trying to avoid any conflictual contexts.

More often he aspires towards a poem which is envisaged in his *for Joan.* It is ideally produced in an inconceivable state of innocence where God has never been and Adam never seen, "quite a new kind of poem/without excuses" which would be its "own explanation like the creed". *Thirty Ways of Drowning* is his most accomplished work of this kind. Here, in making thirty moments speak for themselves and of themselves, in fragments that form precariously before flowing back into the sea, Levi is able to evoke something remarkable, endless and indistinct. What, it would be difficult to say, for nothing significantly meaningful surfaces from the deep.

Letter from an Argentinian Prison[1]

We want this letter to reach the League for the Rights of Man and the Permanent Assembly that defends human rights in order that the military, ecclesiastical, political and trade union authorities may know the atrocities that are committed daily by military, police and civil personnel acting behind the walls of the penitentiary prison of Cordoba in the name of the Third Army Corps.

We will try to get out further letters with factual accounts of the monstrosities that are committed here. But each time it will become more difficult; we will try, therefore, to strengthen the unity of the families of the political prisoners so that they may join together in a great solidarity movement.

We political prisoners are totally isolated from the world and from our loved ones. Since 24th March 1976 visits have been prohibited and we have not been allowed letters sent to us by our families; we are totally ignorant of their situation. We may not listen to the radio, and the ordinary prisoners have been forbidden to approach our quarters at any time. On 15th July, our comrade Moyakarcel was surprised by our executioners while talking with one of the common prisoners. He was brutally beaten, then stripped naked and tied to a stake in the open air. Suffering the intense cold of these conditions he died after 24 hours.

The guards come into our cells and beat us brutally and indiscriminately with hard rubber truncheons; witnesses to this are R. Salustro and B.N. Rivera who were beaten in a manner it would be obscene to describe.

Minimum human rights are disregarded, beatings take place according to the whim of the guard. Torture methods resemble those of the Gestapo. Each morning the authorities order beatings on the pretext of obtaining information, but this is not what

[1] This letter came to *New Blackfriars* through the Student Christian Movement of Holland.

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interests them. They indulge in this sadism for its own sake, sometimes with results impossible to describe. The victims are afterwards taken out of the prison and assassinated for 'trying to escape'. We have to report that the following prisoners were taken out dead: Bertolli, Mochze, Pucheta, Hernandez Vega, Zorilla, Funes, Rosetti, Arguello, Abdon de Maggi, Barberi, White, Torazo, Vera, Vaca Narvaja.

The soldiers, armed with truncheons come daily into the cells to make 'inspections', beating us and using their rifle butts on the back or the most sensitive parts of the body. On 5th July, a soldier beat a prisoner until he fainted and then threw him out of the cell. The soldier (said to be called Raul Bianfucco or Biafucco) took out his pistol and fired several shots into the head of his victim before the astonished gaze of several prisoners. One of them tried to intervene to prevent this assassination but another official interposed and finished off the man's life.

From 27th August 1976, it was decreed that no medicines be prescribed for prisoners under military jurisdiction until 30th September. Our families are told that the prisoners do not need any medicine.

We lack all legal assistance. Food is very bad and very scanty, completely lacking in protein and vitamins. In consequence there is much illness—loss of weight (in some cases up to 15 kilos), gastritis, ulcers, haemorrhoids, dysentery, loss of teeth, etc. The chronically ill, those with cardiac, diabetic and sclerotic complaints are, with one or two exceptions, totally neglected. The medicines which we generally ask our families for are held back and doctors who want to alleviate certain illnesses find themselves totally powerless in this situation.

The foregoing is a copy (slightly abbreviated) of notes sent out by political prisoners detained in the penitentiary prison in the San Martin district of Cordoba—a prison constructed to lodge 300 people and now containing more than 1200.

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