



Tossed down
by
the rising waves!

by
Luna

Closing notes.

Year after year passed. Nearly seventeen years have gone by since I started to breathe the air of freedom after being swallowed by darkness during 18 years. Only in the year 1997 the obligation to report monthly to the Military Authority since mid 1983 was stopped. But for the political detainees/prisoners, although they have reached the age of 60 years they cannot get a life-long identity card like the others. Every three years they have to apply for new identity cards.

During the first years of Independence after 1945 I experienced the armed struggle against the Dutch Colonialists, although only as a courier for the guerrilla-troops around Solo, in Central Java. Later on when peace prevailed I was active within the women's movement which led me to stay in Germany at the Headquarters of The Women's International Democratic Federation (W.I.D.F.) I got also the duty to attend congresses in several countries in Europe like France Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Soviet Union also in China, India etc.

Under the old order led by President Sukarno I was active also as a journalist until 1965 when the 30 September Movement occurred.

When the New Order under the regime of President Suharto started, in the framework of 'anti-communism' a mass murder was launched killing about 2 million members of the Communist Party and its mass organisations as well as its sympathisers. Also to apply for a job one has to obtain a statement of "clear environment", it means no one in the family and relatives is involved with the 'latent danger of communism' as they are considered as 'dirty' or 'not clean'.

The anti-communist phobia has been pressed down in schools, beginning from the elementary schools up to the universities, so this generation has been educated that communism is a latent danger. Although President Suharto was forced to resign by the mass demonstrations including students, still the New Order continued with President Habibie's one year's rule. The economic situation is still very downward with a huge amount of foreign aid. Nearly twenty million people live in deep poverty.

Such situation has been inherited by the 4th present President Abdurrahman Wahid with the National Unity Cabinet. With the duet of Gus Dur and Megawati Sukarnoputri as Vice President it is expected that a total reformation could be realized. The court against corruption, collusion and nepotism (so-called K.K.N.) of former President Suharto and his cronies should be carried out as soon as possible.

Ex-political prisoners/detainees have already the courage to set up a mass-organisation named PKORBA (Paguyuban Korban Orde Baru- Solidarity Union of New Order-Victims on the 15th of September 1999.

We hope that the new millenium will bring new hopes for our beloved country.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

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1. Introduction.
2. Underground work
3. Capture.
4. Living in isolation.
5. The children and hunger behind bars.
6. Cultural activities.
7. Visits of the International Red Cross.
8. Together with women criminals.
9. Brought to Court.
10. Moving to Tangerang Women Prison.
11. Release in 1983.

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I. INTRODUCTION.

In Indonesian history an important but tragic event happened on the 30th of September 1965, usually called the 30th September Movement of the GKI during the 32 years regime of President Sukarno (1956 - 1965). It was stated at that time, that the GKI attempted a coup d'etat against the Government, murdering 6 police of Linggajaya, South of Jakarta. On that date President Sukarno was still in power. Actually it seemed quite strange if President Sukarno always condemned for the unity among the three ideologies in Indonesia: nationalist, religious and communist, popular as Pancasila.

As Sukarno got the mandate to restore order, he firstly outlawed the Communist Party. In anti-communist have spread out throughout the country led by General Suharto, who in 1966 declared himself as President and put President Sukarno under detention, until he passed away in 1970.

Anything connected with communism or 'leftism', such as the United Indonesian Workers' Union (GKI), the Indonesian Trade Union (SISU), the Indonesian Women's Movement (KAWAM), the Indonesian Students' Union (KSI), People's Youth, People's Cultural League and the Indonesian Scientific Union (ISU) were banned and their members got in jail or were sent to re-education especially in the villages.

Many people were sent to labor camps (more than 1000) and the Indonesian Union without being sent to camp. During more than three decades the truth about the 30th September Movement has not yet been thoroughly investigated. The 30th September Movement was the 30th September Movement leading to the overthrow of President Sukarno and the rise of President Suharto.

All followers and supporters of President Sukarno were chased and arrested during 1965 - 1967.

It was during the 30th September Movement that I was sent to the labor camp. I will start to tell the beginning in September 1965. My experiences have passed and I have been for many years.

II. UNDERGROUND WORK.

In September 1965 I was active at the Headquarters of the Indonesian Women's Movement working as translator.

At the same time as part time journalist for some newspapers, I wrote articles and short stories especially about women problems.

The organisation was active in various fields like the Defence of Women's Rights, children's right, for social welfare, training women cadres etc.

At that time the organization had its branches on nearly all islands of the archipelago with about one million members.

Together with many women's organizations in the Indonesian Women's Congress (KOWANI) was held trainings of volunteers in the struggle for the return of West Irian into the Republic of Indonesia (Trikora). Before that, there was also such struggle for the return of North Kalimantan against Malaysia (Dwikora).

Such was the situation at that time, demanding women volunteers to take part in military trainings.

Such was the case in 1965 at Lubang Buaya.

At the same time we were preparing for the holding of the fourth Congress in December 1965.

I stayed with my friend Lamy, who was a secretary of the Women's Movement, in a rented small house not far from the office. But many times, when we had to finish our duties, we had to stay overnight at the office with the driver and a housemaid, who prepared our meals.

In the early morning of October 1st, '65 we started our duty as usual. As most activists were at the same time also housewives, they used to come to the office a little later,

It was a great shock for us in hearing the information from one of our chairwomen, who came very early. She told us that 6 generals were kidnapped and murdered at Lubang Buaya the day before. in the framework of the 30st September Movement

It was the place of volunteers' training in particular of members of the People's Youth, Women's Movement, Trade Unions etc as usual. We decided to look around in the city as we didn't know anything before.

In front of the Communist Party Headquarters we witnessed the burning of the buildings and people plundering.

Arrests were done everywhere. Anybody considered as communist or sympathiser was caught. We stayed overnight in a friend's house, but we had to leave the following day.

Fortunately a relative of mine had married a certain colonel, who was already retired. I knew that he was a supporter of President Sukarno. Lamy also knew him since the time of the guerrilla fight in East Java against the Dutch troops.

We were welcomed heartily. He gave us some funds to continue our struggle. We decided not to be together all the time. Only at night we returned to that place. I started to connect another friend who had gone abroad with to attend the International Federation of Trade Unions.

Lamy had heard that our leaders of the Women's movement as members of Parliament got the opportunity to stay for awhile at the Senayan Sport Hall Complex, because their homes were ransacked by the mob, together with the apparatus.

We decided to know about their whereabouts. The colonel's driver took us to that place. But approaching the apartments we stopped at a small cafeteria, just to be vigilant. The owner emotionally said: "Ah.. at night all the women inside were taken away by the military troupe. What should they have done to be treated like criminals.., ah such old women..!"

We quickly left the place. It must be naive to fall into the trap of the authorities. We tried to meet other friends if possible. Lamy had to meet one friend and I another one.

several times. from Jin , to Rin , Erna ; Lina etc.
We could do so at that time, as long as we had sufficient funds for the officials in charge.

Days and months passed. What made us emotionally tense was the slanders in big letters on posters or written in big letters with chalk or charcoal on the streetwalls staining Gerwani members doing sadistic activities against the Generals at Lubang Buaya. Pulling their eyes off, or cutting their penises. Also the massmedia published all those slanders. Even mentioning that some Gerwani leaders were prostitutes.

It was certainly engineered by the present authority under General Suharto , who arrested President Sukarno until he passed away in 1969. He was considered as loyal to communism as his slogan was the unity among the three existing ideologies in Indonesia at that time : the nationalists, the religious people and the communists (NASAKOM) He never agreed to ban the Communist Party.

In our bulletin published in the beginning of 1966 when President Sukarno was legally still President, we stated that we had to fight against the fascist regime of General Suharto who unconstitutionally took the power. Our aim was to return President Sukarno into power again.

I got the duty to widespread the Bulletin also to foreign Embassies. I did it quietly in the evening just flinging them in the mailboxes along the main street of Iman Bonjol, Diponegoro etc.

Such was our daily activities. Before being aware nearly one year had passed moving from one place to the other Well , we had still a lot of friends and supporters and sympathisers , who assisted us with their activities, mentally as well as financially....!

Before being aware, we had been doing underground work for more than one year, during the last months reproducing and spreading the Bulletin in support of President Sukarno called P.K.P.S (Supporters of President Sukarno's Command).

We had a reproduction machine in the rented house of Sri, my friend from the National Council of the Indonesian Trade Unions (SEBUI). Together with Harti from the Farmers' Union the three of us used to come together regularly to discuss the situation and future activities. I received the monthly bulletin from Lamy, who got it from another three-persons' group above us. It was dedicated against President Suharto, who had declared himself President unconstitutionally. We knew that President Sukarno was held as captive until he passed away in 1969. But at that time it was September 1966 when I got shocked by the information that my two friends were arrested. It meant that they were looking for me too. Capture after capture took place. For me and my friend Lamy it was a problem not to be caught. We disguised ourselves with different names and appearances. I had to cut my long black hair changing it into brown curls or eventually very short like a tomboy. Fortunately citizenship cards could be 'obtained' as far as one could pay a high price.

But finally on the 17th of February '68 Lamy and I were caught one by one and also another friend Biz from different spots. It must be a traitor who knew us precisely in spite of our disguises. We were brought to Gunung Sahari Street in a former Chinese School. I understood later why the place was called referred to as 'the Ghost House'. I was thrown in a narrow cell full of bloodspots on the wall. I heard cries of pain outside in the big interrogation space.

My friend Lamy was first interrogated, then my turn came. A team of interrogators in striped uniforms were standing around me. The Chief called Acep grinned at me: "Ai..ai you tiny girl! How dare you to spread pamphlets supporting the former President against the New Order, Heh! Are you one of the generals murderers?! Be reasonable and tell me where your other friends are!"

He called some soldiers, who dragged me into a jeep next to the driver. They took me around asking me where my other friends were staying. I closed my eyes firmly, my mouth firmly. They shook my arms shouting me to answer. But I just closed my eyes too, behaving as if I was on the point of fainting. One soldier layed his ear on my breast to listen my heartbeats. I held my breath as if I was unconscious.

'Ai, Ai...if you die here, I 'll got trouble.'

So he returned to the Headquarters at Gunung Sahari, and reported that I didn't want to utter a word. He put me on a chair in front of the commander.

I kept silent, looking at him without flickering. I felt my eyes tense without being able to close them.

"How dare you to bugge out your eyes at me like that?!" Acep shouted angrily. He called two soldiers next to him. They took off my clothes and there I stood completely naked in front of those grinning 'ghosts'.

"Come on, open your mouth...or!" and they beat me with long rotan sticks all over my body. About eight of those 'ghosts' in striped uniforms green and yellow.

I closed my eyes feeling the blows down on my naked stomach, breast, face and arms. Blood spilled from my mouth. When I opened my eyes for a while I saw beaten men lying around the corners, many of them unconscious.

They dragged me around the small yard "You see...you will be thrown in that hole and buried if you don't want to tell us anything"

I just shut my eyes again. Why should I tell them the secrets of our underground work and betray my friends, if finally I would be killed anyway!! flashed in my mind

They could beat me to death, if they wanted, but I should not become a traitor anyhow. They took me on a chair to look at the beatings of other detainees. A young man I knew was pushed into

a bamboo-basket, which they kicked around the yard. When he tried to free himself he got more kicking accompanied by laughter at the "show". One of the soldiers opened the basket and bit one of the ears of the detainee. It fell off in a shower of blood.

Again I shut my eyes. "Were they human beings or real 'ghosts' with such sadistic inhuman behavior?"

to X Finally they considered that harshness could not open my mouth. The commander patted me. "Be a good girl...here...take on your clothes and have some talk!"

He brought me into a cell.

"Please be rational...if you tell me about your work...your leader and where he stays, you will be freed!"

I still kept silent. When he came near or almost touching my cheeks, I felt disgusted. My stomach seemed to move up and I vomited all the liquid from my stomach...just on his face with the feeling of the greatest disgust. He shouted a vulgar abuse and dragged me along the big room, while other soldiers beat me again with rotten sticks until I really felt unconscious. I didn't know for how long I heard a new voice shouting.

"Enough...don't kill her...I think she has to be brought to court with the others." It seemed that the newcomer was of a higher

rank.

~~rank~~ rank of the newcomer was also bruised throughout her body.

I was then transferred to another place, it seemed a former Chinese school too. In the big hall I met some other women detainees, all of us suffering from severe beatings. Drops of blood were seen on the thin mats where we were pushed together. More than thirty women and girls, among other Chinese girls.

She were groaning and crying. A Chinese girl was unconscious. She was interrogated. "When she refused to speak she got electric shocks" her friend explained. Across the yard we saw another former classroom where the men detainees were kept also squeezed, maybe 40 of them in one room.

I looked around. There were some older women, whom I knew, mostly members of the Indonesian Women's Movement, The People's Youth or the Indonesian People's Cultural League and young Chinese students assumed as allied to the C.P.I.

Once a day they gave us some food. In this centre of detainees the nights were more awful, because just at night some detainees either from the men-side or some of us would be called up for interrogations at the 'Ghosts' House' the place of sadistic torments.

Upon return in the morning they were wounded and some of them died during interrogation.

I rubbed my own face, which was swollen from the beatings and

my lips were inflamed. In any case I was still alive...!

At that time there was no other feelings than trying not to be nervous during interrogations. Although my heart seemed to burn with fire, my head had to remain cool and not to loose my mind.

I didn't want to die now, even I had to pass prison life.

Finally some of us were transferred to another camp and our turn

came. Lamy and I were called up and transferred to a building

in the centre of the town. It was narrow, men and women detainees

were pushed together, nearly hundred of ^{people}. The women squeezed in one

room while the men sleeping on the terrace in a row close to each

other. But still life was going on. The young students were playing

cards while making fun. A group made efforts to study languages

or accupuncture from experts.

In June 1967 we were moved again to another camp. This

time also overcrowded, so that we had to sleep in turn. It was

just an ordinary house for one family, but we were nearly hundred.

We met here our two other friends, Sri from the Trade Union and

Harti from the Farmers' Union. So the four of us were complete.

I listened to the story of their capture in September '66.

Sri was severely beaten. She was actually well built with yellowish

skin and big breasts. So when she had to stand naked in front of

the soldiers at the "Ghost House", she was greatly humiliated.

For some time she lost her mind staring mindlessly in front of

her, Harti told. Some friends who studied accupuncture tried to

cure her by massage and reflexology.

Although in such horrible situation we tried to use the days as

best as possible, Some groups were learning from others various

skills and knowledge.

Of course when the guard was not in sight.

I spoke with a wellknown poet (Sitor Situmorang), who tried to remain calm and humorous in the worst moments in our life.

Chatting was better than being depressed. I met here a wellknown lawyer, journalists, entrepreneurs and ordinary ex-activists of leftist massorganizations, once so powerful with millions members throughout the archipel.

Again we were investigated in turn. Although no forms of tortures like in the "Ghosts'House" were used, but still if the military interrogator was not satisfied with our answers...

He just slapped in my face like a naughty schoolgirl decades ago

118 Ah it hurt me more mentally, feeling deeply humiliated. Sweat drops fell from my face, when I returned to my place at the corner.

I just fell asleep. My friends tried to cheer me up. In fact we had to comfort each other in order not to feel depressed.

I smiled when a friend told the group how to practice meditation or "yoga", the Indian way to keep calm in any turbulence.

Other friends tried to make pipes from chickenbones, etc, I saw a friend going from one corner in the morning to another corner and returning to his sleeping corner in the evening as if coming 'home' from office, The space was just several meters long.

The episode of living in a narrow space like fishes in a tin, finally came to an end, when one by one or in groups, we were transferred into the prisons.

Our turn came ..a group of men detainees among them a lecturer of the University, a journalist and some activists entered then bus and they called us: the four women.

The bus sped to the big prison at Salemba. I still remembered our friends, thin, pale and in ragged clothes, while the military

guards shouting powerful, when they saw them flickering towards us, the women, ~~in~~ like saying goodbye. All what we had, especially notes, papers, any books were collected and burned. We regretted the notebooks with meditation lessons of Yoga: a method to obtain peace of mind in the chaos of worldly tumult.

Finally all the women detainees were ordered to get into the bus again and we sped up to the Women Prison of Bukitduri. Oh...how big and sturdy was that building. Later I was informed that it was built during the Dutch colonial time for rebellious (ingenious' people or 'inlander'. Some were sentenced to death and many others were banned lifelong to Boven Digul in West Irian. Once I read about those heroes, the fighters for independence many decades ago.

X X It turned out that the big building was divided into two sections, the left one for the women criminals and the right section for the political detainees. In the centre was a big hall used for gatherings or celebrations and in front was the office of the guards. Unfortunately the four of us were not brought to the right wing together with the political detainees, but isolated in one room among the criminal detainees. The guard said it would be just for a certain time as my friend Lamy was needed as witness at the Court of a Communist Leader, who participated in the Sukarnolist Group issuing the Bulletin Supporting President Sukarno. We didn't have the opportunity to contact our friends at the political Section. In the beginning we were rather afraid amidst the women criminals like murderers, thieves, kidnappers, cheaters etc. But soon we understood that they were mostly kind to us. Probably they felt sorry for us, as we were completely isolated day and night. Even our door and windows were all the time shut.

X
Once, during a rainy day we heard something falling from the high window near the ceiling. It turned out to be a package of fried cassave, smelling deliciously. It seemed, that behind the wall

was the kitchen of the criminal prisoners. Oh...how kind they were...

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The second time was, when somebody opened our window to clean it, but at the same time tossed down some fried fishes inside.

We thanked them quietly in order the guard would not see it.

We were really among sympathetic people. More than one month

we were there. Even so-called 'criminals' had a human heart,

feeling sorry for us, who were isolated day and night without enough food.

X
When on the 27th of July '64, Lamy came from the Court Session of the Communist Leader Sim, she told that the latter was sentenced to death just on that day, which was accidentally his birthday. Another friend from Surabaya was also brought as witness. She was captured in Palembang and brought to Jakarta and stayed in the room next to ours.

Finally our days in the Criminal Section of Bukitduri were finished and we were returned to our ^{last} Detainees' Camp. We told our friends there about the friendly women criminals, who many times smuggled some delicious snacks for us.

Our friend the humorous poet remarked "Ah...certainly there are a lot of themes to write about...It's a pity I am not a woman!" Of course everybody laughed.

After several days the four of us were suddenly called up returning to Bukitduri Women Prison, This time we entered officially the Section of Political Detainees at the right wing.

It was a lot of hugging and kissing, as most of them we knew already, such as the leaders of the Indonesian Women's Movement and activists of all the mass organisations, with whom we have worked together many years before 1965.

We were put at Block C, again in isolation as this Block was supposed to be prepared for those marked as 'dangerous'. We as Epilique activists belonged to this group because when the organisations were banned we still continued our activities. Others in this Block were the young teenagers arrested at Lubang Buaya, they were members of People's Youth. But during our underground work we read that they were members of the Indonesian Women's Movement participating in murdering the Generals. Ah... later we would know everything about the truth. In any case, we were now far from the "Ghosts' House", the interrogation centre with inhuman tortures.

For the first time since our arrest and in various camps I could breathe relieved and tried to sleep. What would tomorrow bring for us, we had just to wait and see...!

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LIVING IN ISOLATION

IV
We were put in Block C in One big cell. Block C was dedicated for the 'dangerous' detainees. The so-called epilogue-activists like us, who continued active ^{after} the banning of all leftist organizations. And also those young girls arrested at Lubang Ruyun. They stayed in the cells next to ours, but we could not speak with them as the door was always locked. The other friends, who were not isolated sometimes approached us at the windows to have a chat, naturally when there was no guard in sight.

After some months we were separated, each of us alone, in one small cell of about 2 x 4 meters with a somewhat 'bed', without mattress. I lay down on a thin mat, still the air was damp as the door was always closed day and night. The only window was a small one high near the ceiling, unable to be reached by the other detainees.

During the long hours of loneliness I started to become stressed and began daydreaming. I lost touch with the real world and entered an imaginary world.

My activities in the past before the tragic 1965 event flashed back like a film being revised.

My happy student years in the early fifties at the Gadjah Mada University in Jogjakarta until 1955.

At that time I joined the Indonesian Women's Movement, Yogyakarta branch. Even I participated at the first Congress in Surabaya in 1954. Until 1955 its members had become hundred thousands in all the provinces.

In 1955 I participated in a Youth Delegation to the International Youth Festival in Warsaw, Poland. It was the first time

Upon returning to Indonesia I started working as translator in the Headquarters of the Indonesian Women's Movement.

In 1963 I got the duty to join the Women Workers' Delegation to the Congress of International Women Workers in Bukarest, Rumania. Its chairman was Sri who was the chief of the Women's Section of the Indonesian Workers' Federation (SOBSI).

Oh....like rewinding a film I still remember those faces of women from various countries, white or yellow skinned, brown or black with hair like gold, blond or black, and eyes of brown, blue or yellowish colours.

All of them united in one aim :: to defend women's rights. Every fight has its consequences. ~~At~~ older friends, who experienced the Dutch colonial time and fought against colonialism, were banned to Hoven Digul in the 30-ies (West Irian) stated, that every fighter had to face the 3 B. (Buang, Bui, Bunuh) to be banned, to be imprisoned or to be killed.....

And now I was here... isolated in the prison, Bu, in my case I had to be thankful, that I I was still alive. Where there is life, there is hope, isn't it ?!.....

I looked around in my small cell.

On a friend had given me a pillow containing no soft cottonwool but a collection of pieces of textile pieces, as her mother was a dressmaker. I opened the pillow, collecting the various colorful pieces. I started to make dolls, the faces with embroidered eyes, nose and red lips. The hours passed away. On daytime we could borrow scissors, knives and threads but those things had to be collected in the evening for danger of suicide with those sharp things, they said.

I saw foreign countries and met young people from all over the world. I started to write letters to a friend in Jakarta. The sery of letters was entitled : I saw a new world . It turned out, that my friend published them in the People's Daily . a left wing daily. It was the beginning of my carrier as journalist.

When the Youth Festival was over I got the duty to join the Women's International Democratic Federation (W.I.D.F) as the Indonesian Women's Movement was one of its members. Its office was in Berlin, Germany. It was very interesting I worked together with representatives of many countries, such as Beatrix from the United States, Madeleine Rossi from Italy, the chairwoman was Madame Cotton from France. I lived together in ~~app~~ rtments along the Orankestrasse with Balgis from Iraq, she was at the same age like me , about twnty five years. Next door was Shahnaz from Iran and in another room was Maud from Sweden , Didi from India and another friend from Spain. Our office was at Unter den Linden, in front of the Humboldt University, We were like a global family interested in the defence of Women's Rights in the shole world.

We attended international Conferences like those held in Helsinki (Finland), Leusanne, Swiss, even in China.

Several national organisations invited us at their Congresses like Didi and me to attend the Congress of Femme Francais in Paris, Vienna, Austria and Oslo , Sweden.

It was really an interesting period of my life being in daily conta contact with women from various nationalities.

I spoke about the fight for independence in my country and the position of women which was still lower than that of the men in most Asian African countris.

For three years I stayed there, traveling many times to other countries.

Didit schily

Enthusiastically I produced dolls with various national dresses of different countries as well as from various provinces in Indonesia. In the evening when I looked at them especially the dolls' eyes, I felt like having company, not just completely alone. Also my yearning for the outside world with sceneries of palm trees waving at the beach was somehow reduced by doing patchwork making pictures of coconut trees along the beach with waves of the blue sea. I was fortunate to have studied painting during my student years.

When seeing my handicrafts my friends started to like them and exchanged them with tea, sugar and snacks, which they received from their families. Even they encouraged me to produce more to sell them via their visiting relatives. Only two of the four of us received family visits, although rare. I did not have contact with my family as they lived far away in Solo, Central Java.

Once a day the four of us were brought in front of the guards' office to have one hour 'sunbath', although strictly guarded. Even going to the toilet or taking our baths, we were guarded.

(E) In 1968 new detainees entered the prison. They came from Blitar after a failed revolt against the regime. They were also isolated. It so happened that there was daily only two guards doing their duty in turn, They entrusted their responsibility of controlling the blocks to the so-called 'block-chiefs' chosen from among the detainees supposed to be loyal to the guards. After certain periods they were changed.

Once we got a block-chief who could play a double role, intelligent enough to seem obliging the military guards but at the same time violating their rules to relieve our suffering, especially for the isolated detainees. She dared to open our locked doors as soon as the guard left the blocks to return to his office which was about several hundred meters from the blocks.

We then could freely associate with our other friends.

Apart from the teenagers of the People's Youth there were some real kids of two to 4 years old brought along by their respective mothers. Usually their fathers were also arrested so nobody could take care of them.

Our block-chief Yus taught the children like Yoyo or Tetty a special children's song and upon instruction they sang it when the guard left the office approaching our blocks.

Yus would quickly push the isolation detainees into our own cells and 'lock' the door was locked again.

The other friends returned to their daily routine jobs as tailors, or clustered in the yards while doing their work like crocheting, knitting, or embroidering waiting for the inspection of the guard.

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During my life alone in the cell, I tried to write poetry just to push away every thought which might lead to stress.

Some of those were the following :

1. Peace in my heart !
2. A whisper of hope !

A whisper of Hope

In the deepest darkness of the night
Knocked down by a gulf of sorrow
Painfully squeezed beyond comparison
During years of glowing fire...

In the silence behind walls
Piercing through the iron bars
Thou whispered a string of words
Full of hope in future peace

How dark the night might be
And dreadful the storm could be
Once the storm would come to an end
Fresh and bright the sun would shine

In the deepest darkness of the night
I hear a whisper of hope
Coming from HIM, whose love embraces us all
Who do not doubt in His power ...!!!

Peace in my heart !

Walls and bars
Are witnesses
Of all turmoil
And grief in my heart

Days became months
Years were quickly flying
Like a very long night
Sinking in freezing nothingness

Silent and quiet
Locked up in my cell
Far away from the noises
In complete loneliness.

A
All turmoil in my heart
Quietened in the tremble of peace
In Full belief in HIM
The Creator of the Universe.

Walls and bars
Became witnesses

Of the Deepest joy
Thrilling in my heart
in full belief ...!

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V THE CHILDREN AND HUNGER BEHIND BAR ..

Years have passed since we were thrown into Bukitduri Women Prison in the Southern Part of Jakarta in 1967.

We were considered as Epilogue detainees, those who after 1965, the banning of all leftist organisations, were still active. Therefore we were assumed as 'dangerous' and had to be isolated in Block C. We stayed together with a dozen young girls all of them teenagers, assumed as directly involved in the 30th September Movement. They were arrested in 1965 at Lubang Buaya, the place of where the 6 Generals were murdered by a military unit. After a while they were eager to tell us their stories. In the media and posters in those days they were considered as Gerwani members but in fact none of them were a member of the Women's Movement considering their age at the time of their arrest. They were members of People's Youth who got military training at Lubang Buaya.

In that period during the conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia called Dwikora it was usual to join military training by mass organisations. Not only the communist allied mass organisations, but also by the nationalist and religious groups. Under President Sukarno the three ideologies the three trends (NASAKOM) were united in the fight against imperialism and their organisations.

About the 31 Sept, Movement itself it has been explained before. The main thing was to use GERWANI as the object of accusation of horrible deeds of sadism against the 6 generals.

And these girls were the victims of the assumption that as members of the Women's Movement they had committed sadistic and pornographic activities at Lubang Buaya.

They were widely reported in the mass media that they had taken off the eyes of the generals, cutting their penises after doing sex. Such horrible stories were published.

One report stated that these 'Gerwani members' had taken off their clothes and nakedly they danced the so-called 'Fragrant Flower Dance'. I asked the children how was the truth.

The fact was that these children were arrested at Lubang Buaya heavily beaten, some of them even raped like W. She became mentally disturbed since then. And it was in Bukitduri Prison, where they took their clothes off in the meeting hall, where they had to jump and shout while being put in a video strip. This was belittled as the so-called 'Fragrant Flower Dance' taken at Lubang Buaya. There was also a young innocent housewife whose husband owned the well in which the generals were thrown. She had been heavily beaten, she used to sit for hours stupified alone.

And now here we were together in Block C. We were a; together about one hundred inmates. Block A was occupied by women leaders and important personages like the wives of communist leaders. Block B was occupied by more or less ordinary Gerwani or from other mass organisations members arrested in the areas of the various Jakarta military Districts. Some of them were also heavily beaten, even raped by the military interrogators.

The more we got the stories of their experiences during the arrests, the more we heard horrible stories like the time we were arrested in February '67. Many died during the interrogations and beatings too.

In any case we were still alive, but how...

In the beginning we got as daily food twice a day some rice, vegetables and a piece of fish. Never a breakfast during all the years. Later on it became rice-porridge some vegetables and no fish, even the worst was some grains of maize, some vegetables, even without salt. Hunger was our daily suffering. Especially for those young girls, usually called 'children'. Most of them did not get family visits too. We tried to survive eating anything eatable from the garden all kinds of leaves usually not to be eaten, as far as they were not poisonous. Even stems and green buds of flowers.

But the solidarity among us inmates was high. Anybody, who got a family visit and received some food, decided it to some others, especially those who were sick. For me, as I ^{lost} ~~lost~~ my teeth during the beatings at the time of my arrest, I had to make my food very soft by grinding it with a stone on the aluminium plate. For us four in the isolation room, every gift from the other friends meant a lot, as we were suffering from all kinds of diseases as the aftermath of our tortures at our arrests.

As two of our inmates were former medical doctors, they suggested that the weakest friends should get daily one glass of the fluid after boiling the vegetables. Usually it was thrown away. It must still contain the vitamins of the vegetables, although it tasted bitter.

Some friends who got the duty to work in the garden took the initiative to collect edible snails, although we had never eaten such meat. 'Still it is meat ... just try them!'

We did not have oil, so the snails would be half roasted on hot stones in the garden. Some of the inmates got visitors from their relatives. They told that in the men prison in Salemba and Tangerang they even ate ~~meat~~^{se} meat instead of chicken or buffalo meat. Some of the husbands were also detainees in the men prisons.

In Tangerang prison, some km outside of Jakarta many died from hunger.

During that hunger period at night we used to hear the girls crying and shouting feeling oppressed, as nobody knew when would be the end.

They were arrested and accused of committing such horrible crimes, which actually were complete lies.

When the four of us were brought to court in 1975, before my defence I stated why those children were not brought to court and in case of being unguilty, they had to be soon released. But not the least response.

Only when there was an international urge to free the thousand of detainees finally they were released in 1979. For those children it meant fourteen years of their youth wasted behind the iron bars, without any evidence of crimes.

When the hunger persisted some times we exchanged some clothes, some blouses with a handful of food from the criminal section, the left building in Bukitduri. We had to do it very carefully in order not to be observed by the guards. It happened, that our bathroom was next to that of the criminals. The wall deviding the two parts of the long bathroom had an open space above, through which we exchanged our clothes with packets of rice in banana leaves.

We used to hid the packet in our ttekel, while walking raidly to the blocks.

Still, day by day the hunger became worst.

One of the girls, the youngest--she was only thirteen when she was arrested as 'political detainee'. She was rather fat and short, nicknamed Fatty and used to make jokes in spite of the tragic condition in the prison.

This time she shouted that we were treated just as goats with just maiz and leaves as daily food. The other girls agreed and started together mimicking the bleating of goats..." mBeek...mbeek...!

The next time when the military guard entered to blocks for inspection we heard from all rooms the bleating of goats in all intonations.

The guard understood directly what it meant...only goats got such kind of food daily...! He became furious and red in his face, shouting to stop mimicking the bleating of goats. But it went on...for a while

Then the guard lost his patience and pushed every body in the cells and locked them. For two days all ^{males} were punished without food in the isolation rooms.

Yet the older inmates did not become angry against the naughtiness of the children. Instead, they laughed and later on still laughed remembering the angry guard while hearing the 'bleating' of goat-children.

Ah...the children...and hunger behind the bars !!!

VI

Cultural activities.

In spite our suffering from hunger and mental stress we tried not to loose our spirit.

While looking at the teenagers we as adults had to be more resolute and able to endure hardship.

During those times we were again interrogated , this time not by military officers, but some civil prosecutors to take our verbal official report in anticipating the court session.

But when whould it be, it was just a question ...!

It was already nearly five years whnce entering the prison, when I felt really very weak from lack of vitamines and daily food.

During one of the interrogation by a prosecutor, I didn't tell the truth about our underground work as usual.

He presented a written statement of one of our women leaders who told everything about our underground work, telling everything concerning tht groups, even the names. Ah such a traitor !!!

I was ultimately shocked, so that suddenly I could not move my right arm. My nerves seemed to be cracked down by such a traitory. This disappointment was a climax, for two years I coul not hear and could not move my right arm even until ten years later as going to see a doctor was a rarity for us.

Still we did not want to become hopeless.

We tried to make our prisonlife as best as we could in spite of the poor food and medical services we could not obtain. The young teenagers liked to learn singing and dancing. They held various competitions of gymnastics and other sports in the yard. Every morning we had to do morning gymnastics. Table tennins was allowed to be done, even for us during our daily time of 'sunbath'.

In that way the years passed.

Once Carmel Boediharjo, who worked at the Department of Foreign Affairs entered the prison after Minister Subandrio was arrested and detained at Nirbaya. Carmel was once a representative of the British Students' Union working at the Headquarters of the International Students' Union in Prague. She met the Indonesian representative of students, Budi Harjo and finally became his wife returning home to Indonesia with him.

Some of us formed a group to study English conversation with her. In turn I taught the teenagers elementary English. We were lucky, that Yus was still entrusted as block-chief, so that the opening and closing of isolation doors became her daily routine. We, the isolation detainees were still forbidden to communicate with the others.

We also performed plays in a rather wide space between the blocks. Of course some friends had to take the duty to monitor the guards. As soon as one of them left the office to approach the blocks, we had to stop quickly our activities and did the daily routine of embroidering, sewing etc, while the isolation detainees like us, had to rush to our cells and locked.

X My friend Lamy and I used to write the plays, mostly about the guerrilla troupes fighting for independence against the Dutch colonial troupes. We had a lot of remembrances about the time between 1945 -- 1949, when we were teenagers. I was at that time a courier of the guerrilla troupes, making contacts between the villages and the city of Solo, Central Java.

I got the duty as playdirector, choosing the suitable players.

As Dutch soldier I asked Carmel to play the role as she was the only European, tall, whteskinned, with a straight nose, the exact type of the Dutch figure.

She did it very excellent, but sometimes she just mumbled "Wow... I have to play always the loosing one !"

Of course all of us laughed.

We used to stage such plays approachinh IndependenceDay, the 17th of August to give the youngsters some imagess of the struggle of the older ones.

Once it happened, that our friends who had to monitor the guards seemed to be too much engaged in watching the play and the code-song was heard rather too late.

We rushed to our isolation cells quickly and 'click' the door was locked. But it was not quick enough for Carmel to change her "soldier's" clothing. So the other friends just dragged her into one of the nearby rooms and covered her with a big blanket. The guard was inspecting the rooms.

"She got suddnely ill, probably influenza" told Amah.

At that time there was an epidemy of Hongkong -Flu spreading over the country, So the guard quickly ~~set~~^{left} the blocks, afraid to be contaminated. The guards never ^{by} paid attention, if enybody got sick...

We were lucky that the guard did not have any suspicion/ What if he knew, that Carmel was insoldiers' dress with a pistol in her pocket... Of course just for playing !

Since that time on we continued our English studies. We also held competitions in singing, dancing and poetry reading.

Sometimes, it happened that we got the order from the commander to stage a play formally for the occasion of Independence Day, Christmas or Lebaran Day (the end of the fasting month). It was then staged in the big hall in the middle of the two wings, the left for the criminals and the right wing for us, political detainees.

Many guests from outside the prison were invited. They were quite impressed by our play, singing and dancing. Yes, we had to make our prison-life as sustainable as possible. We didn't know, when would be the end. But we should not lose our spirit and hope in the future!!!!

VII Visits of the International Red Cross.

Some years later for the first time we got a visit of the International Red Cross delegatton, one from Switserlabd and another one from Germany. They didn't bring a translator with them. As the guards didn't speak English, they asked us who among us could do it.

As I was known as an ex-translator, I was chosen together with my friend Tiki, who was a former lecturer at the Indonesian University before.

While walking around, I told the Red Cross delection about our sufferings, the lack of food and medical care. If anybody became ill, she was not directly brought to a doctor.

The last time Rumini died from weakness ,symptoms of high blood-pressure without doctor's control.

In the office I obligedly translated the questions and answers. "How many times a day do the detainees get their meals and how much ?"

The guard answered " Well, certainly three times a day, rice soup and dishes, enough for them I think. Look they are healthy !"

I translated his answer fully and loudly, but added in a whisper. " He lies, we don't get enough, many times only once and not even rice, but maiz or cassave "

It seemed that Tini said the same to the other delegates. We hade to look seriously so that the guard would not be suspicious about our translation even contrary.

The delegates noted everything down. We showed the ~~the~~ rooms , the sleeping ocmented 'beds' without any mattress and blankets. Many friends just slept on the damp bare floors, and when it rained, it could be imagined how we felt.

It contained a nice blanket , nice clothes and chocolates I didn't taste such delicious chocolates for many year. The packet was accompanied by a letter from a Dutch women introducing herself as a friend who knew my condition and would continue to contact and assist us . For the other three, each of them got also a packet with a moving letter of friendship.

The third time we met another I,R,C delegation was in 1980 during our stay at the new Tangerang Women Prison, where we were moved from Bukitduri. It was some kilometers away away from the capital of Jakarta.

It was just on time, as I suffered from allergy for several months and was not brought to the hospital for medical care.

How happy we were like meeting old friends.

How beautiful and nice was international solidarity !!...

When the second International Red Cross delegation came after two years in 1974, the four of us were already transferred to the left wing among the criminals. But the delegates insisted to meet the four of us after they finished their visit to the political section. They had our names and urged to meet us.

The officer in command was obliged to take them to us after passing several closed doors until the left wing. We were surprised and happy. This time they brought their own translator along. When the guard left us for a while they told us that for each of us they had found a special group of Amnesty International supporters, mostly in Europe. For me in Netherland, for Harti in Swiss and for the other two friends in Britain and Germany.

Oh... we were not forgotten, we still had friends, who fought for human rights.

This time the delegation presented us all detainees each a mattress to sleep on. Already so many ^{years} we didn't feel the soft mattress.

When we for the first time tried to enjoy sleeping on the mattress, we sometimes woke up startled when our fingers felt the softness of the mattress containing cottonwool.

My friend Harti got the idea just to put our usual strawmat on the mattress. In that way when in the middle of the night we woke up and our fingers touched the strawmat, we felt relieved and continued sleeping like usual.

Oh, how funny it was!

After a little while after the visit we got a packet from the International Red Cross. The ~~aid~~ officer did not dare, not to send them to us, because the Government had an agreement with the I.R.C.

VIII Together with women-criminals.

Starting from 1974, when the International Red Cross Centre delegation met us for the second time, we were already transferred to the left Section of Bukitduri prison amidst the women-criminals in blue uniforms.

Although for several years the four of us still lived in one cell, but our fellow prisoners used to approach us through the windows and told us their stories freely. When after our court sessions the door was finally unlocked during daytime, we could communicate with our neighbors more intimately.

As they were mostly young girls or women, they called us 'mummy', whereas the women-guards they addressed as 'ibu' (mother or madam). So 'mummy' was more intimate.

I began to know the criminal world, the life of pickpockets, swindlers, thieves, kidnappers, drugtraders or smugglers, and murderers. They were usually considered as 'social garbage'. But were they really garbage?

Weren't they human beings too, who were unfortunate and had reasons in doing their crimes? I became the more interested

day by day while listening to their stories.

I remembered my years before 1965, when I worked as translator

for foreign journalists, including a Pravda journalist from the Soviet Union. At the same time I wrote articles and

short stories for various newspapers and magazines.

At those times we interviewed high officials, even ministers in Presidential Palace.

But now I was here and had the opportunity to write the life stories of the lowest class citizens tossed down in the prison.

Of course I could not justify committing crimes, but I began to understand the reasons why and the motives behind various types of crimes.

For instance there was Tarsem^{Sem}, a sweet darkskinned young woman from Indramayu, a region at the Northern beach of West Java, wellknown for its severe poverty.

She didn't know her father, who died from hunger and tuberculosis when she just a small kid. Her mother worked in the market carrying loads of vegetables and coconuts piled up on her back. When she came home she used to collapse from exhaustion.

As a little girl Tarsem wanted to work as childworker in a cigarette factory to help her mother feeding her younger brother and sister, although she earned only very little. Tarsem told me haltingly " We used ~~eat~~ to eat cassave or maize, as rice was very expensive for us. One day a neighboring girl Minem, who used to work in Jakarta, came home.

She persuaded me to go to Jakarta in order to be able to send enough money for my mother. I joined her with great expectations. But what happened?

Minem brought me to a brothel called 'Sweet nights'. She has worked there for years as prostitute and so became I too. I had no choice. For three years I worked there. I was just a 'paything' with different husbands every night. Of course I had dreams of being loved by a man. I yearned to finish with this life somehow.

Once my roommate stole some jewelry and a lot of money from a customer and fled. So I had to be imprisoned in her place. Ah...in any case I can sleep quietly now", she smiled.

Another one was Keling, a pickpocket "People were shouting...thief...thief!" I was caught stealing redhanded a few cans of sardines in the market. I was beaten across my face, head and body. I bit my lips and hold back the pain, I didn't share a tear. That was why I came here, mummy! I was born beneath a bridge across the Ciliwung river in down town Jakarta, I didn't know my parents. I was brought up

bt Ma' Isah a nimble fingered middle aged woman who was a p pickpocket herself. She had some maternal feelings towards me. When I was small, she used to carry me on her hips : She was formally a vegetable trader, But she frequently stole anything from the shops. And when she was caught and sent to jail I accompanied her as I was too small to stay on my own.

Ma' Isah taught me the skill of pickpocketing. That's how I have lived for years just like the other pickpockets and thieves, sleeping curled up next to my friends near the piles of vegetables in the market or in the doorways of some shops nearby, also under the bridges when the water was not high. My friend Ulin and I were the best in stealing. We were not allowed to beg. Ma'Isah didn't like it. To her stealing or pickpocketing is a dangerous 'profession' with consequences to be caught, whereas begging is just for the lazy and desperate people. When I met a schoolgirl in uniform carrying books under her arms, I sometimes had the feeling of envy... ah away with such thoughts ! There was a wall between their world and ours...! But a pickpocket has certainly dreams, you know!

When I became a little older, Ma'Isah took another orphanaged youth boy as her adopted son. I was happy to get a brother who was some years older than me, who could defend me when I got troubles.

His name was Bopeng or Pickmarked. As years passed Bopeng became a sturdy young man ,who could easily haul down huge weights of rice down from the trucks into the warehouses. That was his 'official' profession. At other times he used to steal car-spotlights which was his speciality ,just as each of his friends had their own speciality in stealing.

Like my friend Dedeh for example used to chat animatedly with the young men and snatched their wallets cleverly.

When she shouted 'Pickpocket..pickpocket !' together with the others, nobody suspected her.

In my community to be a prostitute was considered of a lower status than a thief . We entered and left a prison ,but continued our 'profession'.

As years passed Bopeng showed not only brotherly affection, but the beginning of love, which got full res^ol^uti^on deep in my heart. Ma' Isah was happy that Bopeng and I loved each other. Who says, that love is ~~not~~ only for those who have house and much money ?!...

Ma'Isah had the dream to marry us 'officially' in her home-village one day. So she urged Bopeng and me to collect enough money, although by stealing and pickpocketing.

But you see..now I am here, although I think just for some months and Bopeng is in the men prison. He will be released sooner than I and of course he will visit me then !" Kelling's eyes sparkled gaily.

Another type was a middle aged woman nicknamed 'Dracula' as she had murdered four persons during several months.

She didn't show any feeling of regret. Once she told me, that she ~~she~~ could not control her deeds, when she quarrelled or had a grudge against somebody. But in everyday life she was kind and helpful towards the other prisoners.

I thought she must be suffering of a certain psychological device . She should be handled by a psychiatrist then..

Not only poor people entered the women-prison. There was a beautiful wealthy young Chinese woman named Yang, who was sentenced for ten years imprisonment, because she had murdered her husband/

"Ah...it was a tragedy. I regret it, but too late.

We were married several years and got a son. But I found out that he took a mistress in Singapore. Some friends from Singapore told me it to me.

I went to Singapore to find out whether the rumor about my husband was true. He sometimes didn't come home for a long time.

I didn't meet him there, but the neighbors ensured me that it was the house of my husband and his 'wife'.

It so happened, that in Jakarta, I took part in a shooting lesson, as a sport as it was common among the elite. So I know how to handle a pistol and shoot.

When I returned to Jakarta, I made the gruesome plan to kill my husband. At night when my husband was fast asleep I took my pistol and shot him on his heart. He died immediately. I reported to the police and was detained and brought to trial. It was all like a nightmare. But I really regret it as my little son continuously accuses me "Mummy, why did you kill daddy, mm ?!!!"

But as she was a millionaire in those times she was able to bribe the authorities. Her official sentence was ten years long, but during that period she was allowed to go home now and then of course by paying millions. And finally on the base of various articles of the Law she got many years reduction and was released after 3 years.

Not like other murderers, who had to be imprisoned for the whole period of the sentence, even some of them were sent to the ~~prison~~ on Nusakambangan island at the Southern Sea South of Central Java.

Murder cases were usually committed ~~to~~ to betrayals of the husband, the object was usually the husband or the 'third woman'. Ijah even cut her husband's penis to death so that the other woman could not get it, she said.

In 1974 two students of the University of Indonesia, Faculty of Criminology came to stay with us to make a thesis about women criminals. I introduced them to my fellow prisoners and said that they were our daughters, who paid attention to the fate of women criminals. Later they became lecturers on Criminology at the University.

In the meantime I continued writing short stories of those woman criminals, who were pushed aside by the 'civilised' society. Somehow we could not feel the suffering in the prison ourselves as we were in the midst of human suffering of my fellow prisoners, who mostly didn't have the opportunity to live a normal life before, due to the deep poverty, lack of education etc.

At least all four of us didn't experience such life before, even we had the opportunity to be sent abroad as activists of the women's movement or trade union. Everywhere we were welcomed and honoured by our foreign friends.

I continued my writing about robbers, swindlers, drugseller. I trusted a woman-guard who was particularly kind to us to send the stories home. Later on, when I would be released some time, I would take them back again.

It turned out that her husband was also a political prisoner sent to Buru Island and died there.

She did not tell her superiors. Otherwise as the wife of a political detainee, she could be expelled from her job at that time.

IX

Brought to Court.

Finally the time came, when we had to prepare ourselves to be brought to court in 1975.

From the nearly hundred political prisoners in Bukitduri, only the four of us were sent to court. They told us, that they got sufficient evidence of our 'crime', namely the publication of and spreading of pamphlets supporting President Sukarno.

We did it in 1966, when President Sukarno was officially still in power, but general Suharto tried to shake it in order to obtain the power in his hands. Only in September 1966 President Sukarno was officially turned down at a General Assembly of the Parliament. He was then kept in arrest until he passed away in 1969.

Our court was 6 years later after the death of President Sukarno and President Suharto got the full power. President Sukarno was accused as being loyal to communism as his slogan was unity among the three ideologies: nationalism, religion, and communism (NASAKOM).

The new order of President Suharto boasted itself as being consequent anti-communism, engineering the 30st September Affair, instructing the mass-murder of more than one million communists, sympathisers, and members of the allied mass organisations. Everything connected with Sukarnoism (Old Order) was considered as a crime.

Approaching our appearance at the Court our friends lent us nice batik blouses and syawls to look presentable before the Court. A big prison carriage took us out. It was open at the back so that we could see the people on the streets. When we passed the market, it was a surprise, that many street vendors waved at us enthusiastically. From the prison carriage they knew, that we were detainees. Oh probably, they were also like our prison-mates! pickpockets or thieves etc and considered us

as their friends. We smiled and waved back.

~~X~~ In front of the Court Building at down town Jakarta a whole crowd gathered. They must be informed by the media, that four women political detainees would be brought to court on that day. The four of us sat neatly in a row in front of the judges, consisting of one male and two female judges in their black toga uniforms. On the left the team of prosecutors and on the right the team of defenders from Jan Apul & Associates. One defender smiled and nodded his head welcoming us. It was the first time in years that somebody welcomed us so kindly and ready to defend us. Ah..my heart started to beat harder.

~~X~~ As I looked at the three judges I suddenly remembered that the one on the left was my former classmate Yati at the Senior High School in Solo and also my fellowstudent at the Gajah Mada University in Jogja, My self-confidence returned. Why ..I didn't do anything wrong. I spoke freely in my defence.

In a flash I remembered the 'children', now already teenagers arrested in 1965 as Gerwani members although they could not be members of a women organization yet, but members of People's Youth.

They were accused as having mutilated the generals at Lubang Buaya, taken of their eyes, cutting their penisses, which was complete lies. But for years written as headlines in newspapers and posters on the walls to provoke the society in order to hate everything connected with communism and its allied organisations. I saw the bare lies along the streets during my underground period in 1966 - 1967.

~~X~~ "Honourable Judges, I know the Law has to be applied all the time. Once I have studied Law at the Gajah Mada University My fellow detainees, still kids from the People's Youth, who were arrested in 1965 and still imprisoned after 10 years, should be also brought to court and set free, not only the four of us "

I pointed to the judge ,who was my former fellow student;

" I am speaking the truth, please ask her ! Supporting President Sukarno, who was still in function at the time we published the pamphlets in March, April and May 1966 was certainly not a viola tion of the Law. But this court is held after eight years of our arrest and sixyears after President Sukarno pass passed away, According strict regulation , a detainee should be brought to court after six months of his or her arrest.

After 8 years of our arrest we are brought to court.

Is not that violation of the Law ?!!" I spoke emotionally.

The Chief of the Judges, Asmara, got red in his face.

He banged the hammer and stopped the court session. Some one took the loudspeaker in front of me, sothat the audience ,es-pecially the crowd outside the building could not hear us anymore. The session was then postponed until undetermined time. One session upon another continued for months.

Finally the sentencc was deternined. The hammer fell, sentencing us inprisonment during in secuencia .

for Lamy 20 years, for me 18 years and for Sri and Harti each 15 years withouth reduction of the period since they day of our arrest. And that was eight years , by the way !!

Our defender Yan Apul from the Association of Indonesian Advocated (PERADIN) suggested us not to accept it and go to Higher Court. Also our prosecutor did not accept it as they demanded life sentence. It semmed that the process in Higher Court needed some years,as there were lots of vases awaiting, they told us We just waited ..and in complete isolation as usual...

In 1976 our friends from the poltical section on the right wing were suddenly moved away.

They were sent to a banning⁴ place at Plantungan in Central Java, a former leprosy rehabilitation centre.

~~X~~ Finally the Higher Court issued the sentence in 1978, which was the same, but with reduction of the period since the arrest. We wanted to accept it, but this time the team of prosecutors disagreed and went to the Supreme Court, During the time of waiting, bargaining between the courts, we were still locked up as usual. amidst the criminals.

When the guards were not around, they approached us at the window, ~~chatting~~, pitying us, giving us sometimes snacks and cheering us up with their jokes. Ah... they were our closest friends during those dark days!

Due to international pressure in 1979 all/detainees in Indonesia were set free, but not those who were already sentenced. We could read newspapers smuggled carefully by our friends the women criminals. The nearly 10.000 political male detainees on Buru Island were released after 14 years of detention without evidence of their guilt or violation of the law. But our status was just in between. We were no detainees anymore, because we have already been brought to Court and had still to wait to become formal prisoners.

The final sentence from the Supreme Court came in the beginning of 1980. We were officially released from isolation and were free to communicate with our fellow prisoners wearing the same blue uniforms. We also got the same duties, like cleaning the blocks in turn, sewing and embroidering table cloths and knitting in the work centre led by a woman guard.

On celebrations of National Days we sang in a choir together. I taught them some dances to be performed on the stage.

During all those years we rarely got family visits. Once I was visited by my younger brother, who was just released from prison after 8 years in Solo. He told me that our parents had passed away several years ago. He was formerly an activist

He was formerly an activist of the People's Youth in Jakarta and worked at the National Front.

An old church activist regularly visited us throughout the years. We were really grateful to Mrs Tine Franz for her attention and assistance and from her we got informations about our other friends in different prisons:

3X Moving to Tangerang Women Prison
(At the end of 1980)

One day we were informed that the next day we had to move to Tangerang Women Prison, Tangerang is a small town, northwest of Jakarta. As the inmates of the Rightwing of Bukitduri Prison were trasfered to Central Java in 1996 Bukitduri Prison became too big for us. Actually the building was built during the Dutch Colonial Time more than two hundred years ago. And freedoom fighters were jailed there, even ^{my} were executed. We saw the iron guillotine, where they were hanged at that time. Now the building became rather brittle and the ceilings were likely to break down.

We had to collect all our belongings, namely some clothes, towels etc in one bag. Early in the morning probably at 3 O'clock we had to get into the buses and off we went. It was really a long journey to the north, passing ricefields, villages and sceneries, we hadn't seen in many years. We stopped in front of a sparkling new building, the Tangerang Women Rehabilitation Centre.

In the same town there were prisons for men, for delinquent youth and also one special for children.

The Women Rehabilitation Centre consisted of several round buildings one in the front for the office. Two on the left and right for work-centres and a few others for sleeping places..

For us, poltical prisoners, they reserved one round building.

We got more inmates, one from Lampung, South Sumatra, who was sentenced for life. Two others from Cianjur, West Java, a mother and daighter, whose 'crime' was giving a communist leader from Bandung to stay overnight for a few days. They got respectively 16 years and 22 years sentence.

Another one was Tati from Purworejo, Central Java, who got 15 years.

So the eight of us were brought together in one round building.

The media reported that the new Women Prison was the best in the whole ^M South East Asia. In our opinion it was the most secured, because each was shaped round and the middle space was the post for the women-guards overlooking all rooms around. The doors were not made of wood, but iron bars, so that even at night the guards could control what the inmates were doing. During daytime we got the duty in the Work Centre, just like in Bukitduri, sewing, knitting, embroidering together with the women criminals. As I didn't have enough patience to do handicraft I told the guards that I could draw designs for table clothes, or handkerchiefs for embroidery.

At the same time I could put aside some pages of paper to continue my writing of short stories. I had to do the writing at night in the toiletroom in order not to be seen by the guards.

Sometimes we had to do gardening as around the buildings there was enough land to plant vegetables and flowers.

In the beginning we had to prepare the inauguration of the prison which would be done by the President's wife, Tien Suharto.

We got a teacher to teach us playing the gamelan orchestra and singing traditional Javanese songs. Each of us got a nice light-blue blouse with flower designs, but only just for that occasion. Whereas everyday we had to be satisfied wearing our dark blue prison uniform.

As there were frequently visitors from several institutions and social organisations, church activists or journalists to write reports about the new prison, the food we received was somehow better than in Bukitduri, where we suffered from hunger.

I got the opportunity to smuggle my writings out of the prison via a young female journalist, Doris. She pretended to be student

of the Technical Institute interested in the design of the new prison and wanted to study it in detail. She got the permission to enter the buildings unaccompanied by the guards. She saved my writings and returned them to me after my release.

We met here some international figures in the criminal world.

Jane was an Italian girl, a member of a syndicate in morphine trade.

When smuggling drugs to Bali she was caught. Jane didn't speak Indonesian well, so she used to come to me chatting freely about her experiences to pour all the burden in her heart.

Here is her story :

"Yes, I am an adventuress. I have besmirched my country's good name. I started as a model in a big fashion company in Paris.

I came from a simple family near Rome. On the age of 16 I had a great ambition to become rich and joined a group of girls trying fortune in Paris. In the glamorous world of luxurious fashion I forgot my life in the village. My first love was a feudal prince from Germany. We called him just Baron.

Some time later this Baron took me to elite restaurants in Champ Elisee near the Eifel tower. I felt like Cinderella.

My friends warned me "Be careful with your prince in order not to be betrayed later !" But I just didn't pay attention. My prince took me once to a small island, Banana island south of France at the Mediterranean sea..

It was called also the 'nudists' island as people were sunbathing completely nude at the beautiful beach. Oh..it was like heaven on earth !.

To this island European millionnaires, big business men used to run away from the tensions of the big cities to live a 'free' life for some time. It seemed that Baron was not strange here.

Nobody asked whether I was his wife, We had to enjoy life, Baron always said as nobody knew, when would be the end.

After a while he told me that he had to return home for a while to take more money. With tears in my eyes I told him that the fruit of our love had sprung,,, that I was pregnant.. He just comforted me saying that he would be back soon.

Days and months passed, but Baron didn't appear.

I was really betrayed. Fortunately aunt Rosa, my former housemaid cared for me as she didn't have any child of her own.

When I gave birth to a baby-girl, she took it in her arms like a grandmother and named her Violetta or Letta.

We earned our living by selling souvenirs made of sea-rocks and shells.

After some time Peter, a friend of Baron came to send me some money. He told me that Baron had to marry the only daughter of and heirress of a rich Prince, a relative of his mother. As Baron's parents were impoverished and had to pay loads of debts, Baron agreed to save the family,

And I,,, without anybody on the small island had to care for his daughter. Frustrated I ^{gave} away all the money to Peter's face.. No..no better finished with all this !!

I became a drugseller like many others on the beach and got a lot of money. An international syndicate of drugsmugglers used me to widespread the network to many countries, in particular in Asia. I became a real adventurer. They thought, that I was a beautiful rich girl, traveling to different countries accompanied by handsome partners like Henry, Joe and some others. I kept the morphine tablets among the linings of my brassiere. But in Bali the accident happened, when a big dog was smelling around. He must be trained to find drugs, He jumped at my breast, while barking loudly. Probably I was suspected already, as I came to Bali many times.

I was arrested with a lot of morphine tablets as evidence. Now here I am..mum ! I don't know what the future will be for me !"

~~A~~ As for the other inmates in Tangerang were mostly small fishes. Pickpockets, swindlers and husband murderers. Two girls from Singapore were gold smugglers.

After a certain time we faced some negative treatments in the form of the prohibition to go to the hospital when we were ill. There was a case of an inmate running away while going to the hospital. Although she was accompanied by a guard, she managed to slip away from the backdoor of the doctor's room.

During that time accidentally I suffered from a kind of skin allergy, itching gravely when I was emotionally tense. One day the chief told me that I got permission to see a skin doctor. I was rather surprised, but the only skin specialist was at the leprosy. There I saw the victims of leprosy pushed aside from the society. Oh...certainly there were people who suffered more than us....!

It turned out that the next day a delegation of the International Red Cross came to visit us. It was the third time that we were visited by the IRC delegation.

We welcomed them and secretly told that I was permitted to go to the skin doctor the day before as the chief knew that an IRC delegation would visit us.

In 1981 it was the time for our two friends Sri and Har to finish their 15 years long sentence after getting some remissions. With tears in their eyes they departed from us the remaining six political prisoners. Then the three others, Mummy Ubed, her daughter and Tati were in turn released.

So the three of us, Lamy, I and Nari with her life sentence remained.

According the regulation of the Criminal Law after two third of the sentence we could appeal for parole (relased under control or in Dutch Voorloping in vriheid stelling ! V.I) but usually with some amount of money to be paid.

Lamy and I didn't have any money, even our families in Central Java could not afford to visit us, the more to pay four our parole.

So the only solution was to wait until the time of P.R.T (Pre Release Treatment) meaning a certain period of time before the date of the exact release. But under strict control of the local military district command until the formal date of release.

I jeanned to breath the free air outside the prison walls.

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AT Released in 1983.

To be released needed somebody to be responsible for .

I was lucky that the wife of a distant cousin Widodo, sometimes visited me in Tangerang. Her husband was namely also detained for 14 years and banned on Buru Island . It was she, who declared herself responsible for my request for P.R.T (Pre Release Treatment) It meant that during the time of PRT in my case two years more, in case I ran away and didn't report to the local military command, she would be arrested in my place.

I thanked her heartily, when finally she picked me up on August 17th, 1983 after 16 years of imprisonment.

Ah..how relieved I felt !! Once a week I had to report to the local district military command, But it didn't matter, I was then free to go anywhere I wished .

My niece rented a small house several km from Jakarta in a suburban village called Gandul.

Whenever I went to town in a small public vehicle, everytime I felt happy inhaling the fresh air of freedom.

"Free...completely free !" was the song in my heart, remembering the time within a locked cell during years and years.

My nephew, Widodo, after 14 years in banning on Buru Island with forced labour and probably heavily tortured at his arrest was at that time mentally rather disturbed and could not earn his living.

So my niece had to work hard during many years as secretary of a woman landowner to earn the living for the family.

The eldest son and his sister were already married, the younger two sons had to go to college.

So I had to think how to earn my living and not to be a burden to others .

~~As~~ I was a translator about ^{many years} ~~two decades~~ ago before 1965, presently I had to obtain new certificates in foreign languages, otherwise it would be very difficult to get a job in this overcrowded metropolitan city of Jakarta, people told me. From all the foreign languages I knew, namely Dutch, German and English, Dutch I knew the best as I was forced to master it since childhood during Dutch Colonial time. I studied in the Dutch Elementary School (H.I.S) for seven years and two years at the Junior High School. Then the country was occupied by the Japanese invaders and for three and half year we had to study Japanese. Only in 1945 after the Proclamation of Independence we studied the Indonesian language, called the Malay language before. My mother tongue was Javanese. I registered at the Erasmus Huis, a Dutch Language Institute managed by the Dutch Embassy.

~~X~~ Fortunately I had saved several thousands rupiahs collected from translation fees during the last period of my prison time. Although it was a rather long daily trip from Gentul Village to the Institute in downtown Jakarta, I enjoyed it very much passing beautiful suburbs, ricefields and palm orchards before entering the city with huge buildings and skyscrapers. After several months of hard study I passed the final test cum laude. My teacher a Dutch lady, Johanna, offered me to work at her house assisting her husband, who was a Dutch lecturer at the University of Indonesia. Naturally I was ready to accept it. Only I didn't know her reaction would be if I acknowledged that I was an ex-political prisoner, who had still to appear regularly to the local military command. For two years I had to report weekly. They said, that an ex-political prisoner could not take a job connected with the community, such as teacher, journalist, civil servant even private enterprises or individuals usually didn't accept them as employees.

I started to work as translator at her house, even I had to study operating a computer beforehand. Before 1965 we didn't have computers yet. Finally I stated openly that I was an ex-political prisoner, who still had to report weekly at the military command, she hugged me with tears in her eyes and stated that it was alright as she was connected with the International Amnesty in London, although not openly. So I continued working for her for about four years long, when the family had to leave as there were indication about her activities. During that time she suggested that I should master the English language too.

So I registered as student at the English language Institute managed by the Indonesia-America Friendship League (I.A.F.) you know, at that time anything connected with America was considered the best, so I could be sure that having a certificate as English teacher from IIA would be a licence to get a job. Although there was a restriction for ex-terorists to work as teacher, journalist, civil servant, etc. we better watch out not to be found out!

After two years I got the official statement of release namely from 1967 up to 1965, on the whole 18 years. Now I didn't need to report weekly, but like the other ex-detainees I had to report monthly during many years. (it ended in 1997)

When my Dutch employer had to return to Rotterdam, he gave me a reference to work at his friend's house, an Australian lecturer in History at the University of Indonesia.

Here I became acquainted with some Australian Professors like Prof. Herbert Feith from Monash University and other women lecturers, who were very kind towards me and interested in the situation of ex-political detainees in Indonesia in general.

For several years I worked there, while finishing my teacher's training at IIA. So when the time came that he had to return, to Australia I had already my certificate. In the meantime I got contacts with some NGOs, especially feminist foundations, who usually got invitations to attend congresses or seminars abroad. So they needed the staff to master the English language..

I came in contact with spiritual and social women activists, who remembered me with my activities several decades ago, when I worked for the women organization and attended congresses in Europe and Asia.

Since my release I used to visit our friends who were still imprisoned since 1963 and later on also young activists were detained after the incident of the attack on the office of the Indonesian Democratic Party. Some leaders of the People's Democratic Party were executed, who were just around 20 years old.

The political situation in the country, after great demonstrations of students finally led to the downfall of the New Order, the Suharto Regime. But the new ^{law} to release all political prisoners either from many countries abroad as well as demands from domestic groups, didn't get response yet. Some were released, but still many didn't abolition as they were considered as allied to 'latent communist danger'.

That is the present political situation in 1996. I hope there will be soon a change and all political prisoners will be set free. Let us wait and see !!!

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