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MILITARIZATION OF SAMAR

Report of the International Commission on the Militarization of Samar, Eastern Visayas, Philippines

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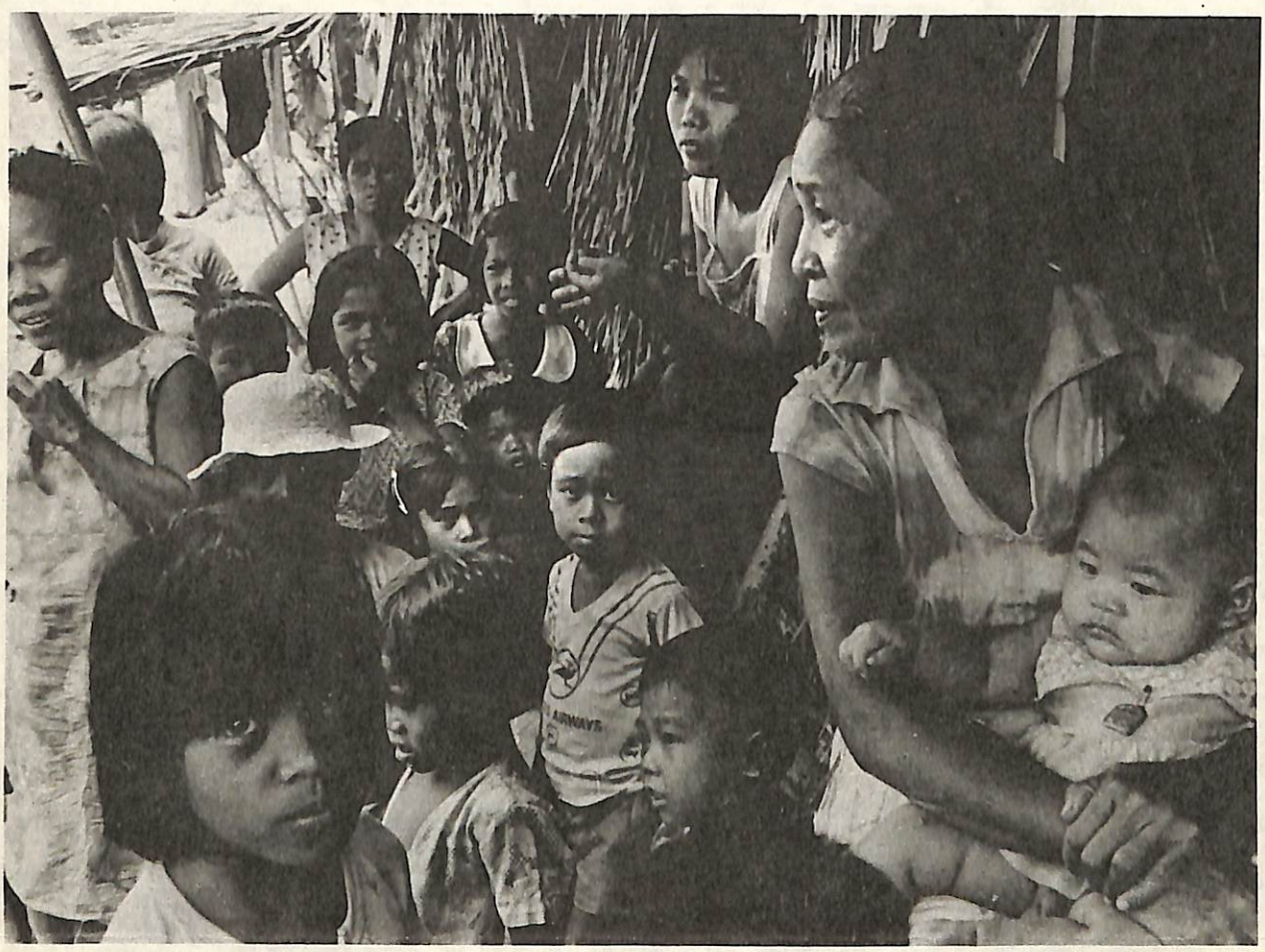

Cover photo: Some of the 50,000 evacuees of Samar

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REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE MILITARISATION OF SAMAR, EASTERN VISAYAS, PHILIPPINES, AUGUST 1979

SPONSORSHIP

The International Commission on the Militarisation of Samar carried out its investigations in the provinces of Samar at the request of the Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace, Manila, Philippines. The Ecumenical Movement is composed of the National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA) of the Catholic Church, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and other church bodies.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

After several years of military build-up in Samar and many reports of military abuse, there has been a marked increase in both numbers of military personnel and reported atrocities particularly since the end of June 1979. The fielding of five battalions (including the 60th Philippine Constabulary Battalion previously known as "the massacre battalion" in Kalinga-Apayao) has precipitated reports of more killings, strafing of villages, more torture, more rapes, more arbitrary arrests and illegal detention as well as more lootings. The sudden proliferation of evacuees in coastal towns to a level of at least 50,000 persons (about 5% of the total population) was also a cause for immediate investigation.

Furthermore local church agencies in Samar have requested national church offices for an international commission to investigate the situation and to report in some detail the history of the militarisation and its effects. This investigation was done with all speed and this report is the result.

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission was composed of the following:

A Community Organizer, Indian Social Institute, Bangalore, India;
A Filipino-American Researcher, New York University, USA;
An Anglican Priest, Church and Society Commission, New Zealand;
A Student Organizer, Canada; and
A Photographer-journalist, USA.

THE INVESTIGATION

The Commission travelled widely in Northern and Eastern Samar in August this year, collecting data and interviewing local people. The Commission divided itself between the two areas. Hence, the incorporation of two regional reports into this document.

BACKGROUND TO SAMAR

The third largest island in the Philippines, Samar, is rich in natural resources: coconut (the Republic's top export); acres of rich pastureland; abundant minerals - copper, iron, aluminum, chromite, zinc , manganese, lead, nickel, cobalt and uranium; the best of Philippine hardwood; and plenty of fish in its waters.

However, the people of Samar (Samareños or Warays) have had a history of turmoil and hardship. Seventy-eight years ago, an American general named "Hell Roaring Jake" Smith was made commander of the Sixth Separate Brigade whose task was to put down

the revolt in Samar. The orders he gave to his men were explicit:

> *"I want no prisoners. I wish you to kill and burn, the more you kill and burn the better you will please me..... The interior of Samar must be made a howling wilderness."*
>
> *(Joseph Scott, The Ordeal of Samar, 1964)*

After the Americans came the Japanese and now the Philippine Government with its American advisers fresh from Vietnam.

Samar is located in the Eastern Visayas region, separated from the main island of Luzon in the north by the San Bernardino Strait, from Leyte in the west by the San Juanico Strait and the Pacific Ocean in the east. The total land area is 1,342,863 hectares but less than a quarter of this is cultivated. Agriculture is the main livelihood of the great majority of Samar's 1,120,192 people (43% in Western Samar, 25% in Eastern Samar, 32% in Northern Samar). But 74% of the land (996,409 hectares) is alloted and used for logging, mining and cattle-grazing by a few corporations and individuals. These industries push people off their land as they encroach into the interior. Consequently, crop production has become inadequate to meet the needs of the people.

Australian interests are moving in to exploit mineral resources in the north-west. Likewise, Japanese interests are intruding into fishing grounds in the western area of Maqueda Bay, one of the two best fishing grounds in the Philippines. As a result, local fish prices have risen and quality dropped.

Therefore, the profile of Samar is that of an island rich in resources which are attracting foreign interests while the people of Samar remain in poverty. Here are a few figures to substantiate this brief description.

1. In 1975 a Filipino family received on the average an annual income of ₱5,456. In three provinces of Samar, the average income of a family was: ₱2,422 in Eastern Samar or 56% less than the national average; ₱3,888 in Northern Samar or 29% less; ₱4,601 in Western Samar or 16% less. (NCSO figures)

2. The University of the Philippines School of Economics estimates that based on the 1975 Government figures, 48 to 55% of the population in the Eastern Visayas are poor (about half a million people), earning less than ₱3,679 to ₱4,083. This is way below the Ministry of Social Services and Development poverty line of ₱7,524 a year.

3. In 1974, Samar and Leyte had the second highest infant mortality rate in the country. Out of every 100 infants born, about 76 died before reaching the age of one.

4. Samar scores badly in relation to many other factors: illiteracy, outmigration, unemployment, under-nutrition.

REASONS GIVEN FOR MILITARY ESCALATION

The government's reasons for the military build-up in Samar focus on the need to protect the people from the subversive influence of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party. The rationale for the tactics used is to deny the NPA their mass base among the people and to isolate them economically from their support. The reason for the sudden increase in troop concentration is the reported success of the NPA in winning the support of the local people and gaining control of 85% of Samar. "Gaining control of a community" means that this community accepts and supports the NPA programme and principles. Military operations are aimed at combating such subversion and winning the people to "national loyalty".

MILITARY DEPLOYMENT

All in all, there is an estimated, 5,000 to 6,000 troopers in the whole island of Samar. They comprise the five battalions sent in last June. The facts which follow, supplemented by the map, clearly give a picture of how heavily militarised the whole island of Samar is. (Note: PA=Philippine Army; PC=Philippine Constabulary; IB/ID=Infantry Battalion/Division; INP=Integrated National Police; CHDF=Civil Home Defense Force.)

I. Military Units and Their Commands

A. Units

1. 53rd PC Battalion
2. 52nd PC Battalion
3. 19th IB, 3rd ID (PA)
4. 60th PC Battalion
5. Engineering Battalion (PA)

B. Commands

1. Regional Command (ReCom 8)
   GHQ: Camp September 21st Movement
   Pawing, Palo, Leyte
   CO: Brig. Gen. Juanito T. Caboboy

2. Area Commands

Western Samar

a. Provincial PC/INP/ICHDF Command
   HQ: Camp Lukban, Maulong, Catbalogan
   CO: Lt. Col. Romeo S. Fernandez, PC
b. 19th IB, 3rd ID (PA)
   HQ. Camp Lukban, Maulong, Catbalogan
   CO: Lt. Col. Alejandro Trespeces, Jr.

Eastern Samar

a. Provincial PC/INP/ICHDF Command
   HQ: Camp Acidillo, Borongan
   CO: Lt Col. Sabas C. Imbong, PC
b. 52nd PC Battalion
   HQ: Dolores, E. Samar
   CO: Lt. Col. Evaristo Ranot, PC
c. Engineering Battalion (PA) 523rd
   HQ: Burayawan, Dolores, E. Samar
   CO: Lt. Col. Natividad

Northern Samar

a. Provincial PC/INP/ICHDF Command
   HQ: Camp Delgado, Catarman, N. Samar
   CO: Lt. Col. Lorenzo F. Detran, PC
b. 60th PC Battalion
   HQ: Catubig, N.Samar
   CO: Lt. Col. Manual T. Bruan, PC

II. Deployment of Forces

Western Samar
Unit: 19th IB, 3rd ID (PA)
Deployment:

1. South-western Area
   Unit: Alpha Company
   HQ: Bo. Dolungan, Sta. Rita
   CO: Lt. Ventura

Detachments:

Calbiga	Talalora
Villareal	Bo. Tulay, Sta. Rita

2. San Jose de Buan Area
3. Sta. Margarita-Calbayog Area

Detachments:

Bo. Palale, Sta. Margarita
Tancinco High School campus, Calbayog City
Oquendo District, Calbayog City
Tinambacan District, Calbayog City
Bo. Malhug, Calbayog City

4. Gandara-Matuguinao Area
   Unit: Bravo Company
   CO: Lt. Rex Cinco
   HQ: Bo. Nguso, Gandara, Samar

Eastern Samar

a. Unit: 52nd PC Battalion

Detachments:

Arteche	Can-avid
Jipapad	Taft
Oras	Sulat
Maslog	Loop-the-loop

b. Unit: Engineering Bn. (PA) 523rd
Detachments:
Bo. Da-o, Oras Tawagan, Oras

Northern Samar

a. Unit: 60th PC Battalion
   Centers of Forces:
   1. Catubig - HQ of 60th Bn.
      2 companies
      14 INP's
      14 ICHDF members
      detachments: Las Navas
      - in the poblacion
      - in San Jose Timber Co.
   2. Palapag - one company (CO: a certain Gonzalez)
      detachments:
      Laoang Pambujan
   3. Bugko, Mondragon - one company
      detachments: San Rogue Lope de Vega
   4. Gamay - one company & 40 army troopers
      detachments: Mapanas Lapinig
   5. Silvino Lobos - one company (combined local PC/60th PC Bn. elements)

b. Local PC/INP/ICHDF Command
   Area of Command: From Catarman to Palanit, San Isidro

EASTERN SAMAR REPORT

Military Operations and Civilian Evacuation: 1975-1979

The people of Eastern Samar have at least four years experience of military operations in their province. The Commission found these operations can be divided into three periods. The first, from 1975 when the 'troubles' started throught to the end of 1976. The second, from 1977 to the end of 1978. The third, from the beginning of 1979 onwards. These periods were all characterised by massive search-and-destroy campaigns by the military against suspected dissidents (New People's Army and its sympathizers).

First Period: 1975-1977

During this period, no less than 722 families or a total number of 5,024 persons were forced by the military operations to evacuate and leave their barrios (villages) and sitios (small settlements). At least 29 barrios and sitios in the five northern municipalities of Dolores, Maslog, Oras, Arteche, and Jipapad were deserted. Thirteen of these barrios were declared "free fire zones" or 'no man's land'. Most of the inhabitants of these places evacuated to the above-mentioned towns. Also within this period, about 225 families totaling about 1,575 people opted to live in the mountains so as to avoid being caught in the middle of military operations undertaken by PC soldiers and the local police.

Negligence on the part of the local officials in the aforesaid towns aggravated the situation. Not a single centavo was given to the evacuees nor were houses provided for them. The evacuees were forced to stay with relatives and friends in the poblacion.

Due to lack of food, most of the evacuees suffered extreme hunger and got sick. They could not go to their farms to get food for fear of getting killed or arrested as whoever is seen on the farms is immediately suspected of having contacts with the NPA. A good number of farms had also been declared "free fire zones".

In the towns, also they became prey to abuses of soldiers - such as mauling, extortion, arbitrary arrest and detention without proper charges, lascivious advances, confiscation of private properties like chickens and domestic animals, cooking utensils, and farm implements.

At present, there are 9 barrios and 4 sitios whose inhabitants have not returned to their homes. The areas are:

1.	San Roque, Dolores	35 families	
2.	Tamsion, Dolores	39 families	
3.	Kasapa, Tamsion (Dolores)	11 families	(sitio)
4.	Libertad, Dolores	17 families	(sitio)
5.	Mabsog, Oras	45 families	
6.	Kopa, Mabsog (Oras)	11 families	(sitio)
7.	Dorillo, Jipapad	35 families	
8.	Hitalinga, Arteche	25 families	
9.	Kabuanan, Maslog	30 families	
10.	Togas, Maslog	22 families	
11.	Maputi, Maslog	16 families	
12.	Casighotan, Maslog	20 families	
13.	Malobago, Maslog	12 families	(sitio)
	TOTAL	318 families totaling or 2,226 people.	

The following are the barrios and sitios whose inhabitants, who evacuated in 1975, have already returned to their homes:

Barrio/Sitio	No. of Families	Returned
1. Caglaw-an, Dolores	34	1976
2. Mapnod, Caglaw-an	21	1976
3. Hindang I, Caglaw-an	34	1976
4. Hindang II, Caglaw-an	10	1976
5. Japay, Oras	22	1977
6. Sta. Cruz, Dolores	35	1977
7. Nag-as, Sta. Cruz	16	after 3 months
8. Happy Land, Sta. Cruz.	9	1978
9. Dinigpi-an, Dolores	51	1978
10. Magsaysay, Dolores	43	1976
11. Del Pilar, Dolores	10	1976
12. San Pascual, Dolores	20	1976
13. Bongog, San Pascual	10	1976
14. Hituyan, San Pascual	6	1976
15. Cagsalay, Arteche	35	1977
16. Tawagan, Arteche	30	1977

Several places are still deserted because the military have prohibited the people's return. In some other places, people dared to return to their homes once the military campaign in their area was over. From this experience many farmers have realized that they cannot afford to leave their homes and livelihood except in extreme situations.

The following were reported to the Commission as some of the abuses of the military during this period:

1. Japay, Oras: In 1975, five farmers were killed. They were; GLORIO CAROL, MODESTA ORANTIA, and three others by the names of PUTROY, PENDO and DORO.

2. Hindang I, Caglaw-an (Dolories): In 1975, many farmers were subjected to brutalities. Some of them were : JOSE CALATAY, JOSE NORCIO, JOSE CABIGAYAN. Their domestic animals were also taken from them.

3. Caglaw-an, Dolores: In 1976 most of the residents of the barrio were manhandled by the soldiers. Some of the victims were: MARIANO RIVERA, ANGEL BALACA, RUGY AGUIRRE, TORIO KELEM and IGNA POMAREJOS. Their domestic animals were likewise confiscated.

4. Mapnod, Caglaw-an (Dolores): RUFINO REYES was shot in the leg and is now permanently maimed and can no longer work for a living.

5. San Roque, Dolores: In May 1976, two farmers were killed; PEDRO IBAYA and BUDDY POMEDA. Many other farmers were manhandled, like MACARIO ANACIO, AMADO POMEDA, SIBING OPALALIC, FELIPE OPALALIC and EDITO BUSIO.

6. Sta. Cruz, dolores: A number of farmers were manhandled and imprisoned. Some of them were; MELING ELLADO, PELES SIDRO, ROQUE APURA and OSCAR CAPACITE. Their domestic animals were likewise taken from them.

7. Happy Land, Sta. Cruz (Dolores): Two farmers were badly injured: INIGO BILANO and a certain 'TANING'.

8. Dinigpi-an, Dolores: Some farmers were beaten up. Among them were: MORRIS APURA, PABLING APURA and INYENG RIVERA. They likewise lost their domestic animals, including one carabao (water buffalo).

9. Kalaw, Oras: A farmer by the name of "PIKO" was killed and another named "PEPITO" was manhandled. Many farmers lost their domestic animals to the soldiers.

10. Kasapa, Tamsion (Dolores): Four farmers were killed in 1976. They were DULFO, GABINO, SERAFIN and an unamed fourth.

Some of the farmers who were arrested are reported to be still in detention centers, while others have been released after two or more months in prisons camps.

Second Period: 1977-1978

This period lasted from June 1977 to December 1978. Eighteen barrios and six sitios were deserted. About 767 families totaling some 5,370 people evacuated to the towns of Oras, Dolores, Arteche and Jipapad. However, the evacuation did not last long. Many returned after several weeks, others after three or six months.

While in the towns, they were unattended to by the local officials. They were required to get "police clearances", "safe conduct passes" and "PC clearances". They also said they became victims of military extortion. As in their first experience, their main problem was how and where to get food. They were hesitant to go to their farms for fear of the military.

The Evacuations during this period came in four waves.

First Wave

In June of 1977, 25 families evacuated from Bo. Cabwanan, ARteche; 30 families from Bo. Lonoy, Arteche; and 25 families from Bo. Casidman.

The following incidents were the immediate reason for evacuation:

1. In Cabwanan: the brutal killing of LUIS NORCIO. He was arrested and killed while working on his farm. His dead body was tied to a post of a house and set on fire.

2. In Lonoy: many farmers were manhandled and were forced to leave the place because their houses were burned down by the soldiers.

3. In Casidman: the merciless killing of four farmers. They were DELFIN MOSLARES, and others named BINAN, HENRY and BERNAS. Many other farmers were reportedly subjected to bodily harm.

Second Wave

In November that same year, the inhabitants of the following barrios evacuated: Catoog, Cagpile, Buntay, Batang and Cagdine - all of Oras town. More than 2,000 people from these barrios were forced to leave their homes upon orders of the military. In the town, they protested before higher military officials and local authorities. Only after three days were they allowed to return to their barrios.

Third Wave

In December of that year (1977), because of continuing abuses of the military

the residents of the following barrios and sitios evacuated:

1. Cagmanaba, Jipapad: 30 families left and have not yet returned.
2. Mabuhay, Jipapad: 30 families left and returned in 1978.
3. Agsam, Jipapad: 30 left and returned in 1978.
4. Ricarte, Jipapad: 40 left and not all have returned.
5. San Vicente, Jipapad: 30 families left but returned soon after. The reason for evacuating was the killing of a certain "GALO" and the mauling of four other farmers.
6. Mac Arthur, Arteche: 20 families left after the killing of OTONG BENTILLO and the manhandling of many other farmers. They returned in 1978.
7. Buenavista, Dolores: 61 families left and returned in September of 1978. Some of those who were manhandled and seriously hurt by the soldiers were: WILLY DACOLIAT, TALLY BARION, SILVINO AGDA and POLDO RONCALES.

Between December 16 and 31, the inhabitants of the following barrios belonging to the municipality of Oras, left their homes: Agsam, Naga, Minap-os, Cagdine, Iwayan, Buntay, Batang and sitio Maykorot (Agsam). This wave of evacuees consisted of 358 families totaling about 2,500 persons. What prompted the people to leave their homes were the following incidents:

1. The shelling of the barrios of Agsam, Naga and Minap-os.
2. The killing of ROSO NAVES in Mayrokot, Agsam on December 22, 1977.
3. The torture-killing of ROMY OSLARES, a farmer from Bo. Minap-os on December 27, 1977.

Fourth Wave

Between April and May of 1978, another exodus involving 1,000 people from 165 families took place. They came from one barrio and 11 sitios belonging to the municipality of Dolores. These were barrio DARAHUMAY and sitios Patag, Bulang, Bawang, Kagaasan, Kankoting, Cagdanaw, Hitindog, Kalotan, Saliang and Sulop. The following reported incidents were among the immediate reasons for their evacuation:

1. On April 2, 1978, two wood-cutters from Jecontol, Dolores BERTING REBATO and ABE REBATO were brutally killed by Army soldiers under the command of 2nd Lt. Anthony Gabriola (Serial No. 0-111467 PA).

2. About this period, 18 houses were burned down by Army soldiers in sitios Jetindog and Bil-og of barrio Jecontol, Dolores. The perpetrators were led by a certain Lt. Cayton.

3. On April 7, 1978, in sitio Patag, Buenavista, Dolores; two farmers - FORTUNATO SABIAN and MAGDALENA LAZARRA were killed. The Army men responsible for the killings were led by ICT Teodoro Rosel (06F07398 PA), who also ate the liver of the victim Fortunato Sabian. With him were TFC Jose Ariaso (06F-7212 PA) and TFC Onofre del Rosario (06F-7398 PA).

4. On April 8, 1978, ARTENIO BOLETIN, a farmer from sitio Kagaasan, Murphy, Dolores, was killed by Army soldiers led by 2nd Lt. Anthony Gabriola.

5. On April 19, 1978, LORETO JARDIO, 27 yrs. old, was arrested and brutally tortured in barrio Hinolaso, Dolores, by Army elements led by a certain Descar.

6. About this time, three brothers were picked up and subjected to torture in barrios Jecontol, Dolores. They were JOSE, MARIO and ROMEO LAZARRA. The youngest, Jose, only 17 years old, suffered several broken ribs.

7. On May 7, 1978, SOSING ABERIA of barrio Darahuway, Dolores was killed by Army soldiers under the command of the aforementioned 2nd Lt. Anthony Gabriola. Seven houses were also set on fire in this barrio.

8. On May 25, 1978, in barrio Binayaa, Lapinig, MAXIM GUARINO was shot and seriously wounded during the barrio fiesta.

9. On May 26, 1978- RAFAEL QUITORIO was killed in barrio Agsam, Oras, by Army soldiers. The only reason for the murder was the farmer's failure to show his "safe conduct pass". The soldiers were under the command of 2nd Lt. Ramon Erasmo (10-111791 PA).

10. On May 31, 1978, in sitio Bayarong, Balingasag, Oras - a mother and her daughter were shot while harvesting rice. They were PIA PAJAROJA and BENYANG. The mother was killed and the daughter, seriously wounded.

Elsewhere, people both in the barrios and in the 'poblacion', were reported to have suffered the same pattern of indiscriminate firings, maulings, tortures, killings, lootings, and rape from the military.

Third Period: 1979

Two "invasions" mark this current period. The first took place February 8 to 14. It was a short but massive campaign involving no less than 500 PC Rangers. They were brought to various points along the three rivers of Can-avid, Dolores and Oras by means of helicopters. From the hinterland and interior barrios, they swept down towards the coastal areas. The Commission received reports of what is by now, a very familiar pattern of molestation and killing of civilians, looting and destruction of the properties of farmers. (Details of some abuses of this February Campaign are given later in this report).

The second campaign, which continues to date, started in the early part of June with the arrival of the 52nd PC Battalion described by the military as a "development-oriented" battalion. This means that it has the joint role of a military unit and a social service agency. So far however, the social initiatives and attempts at integration with the community have merely been a form of tactical support to the military campaign, for example, educational teams disseminating government policies or anti-communist propaganda and engineering units building roads and airstrips which have a primarily strategic value.

The Commission found that this "development-oriented" military role belied the real situation. Language disguises what is in fact a substantial escalation in straight military activity since June. Reports of Military abuses are surfacing at an increased rate despite the terror and the forced passivity of the general populace. The Commission received numerous first-and second-hand accounts of abuses - too numerous to document here. In each town the Commission visited, recent examples of military abuse were presented to us as only the tip of the iceberg which a frightened community kept largely hidden for fear of reprisals. Some of these examples are incorporated in other parts of this report.

Familiar Patterns of Military Operations

The objective of military operations is said to be the identification and elimination of all subversive elements in Samar, NPA members and symapthizers.

Military tactics vary according to the location of the population centers. Coastal towns (poblacion), easily accessible through road transport, act as bases for large military detachments of PC, PA etc. There are some units, located in the inland areas of Eastern Samar in the north, the 'poblacions' of Jipapad and Maslog. But from past experiences, the military now prefers to keep their units together in substantial numbers in easily accessible areas and conduct limited incursions into the interior from these points.

Units of ranging from patoons to several companies (500 or more) are sent inland for periods of 2 to 15 days depending on their objectives. They now travel either by foot or by helicopter. They reluctantly use the most common form of transport to the interior, the pumpboat, as it has proven to announce their presence well in advance.

The composition of the forces in these operations is usually mixed. The major part of the unit will be composed of soldiers from the nearest base town but their numbers are now often boosted by others from further away and by local INPs, CHDFs and guides. They wear no name tags on operation, are usually dressed in civilian clothes and are, needless to say, adequately equipped with military hardware (M-79s, sidearms, mortars, grenade launchers and machine guns).

A typical operation starts by the landing of military personnel in the interior by helicopter in the late afternoon. At least 2 Iroquois choppers are used so that one can provide cover while the other unloads. The unit then waits till evening to start its operations. Under the cover of darkness they will split into 2 or 3 smaller units, each acting as cover for the other and make towards target barrios.

One group is usually used as a cover on the outskirts of the barrio while the others penetrate the settlement to pick up NPA suspects and intimidate the population. In some cases, the military will gather all the people into the middle of the barrio where their 'cedulas' (ID papers) are demanded and they are questioned and manhandled. Any suspect is taken or even executed on the spot. In other cases, the military work through paid informers within the barrio who are contacted before the raid to identify specific people or the houses of NPA sympathizers. Often, informers identify people against whom they have personal grudges. Sometimes they just give away anybody in order to get paid.

On long operations, the military will have a number of target barrios. In many cases, in order to keep the people intimidated, they will return to a village twice or thrice. Each time the people will be harassed.

Military discipline during these raids is clearly a peripheral matter for the soldiers involved. Many occurrences of abuse prove this: looting of houses and stores, domestic animals being maimed or killed, women being raped, people being beaten or killed, their means of livelihood being destroyed (e.g. coconut trees ruined or farm implements broken).

The following is an account of a recent operation in Eastern Samar, previously referred to as the February Campaign, conducted February 8-14, 1979.

Helicopters brought PC Rangers to different points along the three rivers of Can-avid, Dolores and Oras. They then conducted a sweep down to the coast. Along the Oras River, three farmers and one student were killed in the vicinity of Barrio Hitalinga, Arteche. The separate incidents happened at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon of February 10. Killed were SILVER NORCIO, APOLONIO BALENA and ANTONIO MONTALLANA. The identity of the student is not known. The soldiers numbering about 60 were led by INP Juaning Campomanes and two CHDFs from Oras, David Villota and Pelagio Libanan. Their killing of Silver Norcio is recorded as No. 16 under the following heading "Recent Cases of Military Abuse". In the same area about the same time, Apolonio Balena and Antonio Montallana were shot

to death without any investigation while they were catching fish in a brook. They were from Balingasag, Arteche.

This same group of soldiers under the command of Sgt. Cuna, patrolling day and night, continued down river. In Barrio Cagpile, Oras, they held a public meeting to tell the people about the blessings of President Marcos' "New Society" and to criticize the NPAs. In Barrio Cagtooy, the soldiers entered the house of the Barrio Captain and ate all the food they found. They also ransacked houses whose occupants were out on their farms, taking away valuables, farm implements and whatever caught their fancy. The same thing happened in Barrio Buntay, Oras where they looted the belongings of a certain "Tita" and consumed the food that was hidden. In Barrio Cagpaho, Oras, they also looted the house of a certain "Potong" and took away ₱100 in cash and a pair of trousers. Upon their arrival in Barrio Iwayan, Oras, the soldiers cooked and ate one sack of rice belonging to a farmer.

Along the Dolores River in Barrio Aroganga, the soldiers ordered all the people to assemble in the barrio plaza. They were made to fall in line for inspection of their residence certificates. Those who failed to show their 'cedulas' were beaten up and made to run around the plaza. Others were made to squat or to turn around many times or to do anything to make fun of them. Then the soldiers had a drinking spree, killing and cooking a dog and a chicken. Later, drunken soldiers went to a house and inquired if there was any "woman" available. Exasperated, the owner of the house pointed to a woman's picture on a calendar. One by one the soldiers kissed the picture.

In Barrio Magsaysay, the people suffered similarly from the soldiers' visit. In Sitio Saliong, Villahermosa, where the soldiers spent the night on February 8th, they took away clothing, a pig, a shovel and an axe from the house of Bolo and Inse Ena.

The tactics of the military in the 'poblacion' are different owing to their constant presence but the effects are much the same. Every night, the people know that the military are patroling and, worse, drinking. Harassment is a constant possibility and surveillance of the populace continuous. Other manifestations of militarization include:

- searches of houses for subversive material and arms,
- increasing conscription of residents, mostly social deviants, into paramilitary units like the ICHDF, Barangay Kawals, Tanods etc.
- mobilization of reservists and forming them into one reserve battalion,
- compulsory use of papers like 'cedulas', safe-conduct passes, police clearances, barangay captain clearances etc.
- putting up of checkpoints where papers are asked for and searches made,
- increasing the activities of intelligence units in the affected areas and even on school campuses.
- the formation of a special section in the military intelligence apparatus to take charge of religious affairs and also with the task of disseminating false information, surveillance and the establishment of intelligence networks using sects like the Philippine Benevolent Missionary Association (PBMA), Rizalistas, Iglesia ni Kristo (INK), etc.

Another tactic of the military which is becoming more and more prevalent is the creation of free fire zones. These zones intensify the fear already created by raids and increases the mass evacuation ot coastal towns. In free fire zones, any non-military person is shot on sight. The victims are often farmers who have not received word that their farm is now so designated. At present, there is a free fire zone in the northern area of eastern Samar. There are rumors that the zone may be extended to the south of Sulat to cover half of the province.

The Commission has further noted that most of the NPA suspects picked up by the military during these operations described above are mainly innocent farmers. Moreover it has found such tactics to be self-defeating. The barrio people now term the soldiers "onggoy" - monkeys. They describe the NPA as "helpful" and "disciplined". The military recognize this and now often attempt to pose as NPAs when they enter a barrio.

Recent Cases of Military Abuse

Many of the effects of militarization on the population of Eastern Samar have already been cited within the text of this report. But to make the picture even clearer, we wish to list more examples of military abuse during the last three years.

1. January 1, 1977 - In Barrio Salvacion, Can-avid: JUNIO PAGAPOS was mercilessly tortured. After the ordeal, with his hands tied, he was led about with a rope, like an animal. So intense was the torture that his bowels came out.

2. March 28, 1977 - In the same barrio, six farmers were severely manhandled. They were EUSTAQUIO LEGUIN, 42; ANTONIO LEGUIN, 40; GLICERIO OBIENA, 38; DIONESIO GALINDEZ, 34; JUANITO GALINDEZ, 32; and ROMEO HEBEN, 35. To top it all - the wives of two of these men were stripped naked and the soldiers took turns in raping the helpless women. There were other rape victims about this period. Some of them were: ERLINDA OBIDNA, IMELDA HERBON, 22; EDANG LOMAGHOS, 11; and CARMELITA LADIC, 27.

3. April 23, 1977 - In barrio Jepaco, Can-avid: ELPIDIO VILLACROSIS was hit several times with the butt of an armalite rifle and given a "flying kick" by a PC enlisted man named Ramirez. The CO was a certain Sgt. Parenio.

4. May 2, 1977 - In barrio Salvacion, Can-avid: ANTIONIO OBING-GAYAN, 44, was tortured to death. His body was beaten to a bloody pulp with the use of Armalite butts. So cruel was the torture that blood came out of his eyes, ears, and nose. His fingers were also crushed.

5. September 1977 - LUIS and JAMER LOMUNTAD, both farmers from barrio Tawagan, Arteche, were arrested while getting their "Safe Conduct Pass" in the town of Oras.

6. October 8, 1977 - In Tabok (Tawagan), Oras - A drunken Army man, "Boy" Fuertillanosa broke up a public dance. Later that same night he forcibly entered the house of a certain "Doro", who was then out of the house, causing the wife to faint out of fear.

7. October 19, 1977 - During the fiesta in the town of Oras - a drunken Army man shot and wounded the following persons: EDEN NOFILES, of poblacion Oras; AIDA TY, of barrio Bolo (San Eduardo), Oras, VICVIC TY, DOYDOY OROSCO, of barrio Agsam, Oras.

8. October 29, 1977 - In sitio Kagkakalaw, Salvacio (Can-avid): Seven persons were massacred, including 3 children. Killed were: EUGENIA OBIENA, 41; PEPE BAJADO, 30; VERONICA CALUBID, 30; MATEO REBATO, 40; OFELIA CARATAY, 5; PERFECTO CARATAY, 4; and EDDIE OBIENA, 3. All were in the house of Crisanto Caratay, when a group of about 20 soldiers suddenly fired upon them with high-powered weapons, including hand-grenades. Three other children of Crisanto although inside the house, miraculously survived the slaughter. ELEANOR, 3, and ERMILANDO, only six months old, were taken aboard the helicopter which picked up the soldiers after the massacre. Until now the two innocent children have not yet been accounted for. The third child, LENING, 9 years old, was left at the scene of the killings.

9. November 5, 1977 - In the outskirts of the town of Oras - WILFREDO LIBANAN, a driver of a public use motorcycle was senselessly killed by drunken Army soldiers.

10. April 7, 1978 - MAGNO BULA: He is a farmer from barrio Rizal, Dolores, E. Samar; 40 years old, married to Flora Caspe with 7 children. He also moonlights as a 'tuba' gatherer. He was arrested while renewing his "Safe conduct Pass" in Barrio Villahermosa by the Army detachment in this place. After the arrest, Magno was blindfolded and was brought to another detachment in Barangay Buenavista, Dolores. There he was manhandled by the soldiers. He suffered many broken bones in different parts of his body. The barrel of an Armalite was inserted into his anus and the point of another pistol was inserted into his mouth while undergoing interrogation. The military kept forcing him to admit that he was supporting the NPA. Magno was arrested on the pretext that he allowed two armed men to drink 'tuba' (native wine) in his house. According to Magno these two men were unarmed; he believed them to be rattan buyers. He was detained in Dolores municipal jail. He was not charged and not given any food. He ate whatever his wife could ask from friends.

11. April 5, 1978 - ANDRES COLINA: He is 25 years old from Barangay Rizal, Dolores, married to Monica Pajanustan. They had two children, aged 1 and 3 years old. Andres was arrested on his farm while harvesting his rice. He was manhandled by a group of 6 soldiers led by Jorge Villanueva, a private. Together with Romegio, another farmer, he was blindfolded and brought to Barangay Villahermosa where the army detachment was located. The reason for their arrest was mere suspicion of their being members of the local NPA. They were heavily tortured in Villahermosa and while being questioned were placed in a foxhole apparently with the intention of burying them alive. Barrels of armalites were inserted in thier mouths to force them to admit to the suspicion. They suffered broken bones. They are at present detained in Dolores Municipal Jail. Their stomachs and necks were cut with bayonets. They were not charged or given food by their captors. Their wives brought them what food they could. One of the wives was a nursing mother.

12. April 5, 1978 - REMEGIO CA COLIAT: He is 22 years old from Barangay Rizal and is the person arrested with Andres Colina. He is married to Anita Lobrio and they had one child, aged 9 months.

13. April 20, 1978, ANGEL NEBRIJA: He is 22 years old, single, from Hinolaso, Dolores. He was arrested as an NPA suspect. The military first arrested his grandparents as hostages. Later he was arrested together with his brother Francisco. Their grandparents were then set free. He was detained in Barrio Buenavista at the army detachment while Angel is in Dolores Municipal Jail. He had no relatives or friends to feed him and has to share the food of his fellow prisoners.

14. April 22, 1978 - On this date two teenaged girls at Can-avid were abused by two army officers. This happened in Barrio, Mabuhay, Can-avid. The victims were Virgie and Letty Uy. They are sisters and were both attending the Can-avid Agricultural Industrial School. The rapists were known to be the two commanding officers of the two army detachments located in Can-avid and Barrio Salvacion. Both are lieutenants in rank.

On the Vespers of the Fiesta of Barangay Mabuhay, there was a public benefit dance. Since the local curfew was ten o'clock the barrio officials asked permission from the army to extend the curfew up to midnight. The request was granted.

By midnight the people started to go home one by one. At this juncture, the soldiers, who were all drunk by this time, ordered the people to stay inside the school building. A stampede followed. Virgie and Letty found their way blocked by soldiers. They were brought inside the school building and abused by the two officers while their men stood guard until morning.

15. January 19, 1979 Dolores. PC soldiers and some CHDF members arrested 3 persons on suspicion that they were NPAs. One of these was Rudy Anastacio, an operator of a pumpboat plying the Dolores-Mapnod route. He was brought to the military camp in Dolores, where he was interrogated, tortured and was forced to run around the camp naked by a Lt. Sulapas. The interrogation and torture lasted the whole night. He was then released only after he was forced to sign a paper promising to cooperate with the military. The other two were Celestino Borja and Ongkol Rebato, both operators of the pumpboat "Danny". Suspected as NPAs and the killers of a certain Timotea Campomanes of Maslog, they were arrested, tortured and finally brought to Cebu.

16. February 10, 1979, Barrio Hitalinga, ARteche. PC soldiers led by INP Juaning Campomanes and 2 CHDFs from Oras, David Villota and Pelagio Libanan, chanced upon Silver Norcio and his wife who were making copra. They started investigating the two, asking for information of the whereabouts of the hideouts of the NPAs. Getting nothing from them, they began to torture Silver, crisscrossing his body with a bladed weapon. They finally left his dead body with nine wounds and his ears chopped off. His wife was able to escape unhurt.

17. July 12, 1979 - Sulat. A posse composed of INPs, CHDFs led by substation commander Aclon, killed Ben Tadios (25 years old, a native of the place and widely thought to be slightly retarded) at about 10 pm near Limlim Bridge. Ben was a suspect in a stabbing incident three days before. The Commission has a detailed report on this incident with a photograph of the body. The Bishop of Borongan (Eastern Samar) saw the body when driving along the road late that night. As yet, there is no curfew as far south as Sulat.

18. July 15, 1979, Tawagan, Dolores. PC Trooper Eduardo Ramos, who was drunk, shot and killed Juan Y. Yapot of Barrio Nato, Taft. Juan was a Ford Fiera driver (jeep taxi) whom Ramos found with an expired driver's license. Before this incident Ramos had already been confined at Ward 24 in V Luna Hospital, the ward for battle-shocked military personnel. The Commission has a detailed report on this incident with photographs.

19. August 2, 1979, Can-avid. During the fiesta, five young men were asked in the street by the military for their identification papers which they presented. In spite of this, they were taken away and have not been seen since.

20. August 4, 1979, Barrio Carolina, Can-avid. Three young people were taken from their houses. The body of one was eventually obtained from the local PC detachment.

Militarization of Community Life

The Commission observed a general militarization of community life. Civil institutions have been co-opted or coerced into a military support role. This includes local government and officials whose decisions are now made only with military sanction. Community groups and student organizations have either been abolished or must severely restrict their activities to those which, by no stretch of the imagination, have political implications.

Schools and colleges routinely have large military units which parade on most public occasions (e.g. fiestas) and practice regularly in conspicuous places. The militarization of education was also observed in such unlikely places as the in-service training of teachers. The Commission observed a day-long session of in-service training conducted in the style of a military drill by a school principal. Neither the content of the instruction nor the manner in which the teachers were addressed showed any respect for their integrity. Attendance by the teachers from surrounding barrios was compulsory every Saturday for some months. The proceedings were broadcast throughout the day through a loudspeaker

system so that the whole 'poblacion' could also benefit from the "education".

All community organizations, including those of the Church, are inflitrated by the military or their informers. As a result, the participation of the people in their own affairs has become minimal.

Military Discipline

From the military abuses already recorded in this document, it is obvious that the discipline of the military is sadly lacking and that it is not a force the nation can take any pride in. While the imposition of Martial Law in a country requires an honest and disciplined military to administer it fairly, it was very clear to the Commission that in Samar, all levels of the military from colonel to private, regard themselves as prosecutor, judge, and executioner for the entire community and take no cognisance of even the minimal reference to legal processes required by Martial Law. Thus, the military act on whim, suspicion, prejudice or the state of their digestion when "investigating" subversion. Drunkenness is rife as was witnessed by the Commission in several towns which, though under a 10 pm curfew, were deserted immediately as dark came about 7 pm because soldiers are drunk that early and citizens fear arbitrary assault on the street.

Apart from military abuse of the civilian populace, there are also numerous cases throughout Eastern Samar of internal fighting among the military. We give a few well-known examples of this total lack of discipline.

Army and Navy Exchange Shots, Arteche, 1978

A basketball game between the Army and the Navy in the town plaza ended in a dispute on the court. This escalated when Army personnel brought out their weapons and the Navy retaliated. Small arms fire was exchanged around the plaza, the church (where a service was in progress), and the rectory. Some naval personnel returned to their vessel which was moored nearby and began firing its heavy guns. Understandably, the local population were panic-stricken. It continued for at least half an hour. That there were no fatalities was more good luck than good management. The Commission listened to a tape recording and commentary made by the local priest from within the church during the conflict.

PC vs Engineering Battalion

Oras, Eastern Samar
June 10/11, 1979

- Around midnight of June 10th the townspeople of Oras were roused from their sleep by heavy firing coming from the vicinity of the Hospital, at the western edge of the town. The NPAs have invaded, they thought. It turned out to be an encounter between PC soldiers from the local detachment and soldiers from the Army's Engineering Battalion.

Facts

- In the evening of the 10th, an enlisted man from the Army's Engineering Battalion (encamped in barrio Da-o, 4 kilometers from the town proper) was stabbed by an unidentified person during a dance in that barrio.

- The victim was brought to the Oras Emergency Hospital by their CO, a certain Lt. Farrales and six other soldiers. They were in civilian clothes but armed.

- In the town on their way to the hospital the group was met by some PC soldiers who inquired what the matter was and where were they going. The

group ignored the PC and one of them even said. "Wala Kayo ng pakialam" (That's none of your business).

- Without the knowledge of Lt. Farrales' group, the PC troop (the whole detachment) followed them to the hospital, and while the stabbing victim was being treated by Dr. Eva Japson, the PC soldiers deployed themselves around the hospital.

- Then, for no apparent reason, one of the soldiers from the Engineering Battalion fired his pistol into the air. The PC, already in battle position, returned the fire and the battle was on. There was a heavy exchange of fire from both sides. It lasted for about 30 minutes.

- Above the din somebody from inside the hospital kept shouting at the top of his voice, "We are not NPAs!. We are soldiers!" When the shooting finally stopped one PC soldier lay wounded.

- Miraculously, no one inside the hospital was hit.

PC-Army Shoot-out Reported as NPA Ambush

Can-avid, Eastern Samar
June 20, 1979

- Shortly after 9:00 o'clock in the evening, sounds of gunfire were heard from the direction of the military Camp and checkpoint, located some 500 meters from the edge of the town (and about 150 meters from the Can-avid bridge). The shooting lasted for about 15 minutes.

- A few minutes before the shooting, two government dump trucks were seen driving fast from the direction of Dolores town, six kilometers to the north of Can-avid. They were identified as the same vehicles which earlier in the day brought from Catbalogan the remains of a dead soldier escorted by some Army soldiers.

- Shortly after the shooting, men in uniform were seen running from the scene of the "ambush" towards the direction of Dolores.

- The following morning the people of Can-avid were surprised to be told that NPAs had ambushed the two dump trucks loaded with Army men right in front of the military Camp.

- The Manila newspaper *Bulletin Today*, June 23, 1979 issue, carried this story:

> *" ..... Lt. Col. Sabas Imbong, PC commander of Eastern Samar, reported that an Army soldier was killed and seven others were wounded when a team led by 2nd Lt. Eriberto Padernalla of the Army's 19th Infantry battalion was ambushed last, Wednesday. The incident took place in the vicinity of Can-avid. The team was on its way to Taft after escort duty in Dolores when ambushed, Imbong said...."*

- The good colonel conveniently omitted to report the fact that the ambushers were in fact PC soldiers. This omission avoids the embarrassment of reporting a misencounter.

The People Resist Militarization

Resistance by civilians to military abuse is understandably very limited. Generally, the population try to avoid contact by evacuation or passivity. But

there have been some recent examples of resistance:

(a) "Waterlab" - Named after the US Skylab, the Waterlabs are floating placards allowed to drift downriver from interior barrios carrying accounts of military abuse and stating the wish of villagers that the military leave. Over the past two months many Waterlabs were seen on the rivers of Eastern Samar.

(b) One group of barrios decided to hold a public meeting in a coastal town late August to which they planned to bring the skulls and coffins of civilian victims and also the living victims (maimed people, raped women etc). However, the escalation of exactly such activities as they planned to protest against, prevented them from proceeding.

(c) Petitions. A common response of barrio people is to draw up petitions in very moderate terms as appeals to national leaders to remedy their grievances. The Commission itself was presented with petitions.

(d) Mass Re-occupation. The Commission was told of several plans for a sudden mass return by evacuees to their barrios. The seriousness with which this proposal was being pursued, or its likelihood of success, has still to b e ascertained.

(e) The Church. The clergy have witnessed such widespread suffering among their people that they have spoken out in open letters on several occasions.

Experiences of the Commission

It is not possible to give an itinerary of the Commission's movements and contacts in Eastern Samar for security reasons. This report therefore is constrained to give such detail. Nevertheless, it may help to include some more personal observations surrounding the Commission's travels which attest to the general situation.

(i) We used public transport and had to pass through numerous checkpoints or road blocks of armed military. We were asked not to seriously converse on public transport owing to the routine presence of informers on jeeps and buses monitoring the public. Once, late at night, a heavily armed patrol boarded the bus in a remote area apparently to use the public as a shield from attack. (Two days later a patrol was wiped out on this road).

(ii) The atmosphere in the coastal towns was unmistakably one of uneasy silence. Unlike the normal noise and life of evening in a town, there was an eerie silence after nightfall except for the occasional barks from dogs in the distance. This barking, we were told, betrayed the presence of military patrolling the deserted streets in that area of the town. They move very quietly, noting the occupants of houses and trying to overhear their conversation.

(iii) The fear of the people was evident both in the difficulty we experienced in arranging interviews through local contacts and the very tentative responses to our questions by many we did see. A number of people, especially evacuees, refused to speak with us at all for fear of reprisals.

(iv) Our interview with a new evacuee from Barrio Buenavista, Dolores, revealed that the military had threatened the people at a barrio meeting in words akin to: "If anything happens to military personnel in this area, we

will make you suffer more than you ever did before". Since the barrio had already been evacuated on previous occasions after much brutality from the former military unit, the people decided to leave in haste once more.

(v) The Commission received several petitions from inland barrios. They generally included the following requests:

- stop militarization
- pull out all military battalions sent in to beef up local commands
- due process of law must be afforded to suspected individuals
- the rights of political detainees should be upheld
- lift Martial Law

NORTHERN SAMAR REPORT

Background

The people of Northern Samar, unlike those of Eastern and Western Samar, have a more recent but not necessarily less brutal experience with military operations. As June neared its end, the people --- especially the farmers -- began to feel the intensification of militarization in the form of the 60th PC Battalion, known as "The Massacre Battalion" from Kalinga-Apayao. Now stationed in Catubig, the presence of the battalion has meant more killings, more strafing of barrios, more tortures, more rapes, more arbitrary arrests, more illegal detention, more lootings, more of all the other forms of military atrocities and abuses that have been committed in Samar since the start of martial law.

Catbalogan:

In this capital city of Western Samar, military presence is relatively light compared to the other two regions. Rare are the occasions when one sees military men in uniform. One such occasion is the fiesta where military parades are held. The parade as witnessed by the group signified a clear attempt on the part of the government to instill a military consciousness among the youth.

The fact-finding group asked a CAtbalogan priest why Western Samar seems to have none of the serious problems involving the military that the other two provinces have. He replied that as Western Samar is the most economically developed among the three provinces, it is harder for the military to get away with abuses without the people knowing about them. The barrios in Western Samar are relatively nearer to each other than those in Northern and Eastern Samar. Also, communication is much better and faster. He noted that abuses frequently occurred in remote barrios where news of events hardly reach the town proper.

It was also in CAtbalogan that the group was briefed on the overall situation in Samar. It was said that in 1971, bauxite was discovered in the upper part of Samar. This prompted President Marcos to close the island to business prospectors. To this day, only the government can issue permits to those wishing to engage in business there.

Gandara and Environs

Gandara occupies a significant position in the quest of bauxite. Sometime ago, the establishment of a cattle ranch drove the people away from their homes. The people were fenced in and their lands were fenced out to provide grazing ground for the cattle. The cattle came from Biliran Island which is reputedly owned by the First Lady.

When the people were driven out of their lands, the supply of cattle was mysteriously cut, leading to the death of the ranch. It was only after some time that the people realized the ranch was merely being used as a ploy to ease them out of the land in the least obstrusive way. The real importance of the land lay not in the grazing ground it could provide but in its rich deposit of bauxite.

It was observed that where there are rich mineral deposits in Samar, there the military presence is most acutely felt. Gandara, Gamay, ARteche, San Jose de Buan, Dolores, Can-Avid, and others belong to the rich mining areas. They are also heavily concentrated with troops.

Calbayog:

Calbayog, one of the many coastal cities of northern Samar, is populated mostly

by small fishermen. Today, they face the threat of being deprived of their source of livelihood by giant fishing conglomerates.

Catarman:

In Catarman, some social action workers reported a shootout that had just taken place in Catubig between two soldiers. This incident turned out to be simply one of a series of brawls among military men that are often reported as encounters with the NPA.

In ARteche, Eastern Samar, the soldiers had their version of "basketbrawl." After a ball game, the PC (Philippine Constabulary) refused to accede to the victory of the Navy. Thereupon, they started firing at the latter. The navy men, not to be outdone, rushed to their ships and fired their big guns at the PC.

The week before the fact-finding group arrived, about 500 people held a seminar on human rights to protest against military abuses. A few days later, the military staged its own "seminar on human rights" at Pambujan.

Pambujan:

The biggest evacuation site was seen in Pambujan. Makeshift houses were erected near the sea. A number who could not be accommodated on dry land were forced to live in small, narrow boats. The houses were usually not more than two meters wide and sheltered at least two families.

The evacuees recounted their experiences in the barrios. Most of them said that they were driven away because of harassment by the military. Unanimously, the people said they were more afraid of the military than of the NPA. The soldiers were more demanding, they said, while the NPA never imposed on them.

Some of the residents fled upon hearing rumors of killing perpetrated allegedly both by the NPA and the military. To others, however, the incidents are too close and real. One of the evacuees was the widow of Pepe Bantilo, a farmer who was slain because of his alleged connections with the NPA. He was shot by a CHDF member who, in turn, was forced and threatened by the soldiers. The PC told him that if he would not shoot the man, he would also be shot.

Pepe's death was unexpected in the light of the assistance he had given the PC. When soldiers came to Barrio Tula on Aug.1, he reportedly gave some rice and ₱50 to them. Twice the PC held a dance and a drinking spree. On both occasions, they freely availed of the people's resources.

One day, an encounter took place between the PC and the NPA. The attack of the latter was said to be prompted by the numerous crimes committed by the soldiers in the barrio. The fighting lasted an hour. The PC wanted to spray the barrio with bullets but were told by the CHDF that too many civilians would be caught in the crossfire.

After the encounter, a meeting of all males in the barrio was called by the military. Pepe came to this meeting quite untidy because he had no time to change as he had been working on his farm. Upon his arrival, the people were ordered to squat. Pepe was shot.

The military later claimed that Pepe was shot because he was an NPA suspect. He was reportedly seen dragging his brother, also an NPA suspect, who was wounded in the encounter. All four Bantilo brothers have been suspected by the PC as being members of the NPA.

The father of the suspects, however, declared that the claims of the military are not true. None of his sons were present in the said encounter, much less wounded, he stated. The brother whom the military claimed was seen being dragged by Pepe, was alive and well at the evacuation site. He could not understand why his son had been shot. It would have been easier for him to accept his son's death if he had truly been an NPA member, he said. But it was not so. In anguish, he asked, "what kind government is this that shoots down its own citizens without the benefit of due process?"

Lao-ang

The concrete roads in North Samar terminate in Calbayog, just before Lao-ang, an island off its northern tip. There are no roads all the way from Lao-ang to Dolores. Lao-ang is the shipping center for Palapag and other neighboring towns. There are no means of communication, no telephone lines, let alone roads.

Military presence is more noticeable in Lao-ang than in any other Northern Samar town visited by the group. In Lao-ang, the military had an observation post in the wharf, and a headquarter in the town proper. This town, like all the others, is gripped by an atmosphere of fear ever since the military came last June. The visiting group was told that previously, the town was peaceful; people wandered about and without fear at night. At present, as soon as it gets dark, people stay home for fear of the soldiers, especially of their indiscriminate firing after drinking sprees.

People are also forbidden to use flashlights at night because the military believes that they might be used for signalling the NPA. In the town's strategic places, signs have been put up at the behest of the military. These signs read: NPAs KEEP OUT. YOU ARE MAKING US HUNGRY. It was gathered that these signs sprung up after the people asked the military to keep out through banners floated down in banana trunks. The military claims these were floated down the rivers by the NPA.

The military prefer to be stationed in towns which are more accessible, such as Catubig, the site of the 60th PC battalion headquarters. From these points they stage their operations, fanning out to inland areas. On Sunday morning, the group wandered about the town. At the wharf, several military men were on the alert, watching passengers getting off a boat which had arrived from Manila. Some members of the group conversed with a uniformed PC soldier standing watch on the shore. Instead of replying where the boat was from, he instead asked if they were tourists and if they had not heard or read about the "civil war" in that part of the country. The reference to "civil war" caught the group by surprise. The soldier abruptly left. Later, the group noticed one military men armed with M-16s in what appeared to be an operation near the wharf. The previous night, intelligence men had come on the same vehicle as they were on. This group was probably following-up an intelligence report. The group noted that the intelligence men were quite husky and dressed in casual clothes.

Out of the 49 barrios in this area, 8 were totally evacuated. All the evacuees who had come to Lao-ang had been sent back so the group was not able to interview any. They had to be sent back, it was learned, due to food shortage and lack of adequate space, not because the situation had returned to normal. Military operations were by no means over; they were only slowed down for the moment.

The Catholic priest which the group talked to gave them a good assessment of the situation in the town. He described the fear that pervades the town and surrounding areas and spoke of some of the military abuses committed against the people. He narrated that a young couple, Cornelio and Candelaria, were

picked up for questioning by the PC and taken to the military house near the Church. Candelaria was taken to the downstairs washroom and raped several times. Cornelio was taken upstairs and tortured, after which he was forced to buy cigarettes and beer for the soldiers with his money. Both were released after the military was satisfied.

The military, supposed to be "protecting" the citizens, is in fact terrorizing the populace. It seems that no citizen is safe in military presence. It is very clear that the military is at the root of the fear which grips the town. In the barrios, it is much worse because the military not only arbitrarily pick up people, torture and kill, but also loot the people's houses, carting away food and in some instances, burning rice and breaking utensils and tools. The people want the military to withdraw so that peace would return to their homes and communities.

There are also cases of clashes between military men themselves, during which they kill one another. The group was informed that the body of a sergeant was brought in to the Lao-ang morgue the day before from the town of Catubig. He was shot by a PC soldier during an argument. The military ran a story in the *Evening Post*, August 28, that this sergeant was killed during an "NPA ambush at a military checkpoint". It would seem that not many news articles in the Philippine dailies on NPA-military encounters are factual.

Palapag

This town is accessible only by boat. The military has a detention camp on the property of an elite member of the town. At the height of the military operations a few weeks before the group arrived, there were 10,000 evacuees in the town. Five of the 28 barrios in the area were totally evacuated, but most of the evacuees had been sent back, also because there was food shortage and extreme overcrowding in Palapag. The townspeople are expecting another wave of evacuees in the near future.

The group interviewed some of the remaining evacuees, mostly families from the barrio of Sta. Cruz at the foot of Palapag-Mesa. They said they cannot return to their barrio because it was razed by the PC. Some of the evacuees had left as early as January 1979, and when the military came en masse in June, everyone evacuated. There is a very deep fear among these people. It was obvious to the group that they were not trusting them either, even after they had assured them who they were. When the group asked them who they were afraid of, they initially replied, the NPA. However, further discussions with them revealed that it is the military they are actually afraid of. They volunteered very little information because of the fear of harassment from the military. When they were asked if the NPA were good people, they said, "Yes! " They want to return to their barrio and start all over, but they are afraid to go back at the moment, as there will be continued military operations. In fact, the people talk of an escalating conflict; that large areas will be declared no man's land.

Members of the group also interviewed some of the townspeople. One leader in the town who was pro-military told them that "there are places." However, an opposite picture was drawn by others the group talked to, some of whom the group met at an elegant dinner party in a well-to-do residence. One man, a retired Army soldier, told them that the PC are not getting "the real NPAs". Another, a prominent businessman, was anxious that the group come over to the gathering because he said he knew "what was going on."

We talked at length to the prominent man who gave us some very revealing data about military abuse involving three cases. They were:

1. The case of Walling Bicunia; Rolly Toreda and three others from Nagbubtak Barrio . On the morning of July 22, Rolly Toreda, Walling Bicunia and two others were on their way to Palapag when they were met by a PC squad led by a Sergeant Casaral. One of the four, the father of Rolly was allowed to continue to town but the three others were taken back to the barrio. On the way back, one was shot and his body was brought along. In the barrio, two other suspects were picked up. Then, the four men plus the body were escorted back to Palapag. As they neared the landing near the town, they were asked to step on shore. There, they were shot dead. The bodies of the five were then dragged to the landing by ropes tied to their necks. At the landing, the bodies were hog-tied and carried to the municipal hall in town. They were hurriedly buried without the benefit of an autopsy. The man who told this story appeared on the scene just as the soldiers were taking the bodies for burial.

2. The case of Lucio Capampanjan. Lucio, a suspected NPA member, was in detention at Palapag. He was personally known by our narrator. In fact, a prominent man was working out the release of Lucio from the detention camp. At 10 a.m., his father, auntie, and the prominent man visited the camp. They left just before 12 noon when shots were heard. The military floated the story that Lucio was shot for trying to escape.

There were several versions of the escape. One was that he was seen walking along a street and had gone to say goodbye to his wife. Another version was that he was crossing the stream near the detention center. However, it seems strange that he would have tried to escape since Lucio knew that his release was being worked out. Also, it seems impossible that an escape could be conducted in broad daylight from the heavily guarded center. It is felt by many people that the military had its own reasons for shooting him.

3. The case of Mercader. Mercader was a close relative of the substation commander at Lao-ang. He was picked up in Palapag by Sgt. Casaral, taken out about a kilometer away from town, and shot dead. It is believed by the Palapag residents that Mercader was mistaken for another man of the same name who was an NPA suspect. Nevertheless his case is only one of a number where Sgt. Casaral has figured prominently.

The list of military atrocities runs endlessly:

May 15
Patong, Lapinig
Northern Samar

PC troopers and the Integrated National Police of the local command picked up Lourdes Orbano during the barrio fiesta. She was detained for 3 days. According to a police officer and a CHDF, Lourdes was abused by the Commanding Officer of the local command. Before she was turned over to the provincial headquarters, she was allegedly kept for a day in a private house.

July 11
Palmera, Laoang
Northern Samar

Fifteen troopers of the 60th PC Bn. burned three houses in sitio Busak. They were led by Miguel Tabullas, a resident of the place. He was the one who reported to the PC stationed there that the families living in the area were NPA supporters. Along with the three houses,some cavans of rice were also burned.

The victims evacuated to the 'poblacion'. Much as they would have liked to complain to the concerned authorities, they did not do so for fear of being harassed again.

July 12
Lapinig, Northern Samar

Two days before the town fiesta, three soldiers of the 60th Bn (Rico, Guce and a muslim) manhandled and killed Francisco "Boy" Gerale. Before his death, "Boy" was drinking booze with the soldiers and Ismael Lugo, the son of the town mayor. According to reports, after the drinking spree, Boy went out ahead and was followed by the 3 soldiers. They then started to beat him up. They tied his hands behind his back, carried him to a banca, and sailed toward the muncipal wharf.

There they boarded a motorboat, still with Boy's body. Unable to start the engine, they brought the body back to the banca. They sailed through a nearby river leading to the swamp land. The following morning, Boy's brother, Ricardo and a relative, Saling Morallos, found his corpse. Ocular inspection revealed that he suffered a broken skull, smashed right arm and neck, swollen charcoal-black face and tight rope marks around his wrists. It was covered with leaves from the nearby swampland.

July 20
Bgy. Higinitin, Sivino Lobos
Northern Samar

Bibeano Hinandog, a farmer, was arrested while he was securing his residence certificate. He was eventually killed, after his eyes were gouged out.

Aug. 7
Pambujan, Northern Samar

A special account on the case of Zoilo Francisco**
Zoilo Francisco, 42 years old and husband of Maria Morillo, is a father of four children and a farmer of Bgy. Gi-adgawan, Pambujan, Northern Samar. He and his family have just evacuated to Bgy. Dona Anacita of the said town. He was killed by PC operatives of the 60th PC Bn. At around 2:00 p.m. of August 7, he was decapitated and his stomach was slashed till the intestines poured out.

Minutes before his death, PC troopers, guided by Crespotin Lukban, came to Zoilo's barong-barong (nipa hut). He was taking a bath when they arrived. The soldiers told him to change quickly because he was invited for investigation at the 'poblacion'. Zoilo did as he was told and went out with the soldiers. After they crossed the bridge, his wife heard four shots. She then went through the pockets of Zoilo's used pants and found out that he had left his residence certificate behind. Aware of its importance, she asked her children to bring it to their father immediately. After sometime, the children came home crying and told her that their father was killed and beheaded. His head was taken to the poblacion (town). The following morning, Maria, with some friends, went out to look for his body. They found it near a coconut tree a few meters away from the provincial road beyond the Pambujan bridge.

An account of two sacks of heads brought to Lao-ang is one story that is familiar to Pambujan residents. It is said that whenever it has become inconvenient for the military to bring the bodies of the victims, they simply behead them and bring only the heads. At the detention center in Palapag, a string of 32 ears belonging to unknown persons were reportedly displayed for people to see.

Conversations with the people of Palapag has made it clear that it was the military which was causing tremendous fear among the residents. This fear is generated especially through indiscriminate killings, rape, torture, looting, drunkenness.

The townspeople are completely alienated from the military and consequently, the government because of the brutality with which they have been treated. For example, one relatively well-off person complained that the soldiers have taken it upon themselves to shoot down coconuts from his trees. The owner, who used to harvest around 5,000 coconuts before the military came to the island, now harvests only about 2,000 fruits.

As in other towns, everyone stays indoors as soon as it gets dark for fear of the soldiers. One man, however, explained away this phenomenon by saying that members of the NPA "come knocking on people's doors in the dead of the night." This man has barred his windows, built a new wall and secured the doors more heavily.

Before the military came last June, the town was peaceful and people calmly carried on with their everyday activities. Even children played on the streets at night, according to the same man. But still, here, as in other towns, soldiers are regarded as unwelcomed intruders. All the atrocities have deeply shocked and aroused the anger of the people. As a last-ditch attempt to pin the blame on the NPA, the military has put up signs telling the NPA to keep out. But the people seem to know better. They said that barrios that have been evacuated were being looted by marauding PC soldiers.

A priest from Gamay said that evacuees were still in town and that it was becoming increasingly difficult for the farmers to get safe conduct passes to go to their farms for food. He feared that hunger would soon set in.

On top of the very serious dislocation of thousands of barrio folks, they are also required by the military to get identification cards. In the process, grave instances of extortion by the authorities occur. Many families just do not have the cash that is required. Besides the extortion fee for the passes, there is also the bloated boat fare.

In every possible way, hardships are being created for the people. In Gamay, as elsewhere, the barrio people are told to go back and convince the NPA soldiers to surrender. If by Sept. 7, they did not heed the warning, the military said that operations will be intensified.

From these facts and other observations, it can be said that the military seems to operate mainly by creating fear among the people. As atrocities become more brutal, however, it is greatly doubted that the people's fear will not give way to righteous anger and retribution.

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

The observations made by the Commission and the data it collected in Northern and Eastern Samar bring it to some inescapable conclusions.

1. The evidence of serious and widespread military abuse is overwhelming. There apears to be a pattern of systematic assault on the civilian population which covers the entire island of Samar which is currently intensifying in the Northern and Eastern provinces.

2. It is the general opinion among all levels of the civilian population that their lives were much more peaceful before the militarization of their provinces. Since that time they have experienced brutality, hardship and fear.

   We witnessed this pervasive fear throughout the provinces. This has clearly resulted in the alienation of the majority of the people from the institutions of their own government especially the military; a result which is exactly opposite to the stated intention of the military escalation.

3. The legal rights of civilians are ignored. Innocence is no protection from sentences executed on the basis of suspicion and hearsay.

4. The social disruption of the population penetrates all aspects of life: farming, education, health, housing, church community politics, personal relationships. The poverty of the ordinary people has increased as a direct result of this disruption.

5. A Government which forces refugee status on its own citizens through mass evacuations in order to save them from "subversion" deserves to be the target of international censure. Driving people into poverty and despair as a means to securing their "freedom" is to say the least a contradictory policy which, in Samar, has resulted in immense human suffering.

6. The economic interests underpinning the military escalation may b e seen in the concentration of military forces and operations in areas rich in natural resources (particularly bauxite and timber) and in the presence of Australian "aid" teams building roads and bridges. These indications point to the systematic exploitation of Samar's richness while fostering corruption and a disregard for human rights. Once more, development without benefit to or consultation with the people.

7. The situation of Samar is closely related to the national situation, particularly that of the imposition of martial law in 1972 to perserve the republic and to promote national development. The policy of mili- t arization is apparently at cross purposes with the avowed plans for normalization and furthermore reflects the failure of martial law.

Conclusion

This Commission has determined

That there is widespread opposition to the militarization of Samar at all levels among the local people,

That the local people have found the military presence itself to be the force undermining their peace and welfare,

And Therefore Urges

That military escalation and all military operations in Samar should be stopped immediately.

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orderform

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PEOPLE'S URGENT DEMAND TO THE MARCOS REGIME

Whereas the pacification campaigns of the government have abused, exploited and oppressed the people; whereas future campaigns will continue to deprive people of their livelihood, property and peace of mind; whereas there are voices crying out JUSTICE for the victims of atrocities committed by government officials and soldiers of the Armed Forces of Philippines; whereas we firmly stand for the preservation of Human Rights and are one with the people in their desire to build a free, democratic, progressive and peaceful society;

We therefore, unite on this 19th day of September 1979 to urgently demand the following:

1. Dismantle martial law all over the country

Only by a unified people's struggle can martial law be dismantled. The Filipino people must be accorded the freedom to speak, to publish, to organize and to act in fulfillment of their aspirations.

2. Free all Political Detainees

It is not a crime to serve the interests of the people. Everyone has the right to hold their own beliefs. Because of this, we demand the freedom of all political detainees.

In this campaign we must be most concerned with those arrested on wanton charges of "supporting the NPA" or "of being members of the NPA" and other subversive organizations. We must also demand the immediate release of the old, the sick, parents, children and women.

All torture and atrocities by those in power must be stopped. Forcing people to spy on one another, betray their own folks and help in military operations, must be stopped.

3. We demand compensation from the government for lost lives and destroyed properties

All debts in terms of lives lost, properties and belongings destroyed resulting from the actions of military officers and their subordinates, should be paid for by the government. The orphans of peasants killed, and the wounded, and other victims of the military since 1975, must be compensated in full.

All crops and farm equipment stolen and damaged in one hundred villages over three provinces since 1975 must be paid for. These include:

A. About one hundred carabaos (working animals) and thousands of chickens and pigs killed, eaten or confiscated.

B. Thousands of sacks of rice and palay, copra and abaca that were burned, destroyed or confiscated.

C. Houses burned, nineteen villages that were burned to the ground, and household belongings that were either destroyed or confiscated like money, watches, machines, gas lamps and transistor radios.

D. Farming, fishing, tree cutting implements and equipment.

E. Food, drinks and cigarettes which were not paid for by the military offices and other personnel.

4. Stop the pacification campaign in Samar and other parts of the country

By the use of arms people are exploited and oppressed and their rights and freedoms are abused. These actions by the military do not answer the needs of poverty or fulfill the aspirations of the people, especially the peasants. In order to restore peace and to prevent any more damage to the livelihood and properties of the people, the government must undertake the following:

A. Revoke the right of the military to declare any part of Samar or the Philippines a "Free Firing Zone" or "No Man's Land". In such areas the military is given license to kill, abuse, terrorize and arrest anybody.

B. Stop all military campaigns or operations in Samar and in other parts of the country. In particular, halt the military patrols, surveillance, strafing and bombing of towns and upland and lowland villages.

C. Remove all newly installed camps, detachment and military airports. Stop the use of destructive weapons and war equipment. Remove checkpoints and the right of the military to search any person and his/her belongings.

D. Stop the forced issuance of safe conduct passes and Philippine Constabulary clearances. Stop the forced drafting of civilians into the armed forces of the Philippines and other para-military units such as the Integrated Civilian Home Defence Force and the Barangay Tanods (village guards).

E. Stop the surveillance of civilians. Remove all government intelligence men, spies and military informers in the offices, factories, schools, towns and villages.

5. Withdraw from Samar all the military troops of the Armed Forces of Philippines

The priority above all is the withdrawal of all officials and troops of the 52nd P.C. Battalion, 53rd P.C. Battalion, 60th P.C. Battalion, 19th Infantry Battalion (Philippine Army), 53rd Engineering Battalion (Philippine Army) all elements of the Philippine Air Force, Philippine Navy and Marines.

Punishment must be meted out to all officials and military personnel who were involved in, or who instigated the killings and abuses against the people. The officers and military troops of former units assigned to Samar, like the 59th P.C. Battalion and 45the Battalion must also be investigated.

All paramilitary troops like the Integrated Civilian Home Defence Force and Barangay Tanod must be dismantled and all arms and ammunitions issued to them confiscated.

6. Ensure the peaceful return of evacuees who desire to return to their villages

All evacuees who desire to return to their homes and farms must be guaranteed a safe return. Only in implementing the above five demands will this one be

realized. Aside from those mentioned, the following must also be implemented by the government.

A. Revoke the economic blockade ordered against the people. Related to this is the blocking of basic commodities such as salt, kerosene, matches, medicine, milk etc. and the requiring of peasants to show a tax declaration or land title before being allowed to sell their agricultural products.

B. Order all local officials to control the rising prices of basic commodities for a two year period from the time evacuees return to their home and farms. Order a rise in the price of products sold by peasants and workers.

Issue a temporary order to all landlords not to exact payment of land rent or share for two years. Debts acquired by peasants and workers in relation to farming, fishing and the extraction of copra from coconuts must also be temporarily suspended for two years.

This moratorium must cover all areas affected by the pacification campaign and other military operations.

Signatories

Samarnon For Justice and Peace KAGUPASA (Association of Small Fishermen of Samar).

B.C.P.C. Committee on Justice and Peace.

Association of Barangay Captains in Eastern and Western Samar.

Peasant Associations of hundred of villages in Eastern, Western and Northern Samar.

Teachers Associations of Some Towns in Western, Northern and Eastern Samar.

Concerned Citizens for Human Rights in Samar.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF APPEAL

Dear friends,

This is an appeal for help in behalf of 47,000 people in need.

The intensive militarization of the Samar island which followed in the wake of the National Defense Minister's visit last June, brought added misery to a people already prostrate by deprivation and poverty.

The presence and the (now dreaded) military operations of five battalions, with an estimated force of over 4,000 troopers, have to date resulted in a good number of killings of civilians and inumerable cases of tortures, indiscriminate arrests and illegal detentions, of looting and rapes, etc.

Among the most visible and socially burdensome effects of military action in Samar, however, is the forced mass evacuation of people from barrios which have been declared as "free-fixing-zones". This has created a fearsome dislocation of barrio people - over 40,000 in Northern Samar alone - who have been uprooted from their homes and livelihood and who now have to live at the mercy of relatives and friends in the poblaciones.

The local communities in Samar cannot for long support this growing number of dependents. The resources of the poblaciones are now showing strain, and hunger and sickness threaten these uprooted masses.

It is for them that the BCPC (Borongan-Calbayog-Palo-Catarman) Justice and Peace Committee appeal to your generosity and the generosity of your people. We will be eternally grateful if you can bring the plight of the Samar people to their attention and their care.

We will welcome any support, moral and material, which you can extend to them in their goodness. We will especially appreciate if you can support, with your own voice, the people's demand that military operations in Samar, which had caused this misery in the first place, be immediately stopped and that the heavy military presence be withdrawn.

Any material or financial support may be sent to this address:

Mr. Edgar Kangleon
Paul VI Social Action Center
Catbalogan, Samar

Thank you so much for your support and concern. We will consider ourselves in debt to your generosity.

Very sincerely yours,

Mr. Edgar Kangleon
Coordinator
BCPC Justice & Peace Committee

Fr. Mario Operario
Diocesan JP Coordinator
Borongan Diocese

Fr. Restituto Cardehas, Jr.
Diocesan JP Coordinator
Catarman Diocese

Endoresed by: Fr. Cirilo Nachura
BUPC Executive Secretary

PARTIAL REPORT ON EVACUATION IN SAMAR

Northern Samar (as of August 2)

TOWN	Total Population	Total No. of Barrios	No. of Barrios Totally Evacuated	Total no. of Evacuees (individuals)
CATUBIG	20,550	39	3	954
GAMAY	15,258	18	14	5,773
LAOANG	42,000	49	11	6,075
LAPINIG	10,326	12	8	3,505
LAS NAVAS	23,616	49	5	2,281
MAPANAS	6,504	7	6	2,281
PALAPAG	21,165	28	24	12,709
PAMBUJAN	14,797	18	1	One fully evacuated; rest partial evacuation 50-80% of total population
SAN ROQUE	12,325	11	3	2,997
SILVINO LOBOS	7,595	18	7	Rest partial evacuation 50-80% of total population
TOTAL		247	82	36,555 (estimated)

Note: The total number of evacuees listed includes those who have gone to Luzon, Eastern Semar and NOrthernwestern Samar. They compose about 10% of the evacuees. The 90% are in the evacuation sites.

As of now, due to the escalation of militarization, the number of eva-evacuees is still increasing. Some of them however, are starting to return to their respective barrios.

Western Samar

TOWN	No. of barrios Evacuated	Total no. of Evacuees
CALBAYOG	5	1,600 (individuals)
CALBIGA	(all the barrios effected by the 1977 military operations)	263 (families)

Eastern Samar

TOWN	No. of Barrios Evacuated	Total No. of Evacuees (families)
ARTECHE ORAS DOLORES CAN-AVID JIPAPAD MASLOG	almost all the interior barrios of these six municipalities are affected except those along the provincial highways	500

SAMAR

Legend

★ - REGIONAL COMMAND HQ
⊙ - AREA COMMAND HQ
• - DETACHMENT CENTER