

EXCERPT FROM A LETTER TO THE USIA JUSTICE COMMITTEE FROM A MEMBER
OF THE STUDENT COMMISSION FOR THE RELEASE OF THE POLITICAL PRIS-
ONERS OF MEXICO

... As you must know the situation is very difficult. On December 13 a meeting was called and a march planned from the University City to the Casco de Santo Tomas and from the National Polytechnical Institute Zacatenço campus also to the Casco. At the University City 35,000 people arrived...but the police were able to intercept twenty-five buses going to the University City ...and more than two thousand were taken into custody...The repression continues to increase....

As far as the prisoners are concerned, the situation is unchanged. We have helped many of them, and in doing so the money you sent is about gone and our needs have increased. We would like to know if the USIA could possibly send more economic aid, since right now our working conditions are most difficult and our collections are accordingly very small.

I am sorry that I am writing only to give you bad news, but we have very few people to whom we can turn. I hope to be able to write better news in the future....

THE KILLERS ARE IN ACTION AGAIN

A few days after the killers of the prisoners at "El Fronton" were found "innocent" by the military judge and the civilian judge was pressured into ending his investigation, the usual treatment of prisoners on this "Devil's Island" is once again in effect.

This morning, as usual, without any excuse, prisoners were brutally beaten while they were being transferred from the detention prison of "El Sexto" to this island.

Among those being transferred was a political prisoner, Gerardo Benavides Caldas. When the killers learned that he was a revolutionary, they began to work him over. On the orders of the director, Roca, they began to beat him in the Lima prison; later they handcuffed him to a sick man and while they were taking them to the car that would transport them to the launch, they beat them both mercilessly. They laughed because the sick man had difficulty walking when he was being beaten, and they laughed at the attempts of the political prisoner to help the sick man get into the car and at his efforts to shield him from the beating with his own body. Once they were inside the car they began clubbing the prisoners. The orders were the usual "On the back and on the head!" "Hit the political prisoner harder! Let him have it in honor of the 'Year of Human Rights!'" (The Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Peru has called 1968 the Year of Human Rights.) "Ha! Ha! Don't be chicken. Hit hard! This is the way to give it to these dogs!"...and the one who gave the orders demonstrated what it was like not to be "chicken."

Comrade Benavides lost consciousness, but the beating continued, as his riding companions later informed him. But knowing beforehand about the brutality of the guards and the nature of Roca's usual "recommendations," Benavides had pointed out to the penal authorities at the "El Sexto" detention jail that he was in good condition when he was being turned over to the guards who were transferring him to "El Fronton." Thus, when he arrived at this island, we took him to the prison doctor, Dr. Lituma, and to the prison director. Both noted the visible effects of the brutal treatment he had been subjected to.

As usual, the repression is not only directed against Gerardo Benavides but extends to his entire family as well. After torturing and jailing him, they imprisoned his wife, his parents, and his sisters and brothers. Later, his father was fired from his job. When they learned that Benavides had supported his family by working at "El Sexto" detention prison, they ordered his immediate transfer to this island, although it is only for those who have been tried and convicted; Benavides has not been sentenced and is therefore "presumed innocent" in the eyes of the law. His two children visited him at "El Sexto"; now they can only visit on rare occasions--children are not permitted to visit this island.

We are not asking for justice; it would be absurd. We know that murderers are not rewarded with promotions for that "trait." Our duty is to let our people know that there is another side to the regime's "morality campaign."

We repeat our assurances to them that no "campaign to massacre political prisoners" is enough to break us.

We know that the liberation of our people is such a great cause that it is worth these sacrifices and many more.

Land or Death. Venceremos!

(signed) Hugo Blanco, Eduardo Creus G.,
Juvenal Zamallón C., Vicente
Dandado G.

Fronton Island, Dec. 13, 1968