varied responses of the victims include something that reminds one of battered women's syndrome. This specially applied to the husband and the wife who were tortured, and how they in turn appeared to become violent towards their families and children. Maybe in elaborating further on the aftermath of the tortures, and the difficulties of returning to a "normal life," you may want to explore insights coming from this perspective.

This phenomenon of "transfer of oppression" has been a recurrent theme in all matters of human power relations: man to woman to child, boss to employee to wife, older sister to younger brother to dog, torturer to victim to family, and so forth. One source of profound
insight on this phenomenon is truly women’s literature, specifically the battered women’s syndrome. Another significant piece is the research of Pagaduan et al. on Women Torture Victims.

3. Also, given the limited sources available, you may also want to shift to ethnographic approaches, similar to what Clifford Geertz has done, or of late, by the anthropologist Anne Lowenhaupt Tsing when she did fieldwork among a “hill tribe” in Java. There is also a medical anthropology book by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (Death Without Weeping) where she describes everyday violence in a Brazilian slum community. I can send you these books, if you are interested.

I’m very much interested.

3. Literature Study

A. The Revolutionary Purges

There had been numerous studies on the subject of atrocity and its effect on the human victim, owing mainly to the frequency of its occurrence and its widespread practice even in present times. What this study wishes to look into, though, is the peculiarity of bringing atrocity upon one’s own comrades, specifically as practiced by the Philippines’ homegrown revolutionary movement, and how this has affected the lives of its victims in particular and the whole revolutionary movement in general. With this at the core of the research, it inevitably touches on a number of key concerns, such as the concept of power, paranoia, cruelty, and evil.

For the revolutionary purges and their concomitant violations and atrocities, there is relatively scant available material, owing mainly to the delicate nature of the topic. Still, there had been attempts to study it in varying depths, coming from different frameworks and standpoints.

The anti-infiltration campaigns of the CPP-NPA has been a persistently recurring phenomenon. It started way back in 1982 in the Southern Tagalog region, followed by the Kampanyang Ahos or Kahos in Mindanao.
in 1985 where, according to Walden Bello in his interviews with top cadres, "the high estimate for those killed...is 900, the low estimate 600." Cagayan came next in 1987, then the Oplan Missing Link in the Southern Tagalog region again in 1988, which coincided with a nationwide purge campaign called Oplan Olympia that brought Metro Manila cadres all the way to Northern Luzon for detention.

In the CPP's attempt to summarize the movement's experiences from 1980 to 1991, it vilified the Kahos as having occasioned:

a severe violation of the individual rights of the suspects, the standards of a just trial, and the rules of scientific evaluation and weighing of evidence. The cases were opened, investigated, judged and closed through methods and processes that were extremely subjective, rash, arbitrary and wholly defective. Torture was widely used in the mistaken belief that those tortured were enemy spies, in a situation where the presumption of guilt prevailed even though the suspicions rested on the flimsiest basis in most cases.

According to the official Party document, "Kahos was triggered by shock from the unfounded fear of large scale and long-term infiltration by the enemy." The Party attributes the mistakes, though, to specific persons within the CPP hierarchy. It focuses the blame on the former CPP leaders who were later identified with the "Reject" faction of the movement.

The accusation, of course, was not accepted. Paco Arguelles, for one, believes that the problem was more systemic and inherent, and thus entailed a more thorough-going analysis and self-reflection within the movement. Rather than use the purge experience to score propaganda points against CPP's RJ foes, he calls for the need to "search for the roots of this tragedy and a firm commitment to pull out these roots from our lives—in the political, moral and personal spheres."

He said that the movement as a whole can never "continue addressing the human rights questions of our times with moral integrity without coming to terms fully" with this "biggest human rights tragedy for the Philippine revolutionary or national democratic movement."
Arguelles does not attempt to relieve himself of responsibility, being "a member and leader of the revolutionary movement, in whose name these massive violations of human rights were committed...Though I did something to arrest the rampage of Kahos and prevent it from devouring more victims, and during the years that followed, to find out the roots of this political and moral affliction, seek remedies and do justice to the victims, these obviously are inadequate."

Walden Bello's study, meanwhile, looked at the crisis plaguing the Philippine progressive movement as a whole, citing the anti-DPA campaigns as among the most important factors contributing to this. He conducted interviews with top CPP officials and ex-officials and solicited their insight into the "kahibangan" (madness), as it is often referred to. Many respondents pointed to the phenomenon called "collective paranoia" and the mechanical implementation of "class justice" without regard to individual rights. Bello attributed the problem to the movement's instrumentalist mindset that underpins revolutionary praxis, its "tactical view of individuals—a tendency to evaluate their worth mainly on whether or not they advance or obstruct the left's class-determined political objectives." In short, people are pawns of a larger struggle, they are seen as either at service or inimical to revolutionary goals.

He posits further that this "instrumental view of people is a tendency that affects particularly activists in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, making them vulnerable during moments of paranoia at the height of the revolutionary struggle to expedient solutions involving the physical elimination of real or imagined enemies."

Joel Rocamora (1994) zeroes in on the campaigns' impact on the movement's internal cohesion and how it greatly contributed to the CPP's eventual split:

...one of the political liferafts for members of an underground is always a sense of comradeship, of bonds developed from shared experiences of life-and-death struggle. This "glue" holding together the movement was a major casualty of the DPA campaigns.

As it is, while most of the proposed analyses imputed the carnage to fundamental problems internal to the movement, many acknowledged factors outside of it. The most obvious, of course, is the military's strategy to
infiltrate CPP's ranks and its conscious intent to sow intrigue and disarray. This is of course a given in any warfare.

At least one political analyst looked into the regional context. Patricio Abinales studied the geographical, historical, and social specificity of Mindanao as the backdrop upon which the anti-infiltration carnage has ripened. While not “necessarily arguing a direct causality between this context and Kahos,” he nevertheless elaborated on Mindanao’s characteristics in terms of sweeping changes in the economic, political, and demographic frontier; the major cultural shifts; and the roles the CPP played in the midst of all this. The confluence of these factors at a certain point in Mindanao’s history, he believes, made the Kahos possible.

He argued, for example, that the “increased population density, decline of land to people ratio, and...the re-emergence of land concentration, tenancy, and class stratification” that were so pronounced in the island have deeply affected behavioral patterns and people's ability to adapt to changes. Abinales focused chiefly on Kahos as a Mindanaoan phenomenon, and not on the Party’s recurrent purge practice itself as a bigger point of study.

Why...did an organization schooled in conspiracies as the CPP only respond with such widespread brutality in 1985, and only in Mindanao? Why not in the periods before 1985, and why not as massively as in other areas? (Abinales)

A regionally focused scrutiny of Kahos is important, given the scale of its destruction in the whole Mindanao island and the sheer number of its victims. But it is also crucial to find the roots of the purge phenomenon in general that go beyond island-specific circumstances. The first recorded incidence, for example, was not in Mindanao but in the Southern Tagalog region in 1982, called Oplan Kadena de Amor. In fact, the erroneous assessment of this operation was used by the Mindanao cadres as the proper guide in implementing the Kahos. Two more incidences of such nature came in 1988: Oplan Missing Link and Olympia.

Kadena de Amor, Kahos, Oplan Missing Link, and Olympia—these were diseases that perennially afflicted the Philippine revolutionary movement in the recent past. Arguelles calls it a “cancer.” If it is cancer indeed, then it can infect anyone, anywhere, and there is no telling when and whom it will strike next. Looking at the world and looking at history, this “cancer” has, in fact, always been around.
B. On Torture

The most glaring human error committed during the anti-infiltration campaigns was the use of torture. Used to forcibly draw out information, it merely succeeded in generating false testimonies. This in turn created the vicious cycle that soon threatened to consume the very people who instigated the campaigns in the first place.

Historically, humans employed torture for two purposes: either for punishment or for extracting confession. Confession of a crime has traditionally been valued as the most important damning evidence of a suspected person. In Foucault's erudition of the concept of punishment and discipline, he said that during medieval times:

the confession had priority over any other kind of evidence. To a certain extent, it transcended all other evidence; an element in the calculation of the truth, it was also the act by which the accused accepted the charge and recognized its truth; it transformed an investigation carried out without him into a voluntary affirmation. Through the confession, the accused himself took part in the ritual of producing penal truth. As medieval law put it, the confession “renders the thing notorious and manifest.”

Foucault further explains that confession constitutes a “particularly strong proof, requiring for a conviction only a few additional clues...” It reduces to “the minimum the work of investigation and the mechanics of demonstration.” It was therefore “highly valued; every possible coercion would be used to obtain it.”

Strangely, the operative logic during the period of Inquisition was the same one that existed during the purge interrogations circa 1980s. Confessions had to be pried out at all costs, in lieu of genuine investigation. What aggravated it was its mechanical implementation in the hands of amateurs given free rein to tinker with bodies as in an experiment. As I wrote in a previous article:

Ka Dex made a drum of my shin, keeping rhythm with a club, while snarling, “Are you going to talk?” The thumps on my shin were administered in such increasing tempo, speed, and force that made my heart beat faster as the pain grew sharper.
I tried to feign a sudden emotional outburst, protesting my innocence... Ka Dex's club, however, only found a new sweet spot: my skull. I was hit repeatedly on the head. And so I confessed to being a master sergeant.

One inescapable dimension in all this was the blatant exercise of power. The practice of torture became an affirmation of a skewed power balance which, unfortunately, existed within a movement that is professedly for empowerment. In Foucault's words, torture "showed the operation of power... It made the body of the condemned man the place where the vengeance of the sovereign was applied, the anchoring point for a manifestation of power, an opportunity of affirming the dissymmetry of forces."

But who were the "sovereigns" in this case? The top Party officials who made the anti-infiltration campaigns official policy? Does it include the interrogators who made torture SOP in the investigations? How about the whimsical prison guards who heaped verbal and physical abuse upon the captives whenever they felt like it? Where does the buck start and stop?

On a question such as this, Dith Pran, the prominent survivor of the Cambodian "Killing Fields," suggests a delineation of accountability:

We need to learn to separate the true culprits from the pawns, the evil masterminds from the brainwashed. We cannot label everyone the same. There is a world of difference between the leadership of Khmer Rouge and the individuals who followed their orders. Yes, none of them are moral beings, but there is a chasm between someone who intentionally plots to destroy the very souls of people and someone who is not only stupid and brainwashed, but fears death enough (which is very human) to be forced to do wrong. (quoted in Wiesenthal 1997)

This point is made much more significant by the fact that implementors of a policy of atrocity are more often than not "normal" human beings drawn into the circle of violence through conditions not of their doing.

Even the perpetrators have this feature of "normality" around them. In Judith Herman's description of the perpetrator of atrocity, she explains that:
His most consistent feature, in both the testimony of victims and the observations of psychologists, is his apparent normality. Ordinary concepts of psychopathology fail to define or comprehend him.

This idea is deeply disturbing to most people. How much more comforting it would be if the perpetrator were easily recognizable, obviously deviant or disturbed. But he is not.

She qualifies, though, that “masterminds” may have distinct characteristics that figure in their eventual transformation into engineers of destruction:

Authoritarian, secretive, sometimes grandiose, and even paranoid, the perpetrator is nevertheless exquisitely sensitive to the realities of power and social norms.

But were they born to be that way? Was it the way they were nurtured or was it their genes? Thinkers look at it differently. Those reared in the Christian tradition, such as M. Scott Peck, believe that evil is out there. It manifests in certain individuals, at certain points, with certain ways. Philosophers, such as Hannah Arendt, see the “banality of evil,” its existence in the commonplace. Marxists blame it on opportunism. Reactionaries blame it on communism. Malthus might even regard such occurrences as a demographic necessity.

What all this amounts to is a picture so complex that no hard-and-fast conclusions, simplistic moralizing, or political propagandizing can really capture. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn puts it so, “If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?”

C. Trauma and Silence

A major part of this study delves into the psycho-social aspect of the problem, focusing on behavioral patterns at the time of adversity and traumatic symptoms after.
Studying trauma entails a meticulous attention to changes in the victim's physical and mental well-being. Judith Herman's study of post-traumatic stress proved valuable in understanding the changes in purge victims' psychological make-up. One example is the inability to remain calm and to be at peace with oneself:

After a traumatic experience, the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment. Physiological arousal continues unabated. In this state of hyper-arousal, which is the first cardinal symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder, the traumatized person startles easily, reacts irritably to small provocation, and sleeps poorly.

Based on my interviews with the other purge victims, many revealed an array of traumatic symptoms that often erupted in the most unexpected moments. The images haunted them and the pain surfaced in intermittent flashes. Asking them to speak about their experience had been a crucial part of this study.

It was by no means a simple task. It had always been difficult for people to speak about a traumatic experience. Often, the tendency is to clam up and let the pain linger, or else allow a superficial process of forgetting without coming to terms with reality. There are a number of reasons for this: one is that it is very difficult to be sharp and focused during moments of extreme adversity, whether one is a direct victim or a mere spectator. Another is the question of credulity. According to Judith Herman:

Witnesses as well as victims are subject to the dialectic of trauma. It is difficult for an observer to remain clearheaded and calm, to see more than a few fragments of the picture at one time, to retain all the pieces, and to fit them together. It is even more difficult to find a language that conveys fully and persuasively what one has seen. Those who attempt to describe the atrocities that they have witnessed also risk their own credibility. To speak publicly about one's knowledge of atrocities is to invite the stigma that attaches to victims.

Another reason is the failure of memory. This is usually the result of a victim's natural tendency to "lose" awareness and instinctively detach
himself from the abominable things around. It is one of the basic defense mechanisms available to human beings. Wiesenthal, who spent years of his life in a Jewish prison camp, recalls thus:

You lost yourself in fantasy merely in order to escape from the appalling truth. And in such circumstances reason would have been a barrier. We escaped into dreams and we didn't want to awake from those dreams.

Still another reason is social suffering's "silencing" effect on the victims It often renders them mute, unable to articulate or give language to that which resides deepest in their hearts. As David Morris puts it:

Voice is what gets silenced, repressed, preempted, denied, or at best translated into an alien dialect...Indeed, voice ranks among the most precious human endowments that suffering normally deprives us of, removing far more than a hope that others will understand or assist us. Silence and the loss of voice may eventually constitute or represent for some who suffer a complete shattering of the self.

This tendency to "forget" and allow oneself to be clamped is unfortunate and even dangerous, for crimes against humanity continue to happen in silence. The message I tried to convey in this book comes with a hope that the silenced, repressed, preempted, and denied voices shall finally be evoked, and finally find their space and their audience.

D. Hindsight

Was it inevitable? For a long time, the Philippine revolutionary movement took pride in its years of hard struggle. Revolutionaries have often been regarded as vigilant in the face of iniquity, but noble and even self-sacrificing in the pursuit of their aspirations for the people. But there must have been something inherent and ingrained in the backbone of the movement that made the practice of brutal annihilation an imperative.

Is it possible that the revolutionaries were eventually consumed by their self-effacing devotion to their cause? Friedrich Nietzsche, who held profound insights on human character and motivation, once cautioned that: "Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies."
Could it be that the act of overthrowing something, the nature of revolution itself, awakens human potential for cruelty? In Nietzsche's (1986) words:

There are political and social visionaries who hotly and eloquently demand the overthrow of all orders, in the belief that the proudest temple of fair humanity would then immediately rise up on its own. In these dangerous dreams, there is still the echo of Rousseau's superstition, which believes in a wondrous, innate, but, as it were, repressed goodness of human nature, and attributes all the blame for that repression to the institutions of culture, in society, state, and education. Unfortunately, we know from historical experience that such an overthrow once more resurrects the wildest energies, the long since buried horrors and extravagances of most distant times. An overthrow can well be a source of energy in an exhausted human race, but it can never be an organizer, architect, artist, perfecter of the human character.

Examining the anti-DPA campaigns of the CPP-NPA inevitably touches on the concept of human cruelty in general. On this subject, there is no need to search long and hard. There is definitely no dearth in its occurrence both in ancient and recent history.

Familiar with us all is the persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire. The early years saw them being hunted down and brutalized, but they held their ground. Which efforts paid off, for eventually they gained the upper hand. Finding itself in a high and mighty position, the Christian Church became the absolute judge of right and wrong. Persecutions then were done in its name: suspected heretics were excommunicated, tortured, and burned at the stake. One may explain this as part of the “Darkness” that characterized our medieval history, the barbarism of pre-modern thought that has infected the highest echelons of the Church. Except that modernity did not much differ in its turn.

With the dawning of the modern period, or what is now known as the Age of Enlightenment, came scientific thought and, ostensibly, civilized practice. No more the barbaric Dark Ages. But again, it was all myth, for humankind bore witness to the biggest testament to modernity's failure: the Holocaust. Can anyone of us imagine hoarding throngs of people into gas chambers to be burned? It defies all logic, but it happened. In the age of modernity, products were mass-produced, and people were exterminated by the millions.
We rightly blamed it on fascism, an ideology that engenders fervent belief in one's own superiority over another race or another kind. It makes the former regard the latter as something less than human, dispensable, dirt. The same ideology that consumed the Japanese psyche as they raped and ravaged the whole of Nanking, China even before World War II erupted. Iris Chang (1997) had to recite the sordid details:

The Rape of Nanking should be remembered not only for the number of people slaughtered but for the cruel manner in which many met their deaths. Chinese men were used for bayonet practice and in decapitation contests. An estimated 20,000-80,000 Chinese women were raped. Many soldiers went beyond rape to disembowel women, slice off their breasts, nail them alive to walls. Fathers were forced to rape their daughters, and sons their mothers, as other family members watched. Not only did live burials, castration, the carving of organs, and the roasting of people become routine, but more diabolical tortures were practiced, such as hanging by their tongues on iron hooks or burying people to their waists and watching them get torn apart by German shepherds. So sickening was the spectacle that even Nazis in the city were horrified, one proclaiming the massacre to be the work of "bestial machinery."

They had to go down that low, for they were fascists. But were the enemies of fascism any different? America, in all its 20th century glory, burned a whole town of Samar, ignited villages in Vietnam with napalm, and dropped its nuclear might in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Soviet Union maintained its own ghoulish prison camps in Gulag. Thus was how the enemies of capitalism followed suit. The Khmer Rouge heaped piles upon rotting piles of Cambodians in shallow mass graves. China massacred their youth in Tiananmen Square.

It is as if humanity is striving fiercely towards his own destruction. And it all suggests a contagion, a communicability of evil. That somehow, a certain configuration of events, ideologies, relationships, and power can create a monstrosity that can carry in its path even ordinary boys and girls who, in another set of circumstances, cannot imagine laying their finger on another.
Are these mere flukes in human history that can safely be put behind us? Much as we want to, there is not much cause for comfort. The run-up to this book's finish line had been mottled by incidences of atrocity and violence that came up one after the other in different parts of the world.

Kosovo's Milosevic concludes his genocide in Kosovo; Sierra Leone's rebels sever civilians' arms at random; East Timorese militia rampages across a fledgling nation. With wounds still fresh and blood still warm in Timor, indigenous Dayaks kill and decapitate a thousand Madurese men, women, children, and infants in Borneo and eat their innards.

We do not even have to look far. The Abu Sayyaf in Mindanao kills a number of hostages. A bomb explodes inside the LRT right before New Year 2001, killing and maiming commuters and their children. Barely two weeks after President Estrada was forced down by a peaceful uprising, left leader Popoy Lagman took four bullets in his head.

It is the same tired refrain happening all over the world.

Thus at the threshold of the twenty-first century, what have we gained from our experiences with man's inhumanity toward man? Apparently not that much. After knowing what we knew about the Holocaust, the genocide of Bosnia and Herzegovina should shame us all. Of course that shame would not bring back life to the dead of Auschwitz or Treblinka, Sarajevo or Srebrenica, but that shame does make it incumbent upon us to hold accountable those who arrogantly and immorally valued their lives so much more over those of their fellow men and women. (Alkalaj, quoted in Wiesenthal 1997)

On such note we conclude this proceeding, having been afforded a long and hard look at a menu of human severity. We saw that end of the pole that shows his capacity to inflict pain and suffering, his willingness to kill. We witnessed the anguish of people and the death of basic decency.

But we also had a glimpse of the other end of the pole—our capacity to survive it. Our unwillingness to remain silent. And yes, we still have our sense of humor and our laughter. Amid all this, that may offer whatever glimmer of hope remains in this turbulent world of ours.
4. Schema of Factors Leading up to the Violent Purge
Again, this was deliberate, partly because indeed I wanted to "(evolve) empathy on the part of its hearers and readers" more than standard documentary pieces normally can. Apart from this, however, is that I feel more comfortable communicating this way. Some call it creative license, I say I just want to speak my mind, with full appreciation of the power of language in its various forms.

There may always be the risk of trivialization and "voyeurism" in reporting social suffering, but as Jojo pointed out, "so would the recounting of all other human experiences." The only other alternative, which is not to report, is not only worse, but more dangerous. The only thing worse than murder is committing it and getting away with it. Problems of trivialization and voyeurism pale in comparison to issues of atrocity, truth and accountability.

4. "No reader can come away from a firsthand account of the purge...with a definitive account of the purge." Indeed, and a "definitive account" wasn't at all my objective. As you said, "it is this non-totalizing quality...that impels, rather than extinguishes, the desire for explanation." As I mentioned in the Preface, "I just had to take an initial step." This is the same response I would give to critics who take the book to task "for failing to provide an 'adequate' explanation." An initial step, and I guess quite an effective one, if fraught.

5. Critics may bemoan my "predilection for making historical comparisons," finding it too general and unnuanced. While there may indeed be fundamental differences between our experience and the purges in China, Soviet Union, Cambodia; and generally the cases of America, Hiroshima, East Timor, etc., but I never argued they were all of the same mold. I was only saying that all this fall under one broad category: human-inflicted social suffering on a mass scale. It was a reflection piece. The differences can be belabored for another time, or by another writer.

6. Concerning "individualism vs. collectivism." Poring through your text and checking my own sense on it, my conclusion is that our thoughts on the matter are really on the same boat, though formulated differently.
On my point about the purges having occasioned the ultimate erasure of the individual person, you countered that the purges have in fact “overvalued individuals and the stories they tell”—using these as basis for guilt and justification for punishment.

I believe there is truth in both. When I say complete erasure of the individual, I refer to the undermining of individual worth, dignity, and value. Overvaluing a suspect’s stories and individual circumstances as “enemy” were done in pursuit of the eventual erasure of his person—toward his eventual demise.

Individual admissions of “weakness,” squeezed out by force, were overblown in order to reduce/erase individuality. And this was done by the perpetrators collectively.

There was thus this bizarre interplay of authoritarian collectivity (not necessarily an oxymoron) and individual demonization. It is ironic that the situations when individualism was enforced were those when individuals were damned and not affirmed.

7. The Party has eventually reassessed and overturned the purges, declared the victims as martyrs, and “undertaken steps to indemnify...” This is all very well, but is there a complete accounting? How many exactly have they reached? Is there a list? Let me extensively quote the reaction of Lan Mercado (current PATH Chair) in response to the recent statement of Jose Maria Sison on the purges, which exhorts the purge victims to “understand and accept the Party”:

But crimes against humanity are not private, internal organizational matters as Satur Ocampo once said to me, precisely because while it victimized a specific set of individuals, its very nature is a violation of the rights commonly held sacred by all of humanity. Therefore, the condemnation and repudiation of crimes against humanity are made publicly, by a jury not of the Party’s peers but by one distinct and separate from it. In the face of this, all the arguments about the Party having its own independence and integrity seem nothing more than arguments for impunity.
However, if the Party wants to strengthen its claim, it should make public the complete list of those it victimised and who among them have received the Party's supposed assistance. Only then can it say that there are only a 'few families that it has been unable to get in touch with.'

More on this, so what if victims and families have ended up attacking the Party and betraying the revolution?! Does that make them less worthy of the Party's 'social, medical and material support to help them in their rehabilitation and to overcome the blows of their bitter experience and grave loss?'

Clearly, the Party helps only those who help it, electing to exercise prejudice and discrimination over delivery of justice, if indeed providing rehabilitation is justice.

Rehabilitation? Sison betrays his true colours, exposing his contempt for the victims. We weren't the ones who tortured and killed comrades. If anyone needed rehabilitation, they were the leaders and decision-makers of the anti-infiltration campaigns who, like zealots, 'defended' their ideology and Party and in so doing forgot what it is to be human. And [among] those who committed the gravest crimes should be the masterminds, those who ordered and led the anti-infiltration campaigns even if they laid no hand on the victims themselves.

Rectification? No one is saying the Party should not reaffirm its ideological and political beliefs and rectify amongst its ranks. It has the right and freedom to do so, but this right and freedom should not curtail the equal right and freedom of the victims to demand for restitution according to their terms and not that of the Party's, and consistent with what international standards dictate.

Sison holds up as models those who violated us but, as part of the rectification, 'remained loyal to the revolution...and helped in repairing the harm wrought on the revolution's work and organization and the masses.' But what about the harm on our bodies and psyches, the anguish forced upon families? Until proven wrong by verifiable data, I am convinced that the amount of financial and human resources and the level of
organization and coordination that the Party invested on the anti-infiltration campaigns far, far exceeds what it expended on its so-called rehabilitation and rectification.

This, I believe, is also an appropriate response to the statements of Bonifacio Ilagan and Louie Jalandoni. As Ilagan says: "We are especially humbled by those who suffered...yet retraced the path to the revolutionary movement." We do not decry the fact that they are not "especially humbled" by survivors who traced their path elsewhere. But to condemn us yet again for believing and thinking and doing things differently, and to fling dangerous accusations (that fuel this "fixation for violence") is an affront and a grave insult to injury that has yet to heal.

8. I appreciate your discussion of excess and "the foundations of revolution...in the ‘faith’ and agency of its members and supporters," but I'm afraid I don't share the same conclusion.

First, does everything have to go back to revolution? Second, is the CPP-NPA the right group to lead it?

My answer to the first makes the second question moot. The answer in a nutshell is no, though it entails perhaps another book to elaborate. My argument has everything to with the nature of revolutions, track record, outcomes, and the availability of other alternatives that are less messy.

As to the legitimacy of the CPP-NPA waging an armed revolution, there is always this valid issue of potential abuse that goes with wielding the barrel of the gun. In fact, it is no longer a dangerous potential, for they have actually committed abuses and continue to do so in recent times, albeit now in a different form (i.e., assassination of individuals from rival left groups) and justified as being part of warfare.

I believe wholeheartedly in what you say about "the necessity of rethinking the concept of communities, not as utopian or ideal collectivities that share a common origin or even common destiny, but as communities of fate ‘that already include difference and conflict...'" The question is whether the current
revolutionary movement affirms and strengthens this imperative for heterogeneity, or negates it. Its penchant for (physical) elimination points to the latter.

True, "no critique of...revolution...can annul the struggle to live..." But the struggle to live and find a better way of living does not necessarily equate to revolution.

Community empowerment takes many forms, and is normally achieved in many ways. It may be an insult to human creativity if we fail to find ways of bettering our state beyond shooting our way through it. As such, at the core of all this is what you call “the problematic aspect of violence.”

I’ll stop here, Carol, otherwise I could go on and on. Let me just reiterate my appreciation for your work and how it provokes further thinking on my part.

Lastly, I’m happy that we share the same high regard for literature, and see in it the value and potential for human emancipation that others take for granted. As the “wise man from Catalonia” so eloquently put it: “The world must be all fucked up, when men travel first class and literature goes as freight.” (Gabriel Garcia Marquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude)

Bobby Garcia
2014
Publications

Abinales, Patricio. "When a Revolution Devours its Children Before Victory: Operasyon Kampanyang Ahos and the Tragedy of Mindanao Communism."


**Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abinales, Patricic</td>
<td>Navarro, Gil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alejo, Myrna</td>
<td>Quiambao, Manny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alforte, Dolores</td>
<td>Quimpo, Nathan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alforte, Leo</td>
<td>Ramilo, Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David, Randolph</td>
<td>Reyes, Ricardo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encio, Lota</td>
<td>Rocamora, Jose Eliseo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enriquez, Jo Enrica</td>
<td>de Quiros, Conrado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loredo, Rolando</td>
<td>Saniel, Joan Dymphna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercado-Carreon, Lillian</td>
<td>Valencia, Noel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I only had two kids, Anton and Una, when To Suffer Thy Comrades came out on December 2001. I quipped then about the uncanny correspondence between my book production and my offspring. Juan, my third child, was not yet around at the time and hence, was not mentioned in the original acknowledgments. I therefore dedicate this book relaunch to my eleven-year-old bunso so he can stop complaining now.

My wife Debbie and the family I was born into, a fairly big one, also deserve fullest appreciation. From my late Lola to my parents, who just let us be. From big brothers Dindo, Allan, and Mon; to sisters Che-Ann and Mayette for enduring an obstinate activist for a sibling. They are the ones ultimately to be credited for what I have now become. (Or blamed, as the case may be.)

After the book's first publication, more people came "onboard"—meaning those who took an active interest in the issue of the communist purges and decided to do something in a more organized fashion, giving birth to the Peace Advocates for Truth, Healing, and Justice (PATH). I would like to give special mention to our officers, members, and supporters: Lan Mercado, Earl Parreno, the late Reca Parreno, Vim Santos, Jessica Soto, Flor Caagusan, Risa Hontiveros, Jae de la Cruz, the late Omi Dolleton, Weng Libre, Floyd Buenavente, Leling Grecia, Betty de Vera, Joyce Sierra, Jun Carlos, Daisy Valerio, Sol Santos, Cej Jimenes, Boboie Belarmino, Edmund Ballesteros, and many others. To PATH's forensic team: Jerome Bailen, Ben Molino, Jun Rosete, Erwin Erfe, and Richard Taduran. The media people who covered our work: Totoy Sarmiento for the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Hera Sanchez and Lucille Sodipe for Probe Productions, Erel Cabatbat, Boyette Rimban, and Luz Rimban for ABC-5.

From the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) whom I worked with: Joel Rocamora, Jude Esguerra, Aya Fabros, Noy Berja, Mervin de Roma, Norman Patino, etc. as well as the new people holding the IPD fort: Erik Villanueva, Thelma Martinez, Ricky Gonzales, Jen Marbella, Arissa Tomeldan, etc.

My brief work at the office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC) gave me another chance to see what it is like to go through "internal struggles" (which, who knows, can be the subject of another
book.) To the friends I gained there: Boyie Buendia, Baby Huputan, Lumilan, Ruth Honculada, Cecile San, etc. as well as the newer in later years: Ola Almgren and Cynthia Veliko.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and emergency response rolled from my lips and keyboard on a daily basis for five years as Oxfam's seconded advisor to ASEAN on disaster-related trainings and knowledge management. I was blessed with hardworking colleagues from whom I learned much and drank and sang a lot: Gaynor Tanyang, Ian Manlutac, Golda Hilario, Mira Bacatan, Norly Mercado, Jane Ockelford, Annie Santoalla, Jermaine Bayas, Dante Dalabajan, the late Ed Santoalla, etc. as well as ASEAN colleagues, Adelina Kamal and Marqueza Reyes.

Being an Undersecretary at the Office of the President is no laughing matter, most of the time. I should say the experience of actually governing is both tough and cool—something I shared with co-officials and staff at the Office of the Political Adviser (OPA): Ronald Llamas, Raffy Albert, Ernest Ramel, Dong Cucio, Carlo Escalada, Angelique Alinood, Neri Salenga, Andrew Asejo, Jojo Magandi, Bhebs Mercado, Benjie Zabala, Armie Capellan, Bo Roco, Jojo Garcia, CJ Orfanel, and most especially my support staff, Soc Gonzaga, Josh Belarmino, and Jeff Capati.

Colleagues in my current joy and headache (they always come together) for European Union (EU) communications work: Ambassador Franz Jessen, Eric Galvin, Isabel Chamarro, Nicole Mata, JP Fennix, Ron Jabal, and Teng Castillo.

The poem printed here, which speaks of unhealed wounds beneath superficial scars, was given to me way before I started committing to paper the first word of my manuscript. To Leo Dee Rogierro, aka Levi, who found words more powerful than narrative, who conjured images more powerful than text—a million thanks for a short verse that evoked a million words.

The most valuable material in this book was developed through the sharing of personal experiences and reflections of the following persons: Doc and Boy Alforte, Lota Encio, Jean Enriquez, Lan Mercado, Gil Navarro, Manny Quiambao, Nathan Quimpo, Bong Ramilo, and Joan Saniel.

I am also most grateful to Beth Marcelino of the UP CIDS for never doubting my capacity to see this project through. She was responsible for
"Sana'y di Balantukan ang mga Pilat"
(Para kay Bobby, Pasko '92)

Sinalat ko ang mga pilat mo sa isang bisig,
at itinanong kung saan mo nakuha iyon.
Sabi mo'y marka iyon ng
kapangahasan ng iyong kabataan,
at maituturing na medalya ng iyong paglaki.

Itinanong ko kung sa'n-saan ka pa nagkasugat,
habang inaapuhan ng titig ang kaluluwang
inaasahang sisilip sa iyong mga mata;
sa sarili'y inuusal, parang dasal, na lahat ng sugat
mo'y naghilom sanang lubos,
at walang naiwang isa man na balantukan.

Sumimsim ka ng beer, nginitian
ang mga bula ng serbesa,
at nabasag na tila mga luha ang ilang bula sa sulok
ng iyong bibig.
Palihim na humapdi ang mga
mata ko at itinanong sa
sarili ang tanong ko para sa ating dalawa:

Ano't nioromansa ng mga
kamay natin ngayon,
ang mga boteng nانlamig sa yelong pawis?
Nagbiro si Boi Nikko at humalakhak si George;
at nakisabay ako't ikaw.
Para basagin ang mga bula ng beer,
at kipilin ang mga luha sa ubod ng ating mga sarili?

Sana'y di balantukan ang mga pilat...
Kahit pa ang Diyos ay di nagahanap ng mga
medalya kundi mga sugat!

ni: Leo Dee Rogierro
the "psychological bent" of this book. She was the source of many rich insights on the frailties of the movement, and how to rise above them.

Jojo Abinales gave me books and articles for the study, but more importantly gave me confidence. His thorough, scrutinizing eye left no detail unexplored, no vagueness unexplained.

I am further privileged for having engaged my thoughts with the keenest, if divergent, minds around. Many thanks to the following people whose brains I picked (figuratively, rest assured): Noel Valencia, Conrad de Quiros, Roy Loredo, Myrna Alejo, Ric Reyes, Randy David, and Joel Rocamora.

This book also would not have been possible without PEPE my refuge, my school, my tropa and my "spiritual" guide. Bottled up insights would have been harder to surface without the ambience they provided, 80 proof. One straight up therefore to Thea, Maribel, Oca, Nilda, Tita Cors, Brigs, Arnold, Mimi, Guia, David, Ronnie, Jon Jon, Ariel. This goes to the Board as well: John Leydon, Tess Tungpalan, Thony Gutierrez, Ernie Cloma, Robert Pinauin, and others already mentioned.

To Karina Bolasco of Anvil, whose conscientiousness is matched by her patience, and Ani, who labored on the details.

Fidel Rillo, who was among the first to encourage me to write this book. And Mo Ordofiez, who showed me the way to simple, straightforward writing. (I'm still learning).

Sheila Coronel of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism. She gave her all-out support: from the beginning—when the material I had was at its crudest; to the very end—with this one.

My classmates, colleagues and comrades at UP Los Baños: Benjie Marasigan, Derek Deriquito, Long Rana, Laean Benitez, Giselle Montero, George Soriano, Audie and Teddie Casiño, Pogs Palma, Ger Licup, Ybeth and Giorde Pasamba, Medda Belen, Carmen Gutierrez, Joey Tam, Jenny Lee-Bonto, Che Aquino, Malou Realubit—the whole lot; Rica Ouano, Hilda Cleofe, Kité Arceo, Precious Leaño and partner Alex Baluyut, and other brods and sisses at Teatro Umalohokan, etc. Thank you for keeping old memories fresh. Good or bad.
My classmates, co-teachers, and students at UP Diliman, who motivated me, and allowed me to motivate them in turn.

Boi, Ed, Pete, Jen, Doy, Carla, Norman, Sarah, Abbie, and all other restless minds at the Education for Life Foundation and the Institute for Popular Democracy.

Rocio, who introduced me to Primo Levi’s works. Claire, Hanno, Hannelore, and all other friends from Europe, who knew how to really listen and share.

Loudette, Bernie, Nitya, Marivic, Nasreen, and all other colleagues at the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education, whose global thinking expanded my perspective, and who knew I missed out on some of my ASPBAE work in favor of this book. And understood.

*Kasamas* Elcid, Emil, Gladys, Jess, Randy, Ogie, Fidel Liit, Lyndon, Randy, Tom Tom, Lenny, Rayven, and all the rest of the victims—impossible for me to enumerate all at this point—that we find ourselves together in another crusade anew.

And there are more: Chito Gascon, Ging Deles, Apple Oreta, Getty Sandoval, Kael de Lara Co, Karen Tanada, Manny Bautista, Val Buenaventura, Shebana Alqaseer, the late Dong Tizon, Mark Santos, Arline Santos, Nando Jamolin who created the beautiful PATH logo, Joey Flora, Karen Jimeno, Nash Tysmans, Enteng Gueco, Eileen Rillera, Pam Padilla, Viking Logarta, Cecilia Pe-Lero, Tita de Quiros, Noel Cabangon, Ditsi Carolino, Kaka Bagao, Gary Granada, Rey Abella, Hilda Narciso, Cookie Chua, Jire Carreon, Joel Saracho, Eileen Matute, Beckie Malay, Becky Lozada, high school batchmates at San Beda, classmates at UP Diliman, the network of T’bak, colleagues at Amnesty International. At this point I’m already rambling. The business of thanking everyone one needs to thank for somehow affecting one’s lifework and trajectory is a futile exercise, ultimately. I am bound to miss many who matter—and my only wish is they won’t check this list, after all.

If they do and call me out, I apologize and invoke that convenient phrase: “senior moment.” And there is always Facebook to make it up to them via status update.

Again, thank you, everyone.
According to Jo-Ann Maglipon, national economic signals at the latter part of Marcos' rule were distressing. "The country's growth in GNP was estimated by National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) at only 1.4% This was the lowest registered in 20 years and signaled the first time since 1960 that the country failed to achieve a 2-percent growth rate. It was also counting from 1972—the year martial law was imposed—consistently the lowest showing for an ASEAN country. Trading at the stock exchanges dropped 80% in the first half of 1983. Inflation was conservatively estimated at 18%. That entire year, the peso devalued by 52.7% against the U.S. dollar. This rate loss, achieved within a record 9 months and 5 days, was previously witnessed only over a period of 12 years, from 1970 to 1982..."

There are informal accounts of previous purges way back during the time of the old Communist Party (Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas), but these are not covered by this study.


Conrad de Quiros cites an interesting comparison between this situation and the epic "Arabian Nights," whose lead character had to concoct tales for 1,001 nights for her life to be spared.

As I explained previously, Neil, as an interrogator, thought it was very difficult to concoct an elaborate set of lies.

What captures the feeling more accurately is the Tagalog word: *pagsisisi.*

There were many exceptions to this, though. Revolutionary families also existed, and in their case, going "underground" was normally encouraged. They also had misgivings, but were more concerned about safety than its correctness.

Joey is not to be confused with Ka Ranel in Part 1, who also went to Australia.
9The volunteers were made to believe that they were participants to an experiment examining reactions to pain. They were instructed to administer electric shock at an increasing intensity to a subject being observed (they were unaware that the “shock” and the subject’s writhing agony were mere simulations). Majority of the participants, in varying levels of willingness and hesitation, delivered the “painful” dosage. “Behavioural Study of Obedience.” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1963.

10Whether these were real DPAs or not is no longer the issue here—for the lack of proper investigation and due process at the time could not ascertain anything now.

11According to Arguelles, the Party had already been deliberating the merits of torture before the eruption of Kahos in 1985. Their decision: prohibition with exception; i.e., when evidence was exceptionally strong. Furthermore, only “soft” torture was permitted. Such qualification was all that was needed to allow the rampage to happen. What constitutes “strong”? More importantly, how soft is “soft”? This leeway had in fact been capitalized and abused to the hilt that many victims died while being tortured.

12What seemed to abet the situation at the time was a phenomenon called “groupthink,” in which the members’ overriding concern is unity and consensus without conflict. This is also elaborated in the next chapter.

13A mob situation is spontaneous and unplanned, whereas the purge campaigns were deliberate, methodical, and sustained.

14Gustave Le Bon’s Contagion Theory suggested that the mob develops through a process of contagion.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Francis Garcia, or Bobby, currently works for a communications project under the European Union (EU) Delegation in the Philippines. He recently served as Undersecretary at the Office of the Political Adviser under the Office of the President during Benigno S. "Noynoy" Aquino's term.

A graduate of Community Development at the University of the Philippines (UP), Bobby had been a community organizer, an activist, and a teacher at UP. He wrote Of Maps and Leapfrogs: Popular Education and Other Disruptions, a book on education and philosophy. He also co-wrote other books covering various themes, including information technology, lessons from typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda), and leadership, among others. This book, To Suffer Thy Comrades: How the Revolution Decimated Its Own, has won the National Book Awards and is a certified bestseller.

His past consultancies include: the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), United Nations, and Oxfam.

For seven years Bobby served as Executive Director of Popular Education for People's Empowerment (PEPE), an NGO that promotes an empowering education philosophy and creative pedagogy. He was also a Rockefeller Resident Fellow at the University of Washington in Seattle, USA.

Bobby is the founding Chair and currently serves as the Secretary General of Peace Advocates for Truth, Healing, and Justice (PATH). Through PATH he pursues his lifelong advocacy for peace and human rights accountability among State and non-State actors.