

“TRAGIC EVENTS RELATING TO THE CHICOTE FAMILY”

**The story of a family’s sufferings during the Battle for the Liberation of Manila
in the final stages of World War II**

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“SUCESOS TRÁGICOS A LA FAMILIA CHICOTE”

By / Por Prudencio Chicote Lalana

Translation from the original Spanish by Marifí Chicote

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2 - 5
Letter from the author	6
Part I (English translation) Tragic Events Relating to the Chicote Family	7 - 18
Part II (English translation) Report Submitted by Prudencio Chicote Lalana Regarding Japanese Atrocities in the City of Manila	19 - 25
Post Script	26
ORIGINAL SPANISH VERSION separator	27
Carta del Autor	28
Primera Parte Sucesos Trágicos a la Familia Chicote	29 - 39
Segunda Parte Informe que Somete Prudencio Chicote Lalana Sobre Atropellos Japoneses en la Ciudad de Manila	40 - 46

INTRODUCTION

By Marifi Chicote

This is the story of the tragic events that happened to the Chicote family in February 1945, during the Battle for the Liberation of Manila. In these two official reports, Prudencio Chicote Lalana, recounts the brutal atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers in the final stages of World War II.

USEFUL NOTES:

Surnames follow Spanish custom: the father's last name first, followed by the mother's. When using only one surname it is the father's that is used. (e.g. Prudencio Chicote and not Prudencio Lalana)

Prudencio Chicote Lalana: born in Manila, Philippines on April 21, 1914 and died in Madrid, Spain on April 28, 2002. He took up Spanish citizenship although both his parents and the majority of his siblings remained citizens of the Philippines. Prudencio Chicote later reported to the War Crimes Commission on October 31, 1945. (USA vs. Tomoyuki Yamashita Vol. II pp 738-756).



Prudencio Chicote Lalana

Alfredo Chicote Beltran: patriarch of the family born in Marbella, Andalucía, Spain circa 1870. Emigrated to the Philippines aged 13 and educated by the Dominicans at Santo Tomas in Intramuros in exchange for odd-jobs and chores. Became one of Manila's most prominent lawyers, investing in land and property development. He counted among his many influential friends, President Manuel Quezon.



Alfredo Chicote

“La Casona” literally translated means “The big house”. This family home was designed and built by Alfredo Chicote and was located in Ermita, an elegant residential district in those days. It occupied - together with its compound of adjacent smaller houses – almost half a block. “La Casona” faced the fields of Bagumbayan and Luneta with Intramuros beyond.



Translation: text in italics are the translator's.

BACKGROUND:

The Manila massacre of February 1945 refers to the atrocities committed against unarmed civilians in Manila, Philippines by retreating Japanese troops. Credible sources put the death toll in the tens of thousands. Nobody was spared: men, women and children were bayoneted, gunned-down, slashed, raped, burned, mutilated and decapitated. The killings took place during the Battle for the Liberation of Manila.

The Battle for the Liberation of Manila began on February 3, 1945 and lasted until March 3 causing a terrible bloodbath and the total devastation of the city. The capture of Manila by U.S. forces led by General Douglas MacArthur, the Allied Commander in the Far East, effectively ended three years of Japanese military occupation in the Philippines. The reconquest of the Philippines had begun four months earlier in with the biggest land and sea assault of the Pacific war involving some 200,000 men and 700 ships.

The month-long battle for Manila was the fiercest large-scale urban fighting of the entire Pacific War. The city was taken building by building, street by street, often in hand-to-hand combat and with unrelenting tank and artillery bombardment. Few battles in the final months of World War II surpassed the destruction, the brutality of the massacres and the savagery of the fighting in Manila. Over 100,000 innocent civilians were killed by retreating Japanese troops and by the sustained American artillery bombardment. The battle also left over 1,000 U.S. soldiers dead and nearly 6,000 wounded. About 16,000 Japanese soldiers died. Manila is second only to Warsaw in the list of the most devastated cities of World War II.

In the devastation of Manila, a priceless cultural and historical heritage was lost. The city's beautiful historical centre – Intramuros, the heart of its Spanish heritage - was totally destroyed and never completely restored to its former glory. The Manila that was once renowned as the "Pearl of the Orient" and regarded as an important living monument to European culture and colonization for over 300 years had vanished forever.

Esteemed Reader,

This document contains two reports entitled:

1. "Tragic Events Relating To The Chicote Family"
2. "Report Submitted by Prudencio Chicote Lalana Regarding Japanese Atrocities In The City of Manila."

Both were written in 1945 at the behest of the Spanish Consulate General in Manila, Philippines and subsequently forwarded to the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The events related here happened in Manila during the liberation of the city in February 1945.

In the final phase of World War II in the Far East, the Armed Forces of the United States invaded the Philippine Islands successfully re-conquering them from the Imperial Forces of Japan. The Battle for Manila was the last major confrontation of this re-conquest. The war ended with the total surrender of Japan in August 1945 after the aerial nuclear bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The author
(1995)

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Part I

“TRAGIC EVENTS RELATING TO THE CHICOTE FAMILY”

In the afternoon of 3 February 1945, the entire family had congregated in the paternal house, fondly referred to as “La Casona”, situated in the corner of the streets of San Luis and San Carlos in the District of Ermita in the City of Manila. Ours was a profoundly religious family rooted in Spanish customs where peace and unity reigned. Separated at the beginning of war in 1941, the family was reunited only to experience - in the final days of the liberation we so looked forward to - hunger, thirst, terror, separation once more and ultimately the immense tragedy that culminated in our family’s near total destruction.

Our happy family was in reality comprised of several groups, all of who revolved around my father’s authority. These were:

1. Alfredo Chicote Beltran (Head of the family)
2. Pilar Lalana de Chicote (His wife)
3. Eloisa Chicote (Daughter, unmarried)
4. Concepción Chicote (Daughter, unmarried) - (*Conchita*)
5. Adelina Chicote (Daughter, unmarried)
6. María Paz Chicote (Daughter, unmarried)
7. José María Chicote (Son, unmarried) - (*Pepe*)
8. José de Goicoechea Orfanel (Son-in-law) (*also known as Pepe*)
9. Pilar Chicote de Goicoechea (Daughter, married) - (*Pilina*)
10. Ángel José de Goicoechea Chicote – 7 years old (Grandson)
11. Luís Zabaljauregui Castro (Son-in-Law)
12. Carolina Chicote de Zabaljauregui (Daughter, married)
13. Ana-Mari Zabaljauregui Chicote – 11 months (Grand-daughter)
14. Prudencio Chicote Lalana (Son, married)
15. María Luisa Carbó de Chicote (Daughter-in-law)
16. Prudencito Chicote Carbó – 20 months (Grandson)
17. Antonio Chicote Lalana (Son, married) - (*Tony*)
18. Camila Lazcanotegui de Chicote (Daughter-in-law)
19. Milagritos Chicote Lazcanotegui – 6 months old (Grand-daughter)
20. Encarnación Lalana Bustamante (Sister-in-law)
21. Carlos García Buch (Son-in-law)
22. Paquita Chicote de García (Daughter, married)
23. Carmiña García Chicote – 5 years old (Grand-daughter)
24. Carlitos García Chicote – 11 months (Grandson)



Chicote Family photo dated 1912



*Chicote siblings as adults. Photo taken before the war.
 Back Row L-R: Jose Maria, Concepcion, Ma. Paz, Adelina, Eloisa, Pilar & Antonio
 Front Row L-R: Carolina, Rosario, Prudencio, Josefina & Francisca*

Completing the roll-call of family members who lived outside the family compound and were therefore absent when the tragic events occurred are the following: Jesus Zabaljauregui Castro, his wife Josefina Chicote and their young children, Alfredivito, Jesus-Ramón, Milagritos and Jorgito; and the married couple Francisco Redal and Rosario Chicote.¹

The 24 family members listed above were together in “La Casona” when, in the afternoon of 3 February 1945, the violent and bloody battle for Manila began. My father was frail due to Lymphatic Leukemia and my mother bedridden with a kidney complaint. Nevertheless, we put our faith and confidence in the Lord and anxiously awaited the liberation we so longed for, lamenting not having the other family members with us.

The Japanese soldiers positioned in the neighborhood immediately prohibited all non-essential transit through the streets and, complying with this order, we stayed at home. What we thought would last two days or so turned into an exasperating and prolonged period. Soon the violent bombing of bridges and avenues began and finally, the most frightening, deadly and incessant artillery bombardments started.

On the 7th, at about three in the afternoon, an artillery shell hit “La Casona” completely destroying the upper floors and seriously wounding my sister María Paz in the leg. Because she was bleeding profusely, a group of us decided to take her to a doctor friend of the family whose clinic was located in an apartment building about three blocks from “La Casona”. My mother insisted on accompanying her wounded daughter and so we took her out of bed and placed them both on a push cart, the only mode of transport during those days. My son Prudencito had a high fever and my wife and I decided to also take him to see the doctor where we hoped he would be seen to. After negotiating streets and junctions under an endless hail of artillery fire we finally reached the apartments and my sister María Paz was treated by the doctor. Thanks to him she lives today. But grateful as we are to this doctor, we unfortunately cannot say the same for other residents of those apartments, many of whom were of our same race and background. Not only did they refuse us shelter but they urged us to return to our house alleging they had no room to spare. These had been friends of ours and one of them in particular owed great favors to my elderly father but it was this same “great friend” who, at that critical moment, told us: “this is my mouth to feed”. Unworthy too were the actions of one particular couple, Spanish by nationality, who offered hospitality to my mother and sister but turned my wife and my sick son away. Only God knows whether my dearly loved wife and small son would be alive today had this well to do couple offered us hospitality; God will be their judge. We left my mother and my wounded sister in the residence of “our friends” and

1 *(Note: Eldest son Alfredo was in Spain at the time.)*

the rest of us - my father, a brother, two brothers-in-law, my wife and child – again had to weave our way through the streets pummeled by heavy artillery fire and in danger of being shot at by Japanese soldiers until we reached “La Casona”.

The following account tells of what my mother and sister went through:

When the artillery fire intensified and the destructive flames began to engulf large parts of the city, the building had to be evacuated. A sick woman, a wounded girl - separated for the first time in their lives from the family and in constant anguish - they were forced to wander the ruined streets, cross military barricades and fortifications and were at the mercy of relentless artillery fire and the gunfire of the Japanese soldiers who, from the very start, showed no respect for the lives of unarmed civilians. They took shelter finally in the Ateneo de Manila, which was run in normal times by the Jesuits, and when the college in turn succumbed to the flames they found refuge in the Elena Apartments with hundreds of other evacuees. A kind and humble Filipino family, unknown to us, took them in and cared for them until they were liberated by American troops on February 14, 1945.

ASSASSINATION OF MY SISTER ADELINA:

Adelina had always been an energetic and brave woman. These qualities became even more evident during the intense aerial bombardment that preceded the battle for Manila. When - thanks to the “admirable hospitality” of our friends - we had to leave my mother and sister María Paz on their own in the apartments and we realized they would have little access to food, Adelina immediately volunteered to take them provisions at noon and at the end of the day. The protests of the male members of the family were ignored with Adelina affirming that we had our own obligations to fulfil towards our wives and children, and reassuring us that the Japanese would respect her because of her sex. Besides, her knowledge of Japanese would help her negotiate the checkpoints and barricades without much difficulty. Twice a day Adelina came and went despite the continuing and incessant artillery fire, taking them food prepared in “La Casona” and bringing the medicines they needed. She would leave before mid-day, eat there, and return home at mid-afternoon; in the early evening, she would return to take them supper and spend the night there. She fulfilled this task always with a smile and with confidence. But in the afternoon of the 9th, she did not return to “La Casona”. It so happened that that very afternoon the artillery bombardment intensified and frequent fires raged through the neighbourhood. We all supposed Adelina had stayed with my mother because the

conditions had made it impossible for her to journey through the streets. To reassure ourselves, we sent my brother Pepe to find out but he soon returned and told us he had been intercepted at the first junction by Japanese soldiers who prohibited him from proceeding, threatening him with death should he try. My mother and sister for their part assumed - for the same reasons - that Adelina had remained with us. All of us believed her to be safe and close to her loved ones. It was not until a few days after liberation that we discovered, with horror and pain, the tragic death of our unfortunate sister. A resident of A. Mabini Street recounted what she had witnessed:

At noon on the 9th, when she had reached the corner of A. Mabini and Isaac Peral streets, Adelina was stopped by a Japanese sentinel. The eyewitness declared that Adelina spoke to him, indicating the building she proposed to go to and showing him the food and the medicines she was taking to her mother and sister. The eyewitness then saw the soldier give a signal to proceed and as she passed him, he treacherously and cowardly stabbed the unarmed Adelina in the back with his bayonet. My sister slumped to the ground with the rifle and bayonet embedded deeply in her back as the Japanese soldier leaned towards her. Because he had difficulty removing the weapon from my dying sister's back, the soldier then pressed his boot over her body and pulled forcefully until he finally succeeded in dislodging his weapon. The witness could bear no more and withdrew from the window, horrified at the crime she had just seen. Later that day though, she saw Adelina crawling slowly up the street towards a row of terraced houses, pleading for help. Nobody dared to rescue her for fear of the Japanese and the falling shrapnel. It rained heavily that nefarious afternoon and later, at sundown, a great fire would destroy that very row of terraced houses.



Adelina Chicote

Some days after liberation, my brother Jose María found the mutilated corpse of my hapless sister still lying in front of the row of terraced houses, now in ruins. He was unable to recognise her burnt body. She was identified by a shoe and a sock and by the food container and small medicine bag she carried. The martyr was given Christian burial in the atrium of Ermita parish and her remains were later transferred to the Catholic Cemetery of La Loma.

DEATH OF JOSE DE GOICOECHEA AND MY SISTER PILINA:

The Goicoecheas, alarmed by what had happened to my sister María Paz on the 7th, as I have already described above, thought it safer to evacuate elsewhere, further away. They took their 7 year old son Angel José and his nursemaid and headed to the district of Malate. After a long and dangerous journey that took them through Japanese trenches and barricades, they found refuge in the house of Mr. Gonzalo Yrezabal, a close friend of theirs who lived in Wright Street in that same district. But it too was not spared from the destructive artillery barrage, which increased in intensity by the day. And when its turn came two days after the Goicoecheas sheltered there, Wright Street succumbed to the flames and to utter destruction. The Yrezabal and Goicoechea families fled, and upon reaching a nearby plaza where they hoped to shelter, a large fragment of artillery shrapnel hit my sister Pilar in the stomach, mortally wounding her. When her husband Pepe saw the seriousness of her injuries, he went into frenzy and left the boy in the care of the Yrezabals and the maid while he carried his injured wife towards the Philippine General Hospital. On the way there he stumbled across the clinic of a Filipino doctor located within the only house left standing in an otherwise completely flattened neighbourhood. He went inside and asked for medical help for his wife. The old doctor examined her and confirmed that her condition was critical but that he lacked the means and the medicines to save her; only the Philippine General Hospital had the surgical facilities that could save the dying woman's life. So the desperate Goicoechea was once again forced back onto the streets reduced to ruin, carrying his beloved wife to the hospital that might save her life... They were never seen again. An acquaintance later described how he saw Pepe fall to the ground at a street corner a mere 200 meters from the hospital. It is not known whether Pilar, whom he held in his arms, was already dead, and neither is it known whether Pepe was killed by a single bullet, by machine-gun fire from a nearby Japanese emplacement or whether he had been hit by shrapnel, because at that very moment the concentrated artillery blasts were in full force.

All subsequent attempts to find their bodies were in vain. No trace was ever found of the doomed couple.

Thus, their only son became an orphan in the most tragic of circumstances.

INFERNAL NIGHT:

Only 18 out of the 24 family members mentioned at the beginning of this report now remained in “La Casona” after the disappearance of my sister Adelina and the evacuation of my brother-in-law Pepe, my sister Pilar and their son Angel José to Malate. Bombs and shells continued to rain down every minute around the vicinity of “La Casona” and - also alarmed by the serious injury to my sister María Paz - my brothers-in-law Carlos García and Luis Zabaljauregui, their wives (my sisters) and their respective children Carmiña, Carlitos and Ana Mari, decided to evacuate to the nearby San Carlos Apartments.

At midnight on the 9th, a raging fire threatened to destroy “La Casona” and all the neighbouring buildings. Those who had evacuated to the San Carlos Apartments returned to “La Casona” but when flames began to devour the house next door, the entire family group fled. We wandered through the streets in search of a safe haven that we could not find. Entire blocks of houses were fuelling the flames while others had already been reduced to heaps of smoking rubble. The streets strewn with rubble, with huge craters caused by the impact of artillery shells, and fortified with barricades, offered an enormous obstacle to negotiate for our sad family caravan. My sisters held their children in their arms, the men and the unmarried girls carried bundles of clothing, food and medicines, and our elderly father weak and ill but brave and serene; and all of us in silence, desperately concerned about the fate that might have befallen our beloved mother and sisters. Amid the uproar of the ferocious battle, we wandered aimlessly that satanic night through streets and avenues, the sky lit orange by extensive flames and by the blinding flashes of explosions. Artillery and mortar shells exploded all around and we could hear the buzz of bullets very close to us. Implacable destiny had reserved the most terrible end, the most tragic death, for three quarters of our family group who never ceased to pray with fervour and hope for redemption. Japanese soldiers threateningly forbade us to cross into zones where we noticed the shelling was less severe. Our pleas to let us pass in order to save our wives and children were cruelly ignored. Those barbarians could tell their end was approaching; they understood well the futility of the battle they waged and yet, with evil intent, they tried to prevent us any means of survival. We were besieged, besieged and hunted down by men with no faith or heart, by animals with no reason or humanity. We were denied asylum and refuge at the Casa de España (Casino Español de Manila) and in the very Spanish church and seminary of the Paulists. We wandered further on that sad night and found some rest in the lower floors of a flimsy old wooden house, and at dawn, when we saw that the artillery fire had ceased and the flames were receding, we returned tired, hungry and thirsty to “La Casona”. Along the way, Japanese soldiers tried to machine-gun us from a position high above a tall building overlooking the smoking ruins and debris that lined our route. They failed in their objective, perhaps because they were bad marksmen, but more probably because fate had something else in store for us.

“La Casona” had been spared from the fire from which we had fled. Heaps of smoking debris surrounded it where just hours before stood luxurious residences. Only “La Casona” and five or six other houses in that neighbourhood still stood amid the desolation of rubble and ash. My father, my aunt Encarnación, my sisters Eloisa and Conchita and my brother Pepe remained there. My brother Tony, his wife and six-month-old daughter took refuge in a neighbouring house and the rest, together with my wife and small son, stayed in the San Carlos Apartments. We kept in constant touch with each other by using an emergency pathway that linked all three buildings. I came and went, concerned about the health of my ailing father, my unmarried sisters and my aunt. The days were endless, the nights eternal. The cruel artillery bombardment was relentless as were the explosions of shells and mortars. The fires were interminable. Many times, as I contemplated that scene of utter desolation, I asked myself what the purpose of all that artillery fire was, and I could find no answer. If its purpose was to destroy, then everything was already destroyed. It is impossible for me to describe the intensity of that artillery fire and the devastation that it caused. But worst still than all that was the despair at watching the sad Calvary - the suffering - of those innocent children, of those wives and loving mothers and of my poor elderly father.

Our food provisions were running low and we were short of water. Weakened by physical fatigue, lacking sleep, constantly hungry and thirsty, dirty and ragged, we resembled phantoms in that inferno. Only our immovable faith kept us from losing our minds. Together, adults and children, we ran our cadaver-like fingers through the beads of the eternal rosary, praying for the liberation we so longed for and which would never arrive for the majority of us.

THE HOTEL OF DEATH:

As mentioned above, our family group was separated in three adjoining buildings but I kept in touch with them all. I would visit my father and sisters, and my brother Tony and his wife. My wife and son, together with my sisters Carolina and Paquita, their husbands and respective children, were in the San Carlos Apartments with other refugees from the neighbourhood. The suffering they would endure is related in a separate report that I have attached to this one.

At mid-afternoon of the 14th, when I jumped over the wall separating the three buildings to go to “La Casona” as I used to do 4 or 5 times a day, I noticed something strange in me that I could not describe. I ran to the back entrance of “La Casona” and found it deserted. I called out but there was no answer. I searched for them but could

not find them. Their bundles and suitcases were there, but they were not there. Even my father's hat and cane were there. What had happened to them? Where had they gone? Extremely concerned, I returned to my wife and son at the San Carlos Apartments and vowed not to be separated from them. I had a premonition that some sort of climax was approaching and I was gripped by strange sensations of acute anxiety and doom. Why was destiny gradually separating this family, always so united? Where were my father, aunt and sisters? What had happened to them?

The survivors later related the following:

During that afternoon of 14 February, several Japanese officers and soldiers burst into "La Casona" and the adjoining house where my brother Antonio and his family were staying, threatening them and forcing them to leave the houses. They were taken to the fields and park of Luneta where hundreds of others were already gathered. Surrounding them were machine gun emplacements with soldiers manning them. Other soldiers and officers armed with rifles and pistols marched among the crowd of people. They were searched and all objects of value confiscated, and later the men were segregated from the women. Japanese soldiers ordered the men into a building called the Peralta Apartments where they were locked in. For three days my elderly father, my brother Pepe and my other brother Tony, who was now separated from his wife and baby daughter, were imprisoned until they were inexplicably allowed to escape by their captors. They did so with haste, spending that night in some ruins close to the Church of Ermita, the following day in another bombed out house, until finally, after liberation on the 19th, they were reunited by chance with my mother and sister in the Elena Apartments.

While at the Peralta Apartments, my father suffered a shrapnel wound to his forehead. Although he did not seem seriously hurt at the time, the subsequent loss of blood, the conditions he was forced to endure, his chronic illness and above all the shock of learning about the tragedy that had befallen his family contributed to his death only a few days after liberation.

Let us now turn to what happened to my Aunt Encarnación, my sisters Eloisa and Conchita, my sister-in-law Camila the wife of Tony, and their daughter. As I have already mentioned, they were forced out of "La Casona", taken to Luneta and there separated from their men. They saw how these were taken in one direction while they were forced into the opposite direction towards the compound of the Manila Hotel. Inside the hotel, they found thousands of other refugees of all ages, sex and nationality, virtual prisoners of the

Japanese. They were first taken to one of the halls and later locked up inside one of the bedrooms. The Japanese fed them – if you can call it feeding – a handful of boiled rice a day. They settled into the hall, packed with hundreds of women and children, as best they could. Japanese soldiers would repeatedly enter and take by force women they intended to violate. These unfortunate women never returned. Later, some Russian women (known as White Russians) who had a reputation for loose living before and during the Japanese occupation did their admirable best to rescue the others from this fate. As soon as a group of soldiers would enter looking for partners, those wretched women would stand up, and, through smiles, caresses and flirting in the style of their profession, they would go with those animals, thus saving the honour and integrity of their companions in captivity. If in the past those women had fallen into sin, surely God has now forgiven them. Their attitude was, in all truth, irreproachable and their sacrifice enormous.

On 18 February, the women in the hotel were locked inside the bedrooms. My aunt, sisters Eloisa and Conchita, my sister-in-law Camila, her baby daughter, and a friend of the family were placed together in the same bedroom. It did not take long for them to find out what the objective was. The Japanese intended to finish off their captive hotel guests. The soldiers started breaking up furniture on the top floor and throwing it out of the windows. Perhaps they were preparing for a bonfire. There were unusual movements in the corridors and in the floors above. Then, a strange and mortifying silence. A few minutes later, there was a deafening noise followed by blinding smoke and more explosions. The Japanese had blown up the hotel with the deliberate intention of killing all those unfortunate non-combatant civilians. The violent explosion caught Conchita at the very moment she was entering the bathroom: her remains were never recovered. Camila, who was sitting on the floor along with the others because there were few chairs in the room, died from massive blood loss when a large heavy object fell across her legs, trapping her. The explosion was so enormous that her six-month-old baby was blown across the room.^{2*} My aunt grabbed the child, urged Eloisa who was seriously injured in the neck, arm and back to get up, and together they jumped through a broken window into the hotel garden. A raging fire was spreading rapidly inside the hotel and it proved impossible to save Camila, who was near death. It was imperative to escape that inferno.

Chaos and confusion followed the enormous explosion and proved fatal for hundreds of people. Many died and others were seriously wounded. Their remains have stayed forever in the rubble of the hotel of death.

The survivors took refuge at Luneta Park next to the famous monument erected in honour of Dr José Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines. They stayed there for

two days, exposed to the elements, at the mercy of artillery fire and hunted down by the cowardly bullets of the Japanese. When at last they were liberated, that group of people looked more like a company of ghosts.

I include as part of this report the attached, entitled "Report Submitted by Prudencio Chicote Regarding Japanese Atrocities in the City of Manila", which recounts the vile and cowardly massacre of a group of 61 people by bayonet and hand grenade. Victims of this horrendous and evil crime were my wife María Luisa, my small son Prudencito, my sisters Carolina and Paquita, the latter's husband Carlos García, and the daughters of both my sisters, Ana-Mari and Carmiña. Their harrowing and wretched passion and death are detailed in this report.

When the bloody and senseless battle for Manila came at last to an end, 75% of the city had been totally destroyed. Destroyed too were we survivors; in complete moral and spiritual ruin. The bombs, mortars, rockets, mines and machine-guns not only pulverised into oblivion a joyful city: all of these, together with the traitorous bayonets of the Japanese, laid waste to our souls.

My weak, ill and wounded elderly father was taken to a hospital. His admirable integrity and the serenity of yesteryear had gone. The model patriarch was now bedridden. And from that bed, which was to become his deathbed, he saw again his grieving and much loved wife, his faithful life-long companion with whom he had shared so much happiness. He learned that Eloisa, convalescing in an American military hospital, had been seriously hurt but now out of danger. He said goodbye to me when - because of my fractured leg - I was taken to another American military hospital, and he tried to console me for the loss of my wife and young son. He saw his children Rosario, Josefina, Pepe, María Paz and Tony... He wanted to see the others but couldn't. They were no longer here. He saw the tragedy and the misery the war had brought us. He saw how the incomparable happiness he had built through many sacrifices had now been shattered into a thousand pieces. It was too much tragedy to bear. Often he would repeat: "So many of them....so many..." And on 10 March 1945, far now from the roar of the battle that had caused this fateful catastrophe, he died in the peace of the Lord.

This immense tragedy does not end here. One month later, on 23 April, Milagritos, the eight-month old daughter of my brother Tony, died; another victim of the bloody battle for Manila. In a poor and miserable coffin, her body was laid to rest while her tiny soul rose up to heaven to be reunited with her mother.

EPILOGUE:

Here is related – badly related perhaps – the tremendous tragedy of an entire family. It has been both difficult and painful for me to give more concrete details. The wound bleeds still and there are no signs of healing. In the final analysis, everything has finished: “La Casona”, symbol of a happy family era and its members is nothing more than a throbbing memory. Happiness cannot be bought or made; it comes spontaneously from a married couple who raise and educate their children in the love of God. It develops in watching these children grow in harmony, and in turn they marry and create their own homes that are mirror images of the parental home. And finally, it is strengthened by the tranquil certainty of a debt to God fulfilled. All has finished, all except the memory from which one lives.

IN MEMORIAM:

Alfredo Chicote Beltran; his daughters Pilar, Conchita, Adelina, Carolina and Paquita; his sons-in-law José de Goicoechea and Carlos García Buch; his daughters-in-law Maria Luisa Carbó and Camila Lazcanotegui; and his grandchildren Prudencito, Carmiña, Ana-Mari and Milagritos....

Pious reader, a humble prayer for their souls is begged of you from one who has lost everything.

(Signature)

PRUDENCIO CHICOTE LALANA

Calle Ortega Num. 53

San Juan, Manila

(April 1945)

Part 2

REPORT SUBMITTED BY PRUDENCIO CHICOTE LALANA REGARDING JAPANESE ATROCITIES IN THE CITY OF MANILA

In this report I will describe the inhumane acts committed by the Japanese armed forces against a group of 61 people of both sexes, of all ages and nationalities at the residence of Dr. Rafael María de Moreta, located in Isaac Peral Street, corner of Churruca, District of Ermita in the City of Manila. These atrocities, to which I was both eyewitness and victim, were committed between the 14th and the 23rd of February 1945. The events I will relate are proof of innate cruelty and savagery without equal and give evidence of the barbarity and lack of humanitarian principles of the Japanese Nation.

I give faith and swear before God and before the sacred gold and red ensign of my fatherland that all I state here is a faithful and true account of the events.

Before proceeding however, I would like to recall the succession of Japanese abuses which preceded the tragic dates mentioned above not only against Filipinos but also against Spanish nationals in flagrant violation of all human and civilised laws, and in particular of International Law.

I do not want to forget the unjust public flagellations, the barbaric punishments, the illegal detentions, and the constant criminal persecutions that victimised countless innocent people who were denied the right of defending themselves. I have seen faces and bodies disfigured by lashes and Japanese sabres; I have seen horribly mutilated corpses; and I have seen human beings released from Japanese prisons with the seal of terror imprinted on their faces; miserable beings who will forever carry with them the memory of Terror and Injustice, of Misgovernment, of an Uncivilised Nation which - from the very start of its domination of the Philippines until the last fateful days - has left in its wake a never-ending trail of crime and abuse committed in the name of Justice.

Although less important, neither do I want to omit to mention the unjust requisition and expropriation of properties, furniture and private homes as well as all possible means of transport imaginable... and the interminable series of measures designed to humiliate and persecute the peaceful population of Manila. My pen is poor and my mind so full of personal tragedy that I cannot make sense of, nor describe appropriately, the sequence of increasingly punitive injustices and abuses committed - personally and collectively - by high-ranking and low-ranking civil servants, civilians, soldiers and officers of Japanese nationality since the sad day of 2 January 1942 when Manila fell into their hands until its final liberation.

All of the above gives some idea, although vague, about our life in Manila before the tragic days I am about to recount. This report deals with a series of events that occurred in a private house to a mixed group of people with whom I found myself. There are many other similar cases – equally tragic – in the vast area that comprises the districts of Intramuros, Ermita, Malate, and Paco, which today lie completely in ruins. But it is incumbent upon me to limit my account to the abuses committed at the residence of Dr. R. M. de Moreta where my loved ones perished, assassinated in cold blood, and which I personally witnessed.

Because of a vast destructive fire caused by sustained artillery bombardment, on the night of 14 February 1945, sixty-seven displaced people sought refuge in the abandoned residence of the above-mentioned doctor. The group was comprised of the following nationalities:

	Men	Women	Children	Total
Spanish	4	6	4	14
Filipinos	11	20	11	42
Chinese	10	-	-	10
Portuguese	-	1	-	1
Total	25	27	15	67

The Spanish group was made up by: Carlos García Buch, Paquita Chicote de García, Carmiña García Chicote (5 years), Carlitos García Chicote (11 months), José de Maldonado, María Elena L. de Maldonado, Tirso de Maldonado Lizárraga (6 months), Asunción Cedrun, Vicente Julián, Trinidad de Julián, Pilar Julián, Prudencio Chicote Lalana, María Luisa Carbó de Chicote, Prudencio Chicote Carbó (1 year and 8 months).

The house of Dr. Moreta was the only one left standing within the entire area bordered by the streets of M.H. del Pilar, San Luis, Taft Avenue and Padre Faura and that is why we came to be there. The lower floor was built of concrete thus offering a certain protection from the violent artillery fire the area was subjected to. The refugees were, on the whole, neighbors from the streets of San Luis and San Carlos. It had been impossible to find shelter in a safer place and the Japanese soldiers had forbidden us to leave the area so our group was left no choice but to stay in the house.

Once all 67 had settled into the ground floor, we took the necessary precautions to protect ourselves as much as possible from the constant artillery bombardment. Even so, on 15 February, a projectile exploded in the dining room mortally wounding the wife of Vicente Julián in the leg, who died half an hour later. Panicked by this tragic episode we

decided to leave and make our way to the Philippine General Hospital where we believed we would be more secure. To help us do so a former member of the Philippine Legislative Assembly, Representative Emilio de la Paz, spoke with a Japanese guard informing him of our decision. This guard then told an officer who approved our plan and agreed, at our suggestion, to escort us there.

Despite the intense artillery fire, our retinue of men, women and children set off hopeful of finding a safe haven. During the journey shells exploded only a scant distance away from our party. Halfway between the house of Dr. Moreta and the Philippine General Hospital, the Japanese officer told Mr. de la Paz that he would be turning back; the coast was clear, he said, and we were in no danger of being attacked by the Japanese machine-gun emplacements. Once again we believed in the word of a Japanese and in so doing we fell into a trap. Effectively, at the exact moment of crossing the corner of Padre Faura and Florida streets, Japanese soldiers began to fire machine-guns at us from a parapet. As a result, the wife of José de Maldonado and her sister Victoria were injured.

We now felt it was impossible to continue and decided to turn back. The two wounded women and their relatives remained behind finding refuge in a small air-raid shelter nearby. The next day, though, Mr. de Maldonado, his wife and small son, his father-in-law (Tirso de Lizarraga) and his younger daughter and a lady of Filipino citizenship (Mrs. F.E.H. de Gonzales) returned to our house of refugees. Of the 66 in the original party, only 61 therefore returned to the house. The group was comprised as such:

Spanish	13
Filipinos.....	37
Chinese.....	10
Portuguese.....	1

It is worth recalling that the unburied corpse of Vicente Julián's wife was still inside. It was impossible to bury her because the Japanese did not allow us to step outside the house. Only after constant pleas and interminable questions and requests did we receive consent to give her Christian burial on the 17th at about 10 in the morning. Mrs. de Julián was buried in a makeshift grave dug by four of us, amid explosions and gunfire, in the grounds of an adjoining property.

On the same day, at about twelve thirty in the afternoon, while we were all gathered together in the living room, 20 soldiers of the Japanese Marine Infantry - their rifles fixed with bayonets and led by a pistol wielding officer - burst into the house. In

a threatening manner they ordered the men into the dining room and after a lengthy search they confiscated watches, fountain pens and other valuables and then forced us into the bathroom. Those of us with Spanish citizenship protested and showed them our documents, but it was useless.^{1*} They mocked us and threatened us even more. Fifteen or sixteen of us were crammed into the bathroom; the other men had managed to hide in an air-raid shelter in the garden. They locked us up inside after having dragged Mr. Vicente Julián to the interior patio where he was shot and killed. A few minutes later they came back for Mr. Tirso Lizarraga who met a similar fate. They then returned and blindfolded my brother-in-law Carlos García Buch, but then changed their minds and the blindfold was removed. Immediately afterwards, I was called and taken from the bathroom by two soldiers only for the officer to order my return with the others. Shortly afterwards, they opened the bathroom door slightly and threw in a hand grenade. My brother-in-law Carlos caught the full force of the explosion, his face and chest torn open by pieces of shrapnel, and he died a few minutes later. The rest of us, without exception, were wounded. Five more grenades were thrown in succession at intervals of 7 or 10 minutes.^{2*3*}

While recovering from the shock and the terror, and as we waited bleeding and exhausted for the next grenade to be thrown, Mrs. de Maldonado, looking very badly injured, burst into the bathroom looking for her husband. Upon seeing her in that terrible state, I was overcome by such a sense of dread for the fate of my wife and little boy that I rushed out of there despite my badly injured leg, buttocks and back only to be confronted with the most terrifying scene I shall never forget. In the living room, one on top of another and lying in an authentic river of blood, lay some thirty dead, dying and severely injured women and children... and among them my beloved wife María Luisa and my small son Prudencito. I rushed to her side, stepping over many inert bodies, and – oh – I found her, already cold and stiff, with five great bayonet wounds penetrating her back and going right through her chest; and beneath her, cradled still in his mother's arms and also dead with three similar wounds, was my little son who was only one year and eight months old.

All around them lay more corpses and all of them with the unmistakable expression of terror frozen on their pale faces; all of them – all, without exception - had the same bayonet wounds on their backs. I saw the body of a Filipina with a bayonet plunged into her genitals. Children and small babies lay bathed in blood, all of them murdered by the bayonets of creatures more cruel than animals or savages.... and lying among the dead were the dying with their pitiful and heart-rending cries. I have to repeat that this heartbreaking scene was, above all, terrifying and unbearably agonizing because of my personal tragedy and the pain caused by my injuries.

^{1*} *Spain was neutral during WWII*

^{2**} *Although not specified in this report, my father told me that only three men survived this ordeal*



Ma. Luisa Carbó de Chicote

How did this happen? Mrs. Conchita Ayala de Samson, one of the few survivors of the massacre, told me later: Soon after having locked the men in the bathroom, these Japanese barbarians rounded up the women in the living room. Four of them picked out four women and forced them into the kitchen where, after brutally raping them, they murdered them by shooting and stabbing them with their bayonets. In order to respect the victims of such savagery, I will not name these unfortunate women. We later found their horribly mutilated bodies - the muscles still tense - in a corner of the kitchen where they were sacrificed.

Meanwhile, the slaughter in the living room had begun. They called them one by one and led them towards the bathroom and, when the women and children had passed a certain point, the soldiers repeatedly plunged their bayonets into their backs. And even as they fell to the floor, bleeding and in agony, one of the soldiers would finish the job by burying his bayonet into their frail bodies. Nineteen women and 14 children were attacked in this manner:^{4*}

The following tables clearly show the number of victims who died or were injured at the hands of those criminals:

Table I	<u>DEAD AND INJURED ACCORDING TO SEX</u>			
		<u>Injured</u>	<u>Dead</u>	<u>Total</u>
	Men	11	13	24
	Women	10	13	23
	Children	5	9	14
	Total	26	35	61

^{4*} Prudencio Chicote found his 11-month-old nephew Carlitos García covered in blood and crawling among the corpses. With no means of feeding him, an unknown woman whose own child had been killed offered to suckle the starving baby. Thanks to her, the baby survived.

The list of victims according to nationality:

Table II	<u>DEAD AND INJURED ACCORDING TO NATIONALITY</u>			
		<u>Injured</u>	<u>Dead</u>	<u>Total</u>
	Spanish	5	8	13
	Filipino	17	20	37
	Chinese	4	6	10
	Portuguese	-	1	1
	Total	26	35	61

The eight Spanish victims of that barbarity are:

1. Carlos García Buch
2. Paquita Chicote de García
3. Carmiña García Chicote (5 years old)
4. Asunción Cedrun
5. Vicente Julián
6. Pilar Julián
7. María Luisa C. de Chicote
8. Prudencio Chicote Carbó

All our efforts – despite our own injuries - to bury our loved ones were in vain. We were watched over and continuously victimized, and any attempt to dig graves in the garden was met by a hail of bullets. After trying several times, we finally desisted.

Meanwhile, the persecution we faced was unremitting. Knowing there to be survivors who had witnessed their crimes and excesses, and perhaps afraid that we would mount some sort of resistance against them (what cowards, what miserable beings) they decided to exterminate us from afar. They began first to shoot at the house, then they started throwing hand grenades and incendiary bombs until, on the night of the 18th, they succeeded in their objective. Stealthily approaching the kitchen where we survivors were huddled, they threw at us first a hand grenade and then an incendiary device and the house immediately caught fire. But it seems God wished to spare us because all of us who were injured were able to escape, hiding and dragging ourselves among the ruins and exposing ourselves to the fierce shrapnel that fell everywhere. Anything was preferable to that cruel persecution. Bleeding, hungry and desperate for water, we finally reached the smoking ruins of “La Casona”, our family house whose lower floors were still intact, located in the corner of the streets of San Luis and San Carlos.

And there we stayed surrounded by Japanese and unable to move until the afternoon of the 23rd when we were rescued by four young men and a young girl who had bravely crossed the line of fire to look for us and whose names deserve mention here.

These brave young people are: María del Pilar Casanovas, Alfredo Gonzalez Anguita, Enrique Hymus, Antonio Lorenzo and my brother José María Chicote who - convinced there would be refugees in "La Casona" - enlisted the others to help him.

I have attempted in this report to be as concise as possible. Small details that are not deemed essential - however important and terrifying - have been omitted. As I have already indicated, it has not been possible for me to describe these atrocities with the necessary clarity and precision. My pain is too great in the face of this tragedy. For apart from having suffered the loss of my loved wife and small son in such terrible circumstances, my two sisters, two little nieces and a brother-in-law also died with them. I have also lost - in other areas of the city and in differing circumstances - three more sisters (1 assassinated, 2 killed by shrapnel), a brother-in-law and a sister-in-law and more recently - only a few days after liberation - my much respected father, grief-stricken by the magnitude of the tragedy, died from an injury sustained in the head. In short, of the twenty-four family members who lived in the paternal home, thirteen have perished. I have written this account full of sorrow for such irreparable loss and recovering from an injury to my right leg and other parts of the body for which I have required hospitalization.

I state again that all here contained is true and to give testimony of its veracity I can name other survivors among who are people of high-standing in the political, social and commercial spheres of this city.

(Signature)
PRUDENCIO CHICOTE LALANA
ORTEGA 35,
SAN JUAN, MANILA
5 APRIL 1945

5

5 *Translated by Marifí Chicote*

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POST SCRIPT:

After liberation, Prudencio Chicote, accompanied by his brother Pepe, returned to the house of Dr. Moreta to recover the remains of his wife and son and other relatives. He found the house completely gutted by fire and the bodies of the dead reduced to ash. In a corner of the living room, however, he managed to salvage a few singed pieces of personal items among which was a small fragment of material that belonged to the dress his wife was wearing when she was brutally killed. With their bare hands, the brothers scooped the ashes from the scene of the massacre into a small box they carried. The ashes were later interred in the crypt of San Agustín Church, Intramuros, where they still lie today. The simple white marble slab that covers the niche is inscribed with the names of the family members who died. It also pays tribute to all the others – Filipino, Chinese, Spanish and Portuguese – who died with them so violently and needlessly in the house of Dr. Moreta only a few days before the final Liberation of Manila.

In 1995, at the age of 81 and now living in Europe, Prudencio Chicote was invited to Manila for the 50th anniversary commemorations of the liberation of the city. He carried the wreath at the official ceremony in Intramuros to unveil a new memorial for the tens of thousands of civilian non-combatant victims of the Battle for Manila. Before leaving Manila, he went to the crypt of San Agustín for the last time to pay honour to his family and all the others who died, massacred by Japanese soldiers, fifty years ago.



“MEMORARE – MANILA 1945

This memorial is dedicated to all those innocent victims of war, many of whom went nameless and unknown to a common grave, or never even knew a grave at all, their bodies having been consumed by fire or crushed to dust beneath the rubble of ruins.

Let this monument be the gravestone for each and every one of the over 100,000 men, women, children and infants killed in Manila during its Battle of Liberation, February 3 – March 3, 1945.

We have not forgotten them, nor shall we ever forget.

May they rest in peace as part now of the sacred ground on this city, the Manila of our affections.

February 18, 1995”

ORIGINAL SPANISH VERSION

Estimado Lector/a,

Este folio contiene dos informes titulados:

1. "Sucesos Trágicos a la Familia Chicote"
2. "Informe Que Somete Prudencio Chicote Lalana Sobre Atrocidades Japonesas en la Ciudad de Manila"

Ambos informes fueron escritos en 1945 por el que suscribe a instancias del Consulado General de España en Manila, Filipinas. Los mismos fueron transmitidos por dicho Consulado al Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores del gobierno Español.

Los hechos relatados ocurrieron en Manila durante Febrero de 1945, en la liberación de dicha ciudad.

En la fase final de la II Guerra Mundial en el Extremo Oriente, las Fuerzas Armadas de los Estados Unidos invadieron las Islas Filipinas reconquistándolas de las fuerzas del Imperio Japonés. La batalla de Manila fue la última de dicha reconquista. La guerra concluyó con la total rendición del Japón en Agosto de 1945, después de los bombardeos aéreos nucleares de Hiroshima y Nagasaki.

El autor . .

“SUCESOS TRÁGICOS A LA FAMILIA CHICOTE”

En la tarde del 3 de Febrero de 1945, hallábase mi familia reunida en la casa paterna, apodada cariñosamente “La Casona” sita en la esquina de las calles de San Luis y de San Carlos, Distrito de la Ermita, Ciudad de Manila. Familia de costumbres arraigadas españolas y de profundos sentimientos religiosos, imperaba siempre en ella la paz y concordia. Separada el comienzo de la guerra en 1941, reunióse al final de ella, solo para que en los últimos días que precedieran a la liberación tan ansiada experimentara el hambre, la sed, el terror, la separación y finalmente la inmensa tragedia que culminó en casi su total exterminación.

Componíase la familia feliz en realidad de varios núcleos, todos los cuales giraban alrededor de la autoridad paternal. Eran estos los siguientes:

1. Alfredo Chicote Beltrán (Jefe de Familia)
2. Pilar Lalana de Chicote (Esposa)
3. Eloisa Chicote (Hija soltera)
4. Concepcion Chicote (Hija soltera)
5. Adelina Chicote (Hija soltera)
6. Maria Paz Chicote (Hija soltera)
7. José Ma. Chicote (Hijo soltero)
8. José de Goicoechea Orfanel (Yerno)
9. Pilar Chicote de Goicoechea (Hija casada)
10. Ángel José de Goicoechea - 7 años - (Nieta)
11. Luis Zabaljauregui Castro (Yerno)
12. Carolina Chicote de Zabaljauregui (Hija casada)
13. Ana-Mari Zabaljauregui Chicote - 11 meses (Nieta)
14. Prudencio Chicote Lalana (Hijo casado)
15. Maria Luisa Carbó de Chicote (Yerna)
16. Prudencito Chicote Carbó - 20 meses (Nieta)
17. Antonio Chicote Lalana (Hijo casado)
18. Camila Lazcanotegui de Chicote (Yerna)
19. Milagritos Chicote Lazcanotegui (Nieta)
20. Encarnación Lalana Bustamante (Cuñada)
21. Carlos Garcia Buch (Yerno)
22. Paquita Chicote de Garcia (Hija casada)
23. Carmina Garcia Chicote - 5 años (Nieta)
24. Carlitos Garcia Chicote - 11 meses (Nieta)

Completaban la familia patriarcal los siguientes, que por circunstancias de residir aparte no se hallaban reunidos con el grueso cuando sobrevinieron los intrascendentes acontecimientos que a continuación se van a relatar: Jesús Zabaljauregui Castro, su esposa Josefina Chicote y sus hijos menores de edad, Alfredito, Jesús-Ramón, Milagritos y Jorgito; y los esposos Francisco Radal y Rosario Chicote.

Cuando en la mencionada tarde del 3 de Febrero de 1945 comenzó la dura y cruenta batalla de Manila, quedaron reunidos en “La Casona” los 24 primeros arriba mencionados. Hallábase mi padre débil de cruenta y pertinaz leucemia linfática, y mi madre en cama con mal de riñón. Así y todo pusimos fe y confianza en el Señor y esperamos con ansia la liberación tan esperada, lamentando no poder estar con nosotros el resto.

Las tropas japonesas apostadas en la vecindad, inmediatamente prohibieron el tránsito por la calle nada más que para lo indispensable y nosotros cumpliendo la orden no salíamos. Lo que nosotros creíamos sería cuestión de un par de días se alargó en un periodo largo y exasperante. Comenzaron las violentas voladuras de puentes y avenidas y finalmente lo más terrible cruento e incesante duelo artillero.

En fecha 7 y hacia las tres de la tarde cayó un obús en “La Casona”, destrozando por completo los altos de la misma e hiriendo gravemente en la pierna a mi hermana, Maria Paz. Como la misma desangraba profusamente, decidimos llevarla a unos pisos, distantes tres manzanas de la “Casona”, donde tenia instalada su clínica un medico amigo de la familia. Aprovechando de ello sacamos de la cama a mi madre, quien insistió estar al lado de su hija enferma, y la misma fue trasladada con Maria Paz en un carri-coche de mano, único medio de transporte en aquellos días. Mi hijo Prudencito se hallaba enfermo con alta fiebre y decidimos mi esposa y yo llevarle a la casa del medico citado donde esperábamos pudiera atenderle en caso propicio. Llegados a los mencionados pisos después de cruzar calles y esquinas entre lluvia de metralla artillera, mi hermana Maria Paz fue atendida por el medico. Gracias a este vive hoy Maria Paz. Agradecidos como estamos con éste, no podemos decir otro tanto, desgraciadamente, de los demás vecinos de aquellos pisos, la mayor parte de los cuales eran de nuestra misma raza y color. No solamente no nos ofrecieron cobijo sino que nos instaron a volver a nuestra residencia alegando ya no tenían espacio. Amigos nuestros habían sido y uno de ellos debía grandes favores a mí anciano padre, pero fue este “gran amigo” en particular quien nos dijo “esta boca es mía” en aquellos momentos tan críticos. Censurable también en todo sentido fue la acción de cierto matrimonio, español de ciudadanía, quien ofreciendo hospitalidad a mi madre y hermana, nos la negaron a mi esposa e hijo enfermo. Dios solo sabe si

mi pobre esposa e hijito tan queridos vivirían hoy si aquel matrimonio acomodado nos hubiera dado hospitalidad, y Dios solo es juez de su bien o mal obrar.

Dejamos pues a mi madre y hermana herida en la residencia de “nuestros amigos” y volvimos el resto integrado por mi padre, un hermano, dos cuñados, mi esposa, mi chiquillo y yo; y otra vez entre lluvia de metralla y el peligro de ser tirados por centinelas japoneses llegamos a “La Casona”.

La suerte que después corrieran mi madre y Maria Paz fue la siguiente:

Intensificado el duelo artillero, y comenzados los destructores incendios, hubieron que evacuar el edificio. Una enferma y una herida, separadas de la familia por primera vez en su vida y en zozobra constante, tuvieron que vagar por calles en ruinas y cruzar fortificaciones y barricadas niponas entre el peligro de los obuses y de la fusilería japonesa quien desde un principio no respetó vidas de indefensas personas civiles. Encontraron abrigo al fin en el edificio del Ateneo de Manila, colegio regentado en tiempos normales por los PP Jesuitas, y cuando este por su vez era pasto de las llamas, evacuaron con cientos de otros refugiados al edificio del “Elena Apartments”. Fue una humilde familia filipina desconocida quien tomó cargo de las mismas hasta que las tropas norteamericanas las liberaron en fecha 14 de Febrero de 1945.

ASESINATO DE MI HERMANA ADELINA:

Adelina fue siempre mujer energética y valiente. Estas cualidades de su carácter se mostraron más aun con ocasión de los bombardeos aéreos que precedieron a la batalla de Manila. Cuando por razones de la “admirable hospitalidad” de nuestras amistades tuvimos que dejar solas a mi madre y a Maria Paz en los “apartments” y supimos no las proveerían de comida, fue Adelina la que inmediatamente se ofreció voluntariamente a llevarlas algo de comer a mediodía y a la caída de la tarde. Inútiles fueron las protestas de los varones de “La Casona”, Adelina alegó que nosotros teníamos obligaciones mayores con nuestras esposas e hijos y que por razón de su sexo los japoneses la respetarían. Además, su conocimiento del idioma nipón la ayudaría a pasar sin dificultad por los puestos de guardia y barricadas niponas. El fuego incesante de la artillería continuaba pero a pesar de ello Adelina iba y venia dos veces al día llevando a su madre y hermana comida preparada en “La Casona” y medicinas que ellas necesitaban. Salía antes del medio día, comía allá, regresaba a la media tarde y volvía antes del anochecer con la cena para dormir ya allá. Y siempre sonriente y confiada. Pero en la tarde del 9 ya no regresó

a “La Casona”. Sucedió que aquella tarde se intensificara mas que nunca la artillería y menudearan los grandes incendios en la vecindad. Supusimos que Adelina se había quedado con mi madre, en la imposibilidad de transitar por las calles. Para asegurar esta suposición despachamos a mi hermano Pepe para que se informara de ello y este volvió con la noticia que en la primera esquina fue interceptado por soldados japoneses, quienes no le permitieron proseguir el camino, y le amenazaron matarle si lo intentara. Mi madre y hermana por su parte supusieron que Adelina se había quedado con nosotros por la misma razón. De esta forma, unos y otros creíamos a Adelina en lugar seguro, y cerca de los suyos. Solo unos días después de la liberación nos enteramos con horror y dolor de la trágica muerte de la desdichada hermana, relatado por una vecina de la Calle de A. Mabini, testigo ocular de lo ocurrido.

En el medio día del 9, llegada a la esquina que forman las calles de A. Mabini e Isaac Peral, fue interceptada Adelina por un centinela japonés. La testigo declara que aquella habló con el mismo señalando el edificio donde se proponía ir, y enseñando la comida y medicinas que llevaba para su madre y hermana. Vio la señora testigo como el soldado hizo señas para que prosiguiera su camino, y cuando Adelina lo hizo y en el momento de pasar el mencionado centinela, este hundió traídoramente y cobardemente su bayoneta calada en la espalda de la indefensa Adelina. Cayo la infeliz hermana con bayoneta y fusil clavados y el japonés se inclinó sobre ella; luego como no pudiera sacar su arma de la espalda de la moribunda, colocó un pie sobre ella y forcejeó hasta que el arma quedó libre del cuerpo. La testigo no pudo ver mas, retirándose de su puesto de observación horrorizada de aquel crimen que acababa de presenciar. Mas tarde sin embargo, la vio arrastrarse por la calle en dirección a un grupo de accesorias cercanas, pidiendo auxilio. Nadie osó socorrerla por temor a los japoneses y a la metralla. Llovió aquella tarde nefasta, y ya anocheciendo un gran incendio destruía aquellas manzanas de casas.

El cadáver mutilado de mi infeliz hermana fue hallado en fecha posterior a la liberación por mi hermano José María frente a las ruinas de las accesorias citadas. No se le pudo reconocer por estar completamente quemada. Sirvieron de identificación un zapato que llevaba puesto, el calcetín, la fiambarrera donde llevaba la comida y un maletín con medicinas. La mártir fue dada cristiana sepultura en el atrio de la Parroquia de la Ermita y sus restos trasladados mas tarde al Cementerio Católico de La Loma.

MUERTE DE JOSÉ DE GOICOECHEA Y MI HERMANA PILINA:

El matrimonio Goicoechea, alebrestado con el accidente ocurrido a mi hermana María Paz en fecha 7 y cuyos detalles han quedado consignados arriba, creyó mas seguro

evacuar a lugar más lejano. Llevándose a su hijo de 7 años, Ángel José y a la criada del mismo, marcharon en dirección al Distrito de Malate y después de largo y peligroso trayecto pasando trincheras y barricadas japonesas, tomaron refugio en la residencia del Sr. Gonzalo Yrezabal, amigo íntimo de los mismos, en la calle de Wright, del citado distrito. No se libró este del destructor fuego artillero que aumentaba en intensidad de día en día. Y cuando llegó su turno a la calle de Wright dos días después que el matrimonio se acomodara en ella, esta era pasto de las llamas y de la más completa destrucción. Huyeron de ella las familias de Yrezabal y de Goicoechea, y he aquí que en una plaza cercana, a donde habían tomado refugio, un enorme fragmento de obús hiere mortalmente a mi hermana Pilar en el vientre. Su marido Pepe al verla se enloquece, deja al niño al cuidado de los de Yrezabal y de la criada y lleva a su esposa malherida en dirección de los edificios del Hospital General Filipino. En el trayecto tropieza con la clínica de un médico filipino situado en la residencia del mismo y única casa de la vecindad no destruida. Penetra en ella y pide auxilio médico para la esposa. El anciano médico la mira y dice la herida es grave, que le faltan medios y medicamentos para atenderla y que solo el Hospital General Filipino con sus facilidades quirúrgicas podría salvar la vida de la agonizante. Y el infeliz Goicoechea sale con ella otra vez por las calles en ruinas en dirección al hospital que pudiera salvar la vida de la esposa querida Ya no se les volvió a ver a los dos. Un conocido suyo testificó más tarde que en cierta esquina, a doscientos metros escasos del hospital, vio caer a Pepe, herido de muerte. Se ignora si Pilar, a quien él tenía en brazos había fallecido ya o no, y se ignora asimismo si Pepe fue muerto de tiro de fusil o de ametralladora de un puesto de defensa japonés cercano, o por metralla, pues en aquel momento arremedaba con furor el fuego concentrado de la artillería.

Todo esfuerzo llevado a cabo después para localizar sus cadáveres fue en vano. No se sabe ni se comprende como no se llegó a encontrar rastro del infeliz matrimonio.

Así quedo huérfano en las más trágicas circunstancias el hijo único de los citados esposos.

NOCHE INFERNAL:

Con la desaparición de mi hermana Adelina y la evacuación a Malate de mi cuñado Pepe, ni hermana Pilar y su hijo Ángel José, quedamos en “La Casona” aquella tarde del 7 de Febrero, dieciocho de los 24 moradores mencionados el principio de este informe Como continuaran cayendo y explotando obuses en “La Casona” y sus alrededores a cada minuto y alebrestados por el incidente de la herida de Maria Paz, decidieron evacuar

a un edificio cercano llamado “San Carlos Apartments”, mis cuñados Carlos y Luis Zabaljauregui con sus esposas (mis hermanas) Paquita y Carolina, y las hijas respectivas de estas Carmina, Carlitos y Ana Mari.

En fecha 9, un incendio voraz a media noche amenazaba destruir “La Casona” y sus inmediaciones. Los que habían evacuado a los “San Carlos Apartments” regresaron a “La Casona” y ya cuando el incendio devoraba la casa vecina, salimos de aquella el grupo de moradores. Deambulamos por las calles en busca de lugar seguro que no encontrábamos. Manzanas enteras eran pasto de las llamas y otras eran un montón de ruinas humeantes. Las calles llenas de escombros, de hoyos de impactos de artillería y de barricadas, ofrecían obstáculos enormes para la triste caravana familiar. Mis hermanas con los chiquillos en brazos, nosotros los varones y las solteras con bultos de ropa, comestibles y medicinas y el anciano padre, débil y enfermo, pero sereno y valiente; y todos, todos en la callada, pero impaciente preocupación de la suerte que corrieran la madre tan amada y la hermana herida tan sufrida, vagamos aquella satánica noche por las calles y avenidas entre el fragor de la reñida batalla, la anaranjada iluminación de los extensos incendios y las cegantes luces de las explosiones. Explotaban obuses y morteros en nuestro derredor y oíamos el zumbido de las balas muy cerca de nosotros. Pero no estaba escrito cayéramos allá. El destino implacable tenía reservada para tres cuartas partes de aquel grupo que no cesaba de orar con fervor y esperanza de redención, un final más terrible, una muerte más trágica. Nos prohibieron soldados japoneses amenazadoramente cruzar calles hacia lugares donde notábamos la artillería concentraba menos su fuego. Inútiles fueron nuestras suplicas que nos dejaran

pasar para salvar a nuestras mujeres y chiquillos. Aquellos bestias veían su fin cercano, comprendían lo fútil de la batalla que luchaban y con satánica intención trataban de evitar todos los medios por los cuales tuviéramos ocasión de sobrevivir. Estábamos cercados, cercados y cazados por hombres sin fe ni corazón por bestias sin razón ni humanitarismo. Nos negaron asilo y refugio en el edificio de la Casa de España (Casino Español de Manila) y en la españolisima iglesia y seminario de los PP Paules. Vagamos aun mas aquella triste noche, descansamos en los bajos de una frágil casa de maderas viejas y al amanecer, cuando notamos que el fuego de artillería cesó y amenguaban los incendios, volvimos fatigados, con hambre y sed a “La Casona”. En el trayecto de regreso intentaron los japoneses ametrallarnos desde un edificio alto que dominaba las ruinas humeantes y los escombros de nuestro camino. No consiguieron su objetivo quizás por mala puntería pero más seguro aun porque el destino nos reservaba otro fin.

“La Casona” se había salvado del incendio, causa que nosotros la abandonaremos. A su derredor todo eran escombros humeantes de lo que horas antes habían sido residencias más o menos lujosas. “La Casona” y cinco o seis casas de aquella vecindad se mantenían erigidas en aquella desolación de escombros y cenizas. Regresaron a ella mi padre, mi tía Encarnación, mis hermanas Eloisa y Conchita y mi hermano Pepe. Tony con su esposa e hijita de seis meses se refugiaron en otra casa contigua y el resto con mi esposa e hijo quedamos en los “San Carlos Apartments”. Manteníamos comunicación constante mediante un paso provisional de emergencia entre los tres edificios. Yo iba y venía, preocupado con la salud de mi padre y de la suerte de mis hermanas solteras así como la de mi tía. Los días se hacían largos y las noches eternas. Continuaba la implacable artillería y las continuas explosiones de obuses y morteros. Los incendios eran interminables. Muchas veces, al contemplar aquella desolación pensaba cual era el objetivo de tanto fuego artillero y no me podía explicar. Si era destruir, ya todo estaba destruido. Es imposible para mí describir la intensidad de aquel fuego así como la destrucción que el mismo ocasionara. Pero peor aun que todo ello era la exasperación al ver el triste calvario que aquellas inocentes criaturas, aquellas esposas y madres amantes y aquel pobre anciano tuvieran que pasar.

Empezaban a escasear nuestras provisiones de boca y estábamos faltos de agua. Extenuados por la fatiga corporal, faltos de sueño, con hambre continua y sed implacable, sucios y andrajosos, parecíamos fantasmas en aquel infierno. Solo nuestra fe incommovible no desbarato para siempre nuestras mentes. Reunidos los matrimonios con los respectivos chiquillos, pasábamos las cuentas del rosario eterno por nuestros cadavéricos dedos, pidiendo la liberación tan ansiada que jamás iba a llegar para la mayoría de nosotros.

EL HOTEL DE LA MUERTE:

Como quedo antes consignado, quedamos separados unos de otros en tres edificios contiguos, pero yo mantenía enlace con todos ellos. Visitaba a mi padre y hermanas, a mi hermano Tony y su mujer. Mi mujer e hijo con mis hermanas Carolina y Paquita, sus esposos e hijos respectivos, estaban en los “San Carlos Apartments” con otros refugiados de la vecindad. El calvario que estos pasaran queda relatado en informe aparte que se adjunta el actual.

En la media tarde del 14, cuando salte la pared que dividía los tres edificios para irme a “La Casona” como acostumbraba hacerlo 4 o 5 veces al día, note algo extraño

en mí que no puedo describir. Corrí a la puerta trasera de “La Casona” y la encontré desierta. Llame y no me contestaron. Les busque y no les encontré. Sus paquetes y valija estaban allí, pero ellos no. Hasta el bastón y sombrero de mi padre estaban. Que había sido de ellos? Donde habían ido? Inmensamente preocupado volví a los “San Carlos Apartments” a reunirme con mi mujer y mi hijito, y decidido a no separarme ya de los mismos. Presentía que el clímax se aproximaba y una extraña sensación de desasosiego y tragedia persistía en mí. Porque iba el destino separando paulatinamente a aquella mi familia siempre tan unida? Donde estaban mi padre, tía y hermanas? Que les había sucedido?

Lo referido mas tarde por los que sobrevivieron fue lo siguiente:

En la citada media tarde del 14 de Febrero irrumpieron en “La Casona” y la casa contigua donde se hallaba mi hermano Antonio, varios oficiales y soldados japoneses, quienes con amenazas les obligaron a salir de ellas. Les condujeron al campo y parque de la Luneta, donde cientos de personas se hallaban concentradas. Frente al enorme grupo habían ametralladoras emplazadas con sus servidores. Otros soldados y oficiales merodeaban con fusiles y pistolas ante el grupo. Les cachearon y les despojaron de objetos de valor que llevaban consigo y luego procedieron a segregar a los hombres de las mujeres. A los primeros les ordenaron dirigirse a un edificio de cemento llamado “Peralta Apartments”, donde quedaron encerrados. Allí mi anciano padre y mis hermanos Pepe y Tony, este ultimo separado de su esposa e hijita, permanecieron encerrados tres días, hasta que por circunstancias extrañas e inexplicables hasta hoy, les permitieron sus capturadores escaparse, cosa que lo hicieron sin demora alguna, durmiendo aquella noche en las ruinas cercanas de la Iglesia de la Ermita, y la siguiente en una casa en ruinas, y finalmente, en fecha 19, al ser liberados, se reunieron por coincidencia con mi madre y hermana en el edificio del “Elena Apartments”.

Durante la estancia en el “Peralta Apartments”, mi padre fue herido en la cabeza por cacho de metralla, herida al parecer de poca importancia, pero que después por la pérdida de sangre sufrida, la exposición a la intemperie, su crónica dolencia y mayormente por el golpe producido al enterarse de la enorme tragedia acaecida a su familia, contribuyo a su fallecimiento, en fecha posterior a su liberación.

Veamos ahora la suerte que corrieran mi tía Encarnación, mis hermanas Eloisa y Conchita y mi cuñada Camila, esposa de Tony, e hijita. Recordemos que estos fueron sacados de “La Casona”, llevados a La Luneta, y allí separados de sus familiares varones.

Vieron como estos fueron llevados a una dirección, mientras que les obligaban a ellas a proseguir en dirección completamente contraria, a los edificios del Hotel Manila. En el hotel se encontraron con miles de refugiados, prisioneros virtuales de los japoneses. Había de todas las edades, sexos y nacionalidades. Fueron conducidas primero a uno de los salones y más tarde encerrados en una de las habitaciones. Los japoneses las alimentaban, si ello se puede llamar alimento, con un puñado de arroz cocido al DIA. Se acomodaron en el salón como pudieron, donde ya se hallaban hacinadas centenares de mujeres y chiquillos. En repetidas ocasiones, soldados japoneses entraban y se llevaban a la fuerza a alguna que otra con la intención de violarlas. Las desgraciadas jamás volvían ya. Mas tarde unas cuantas mujeres de nacionalidad rusa (blancas) conocidas por su vida ligera, antes de la guerra y durante la ocupación, hicieron labor laudable con le intención inequívoca de salvar el resto de las cautivas. Tan pronto como un grupo de soldados japoneses entraba en busca de compañera, aquellas desgraciadas se levantaban y mediante sonrisas, mimos y caricias propias de la inmoral profesión a la cual de habían acogido, se llevaban a los bestias, salvando de esta forma el honor e integridad de sus compañeras de cautiverio. Si aquellas mujeres habían caído en el pecado muchos años atrás, Dios quizás las haya perdonado en aquellos instantes. Su actitud fue en realidad irreprochable y su sacrificio enorme.

En fecha 18 de Febrero fueron encerradas todas las mujeres en distintas habitaciones. Mi tía, hermanas Eloisa y Conchita, mi cuñada Camila con su hijita y una amiga de la familia les toco estar juntas. No tardó en saberse el objeto de tal confinamiento. Los japoneses querían terminar con aquellos huéspedes involuntarios del hotel. En el piso superior empezaron a romper muebles y tirarlos por las ventanas. Estaban preparando quizás la gran hoguera. Notose movimiento extraordinario en los pasillos y en los pisos superiores. Luego un silencio extraño y mortificante. Y a los pocos minutos, una conmoción ensordecedora, seguida de humareda cegante a la cual se sucedieron más explosiones. Los japoneses habían volado el hotel con la deliberada intención de matar a aquellos infelices e inocentes no-combatientes. La violenta sacudida cogió a Conchita en el momento en que se encerraba en el cuarto de baño; jamás se supo su fin, ni pudieron ser localizados sus restos. A Camila, quien se hallaba, como las demás, sentada en el suelo por escasear de sillas la habitación, se la cayó un objeto pesado sobre las piernas, cercenándole las mismas y pereciendo desangrada después. Fue tal la conmoción que la hija de la desdichada, criatura de seis meses de edad, fue tirada al otro extremo de la habitación. Mi tía cogió a la criatura, instó a Eloisa a que saliera, viéndola malamente herida en el cuello, brazo y espalda y por medio de una ventana saltaron al jardín del hotel. Como se propagara con facilidad el enorme incendio, todo intento de salvar a Camila fue inútil pues la desdicha agonizaba y era imperativo salir de aquel infierno.

La confusión causada por la enorme explosión fue caótica a la vez que fatal para cientos de personas. Muchos perecieron y otros quedaron heridos. Los restos de aquellos quedaron para siempre en los escombros del Hotel de la Muerte.

Los supervivientes tomaron refugio en el famoso monumento erigido en la Luneta en honor del Dr. José Rizal, héroe nacional filipino. Allí permanecieron dos días en la intemperie, a merced de la artillería y cazados ignominiosamente por balas cobardes niponas. Cuando al cabo fueron liberados, aquel grupo de personas más bien parecía una conglomeración de fantasmas.

Hago parte integra de este informe el otro adjunto, titulado “Informe que somete Prudencio Chicote Lalana sobre Atropellos Japoneses en la Ciudad de Manila”, el cual relata el vil y cobarde asesinato a bayoneta y granadas de mano de un grupo de 61 personas. Víctimas propiciatorias del horrendo y nefasto crimen fueron mi esposa Maria Luisa, ni hijito Prudencito, mis hermanas Carolina y Paquita, el esposo del último Carlos García y las hijas de ambas Ana Mari y Carmina, respectivamente. Los detalles espeluznantes y tristes de su pasión y muerte quedan consignados en el citado informe.

Concluida la cruenta, a la par que incomprensible batalla de Manila, quedo el 75% de la Ciudad materialmente triturada. Triturados también quedamos los supervivientes. En completa ruina moral y espiritual. Los obuses, los morteros, los “rockets”, las minas y las ametralladoras no solamente habían pulverizado una alegre ciudad: todo ello y las bayonetas traidoras habían también desolado para siempre nuestras almas.

Mi anciano padre, débil, enfermo y herido fue conducido a un hospital. Su admirable entereza y serenidad de antaño habían desaparecido. El patriarca modelo quedo postrado en cama. Y desde aquella cama que fue mas tarde su lecho mortuario, vio a su apenada y amada esposa, fiel compañera de toda su vida, depositaria de la felicidad sin par por los dos criada. Supo que Eloisa estaba herida, pero fuera de peligro, en un hospital militar norteamericano; se despidió de mi cuando por mi pierna fracturada tuve que ingresar en otro hospital militar, consolándome tristemente por la pérdida de mi esposa e hijito; vio a sus hijos Rosario, Josefina, Pepe, Maria Paz y Tony Quiso ver mas y no pudo. Los demás ya no estaban aquí. Vio la tragedia y la miseria que la guerra nos había traído. Vio rota en mil pedazos la incomparable felicidad del hogar que el había levantado con muchos sacrificios. Fue demasiada tragedia para soportarlo. Con frecuencia repetía tristemente: “Son tantos . . . , tantos....” Y en fecha 10 de Marzo de 1945 lejano ya al rugido de la batalla que ocasionara la fatídica catástrofe, falleció en la paz del Señor.

No concluyo aquí la tragedia inmensa. Un mes más tarde, el 23 de Abril, fallecía Milagritos, la hijita de ocho meses de Tony, víctima de las consecuencias de la cruenta batalla de Manila. En pobre y mísero ataúd, fue sepultado su cuerpo mientras su alma subía al cielo a reunirse con el de su madre.

EPILOGO:

Ha quedado relatada, mal relatada quizás, la tremenda tragedia de toda una familia. Me ha sido difícil y dolorosa a la par dar detalles más concretos. La herida sangra aun, no tiene trazas de cicatrizar. En el recuento final, todo ha terminado: “La Casona” símbolo de una era feliz familiar y sus moradores, no son mas que un recuerdo punzante de lo que fue y ya no lo es, ni lo volverá a ser. La felicidad no se compra, ni se hace; nace por si sola de un matrimonio que cría y educa a sus hijos en el amor de Dios, se desarrolla viendo a estos crecer en la armonía, casarse a su vez felizmente y criar hogares espejos del propio; y finalmente se fortalece en la tranquila satisfacción de un deber a Dios cumplido. Todo ha concluido, todo excepto el recuerdo, del cual se vive.

IN MEMORIAM:

Alfredo Chicote Beltran; sus hijas Pilar, Conchita, Adelina, Carolina y Paquita; sus hijos políticos, José Goicoechea y Carlos Garcia Buch; sus hijas políticas, Maria Luisa Carbó y Camila Lazcanotegui; y sus nietos Prudencito, Carmiña, Ana-Mari y Milagritos . . .

Lector piadoso, una humilde plegaria tuya por las almas de todos ellos te suplica este quien todo lo ha perdido.

PRUDENCIO CHICOTE LALANA
Calle Ortega Num. 53
San Juan, Manila

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**INFORME QUE SOMETE PRUDENCIO CHICOTE LALANA
SOBRE ATROPELLOS JAPONESES EN LA CIUDAD DE MANILA**

En el presente informe me limitaré a relatar hechos ocurridos en relación al inhumano atropello cometido por fuerzas armadas japonesas en la residencia del Dr. Rafael Ma. De Moreta, cita en la calle de Isaac Peral, esquina de la de Churruca, Distrito de la Ermita, Ciudad de Manila, entre los días 14 al 23 de Febrero de 1945, contra un grupo integrado por 61 personas de ambos sexos, distintas edades y diferentes nacionalidades; atropello del cual fui testigo y víctima por igual. Todos los hechos que voy a relatar dan claro testimonio de crueldad innata y salvajismo sin igual, y ponen en evidencia la barbarie y la falta de principios humanitarios de la Nación Nipona.

Doy fe y juro ante Dios y ante la sagrada enseña gualda y roja de mi Patria que todo cuanto aquí expongo es fiel y verdadero relato de hechos.

Quiero recordar, sin embargo, antes de comenzar este relato, la serie de atropellos japoneses que precedieron a los trágicos días mencionados; no solo contra filipinos, sino también contra personas de nacionalidad española, en flagrante violación de todas las leyes humanas y civilizadas, y de la Ley Internacional en particular.

No quiero olvidar las injustas flagelaciones públicas, los castigos bárbaros, las detenciones ilegales y las constantes persecuciones criminales de las cuales fueron víctimas propiciatorias incontable número de personas inocentes, sin haberseles concedido el derecho a su propia defensa. He visto rostros y cuerpos bárbaramente desfigurados por látigos o sables nipones; he visto cadáveres horriblemente mutilados; y he visto seres vivientes recién salidos de las cárceles y prisiones japonesas con el sello del terror en sus rostros; seres miserables que llevarán en su mente para siempre el recuerdo del Terror y la Injusticia, del Desgobierno y de la Incivilización de una Nación que desde el comienzo de su dominación en Filipinas hasta los últimos fatídicos días de la misma, ha dejado una estela interminable de crímenes y desmanes cometidos en nombre de la Justicia.

Aunque de menor importancia, no me olvidaré de mencionar las injustas requisas y expropiaciones forzosas de propiedades, muebles e inmuebles particulares, así como también todos los medios de transporte imaginables y la serie interminable de humillaciones y vejaciones a que ha estado sujeta esta población pacífica de Manila. Mi pluma es pobre y mi mente esta tan llena de tragedia personal que no puedo coligar ni describir apropiadamente la serie ascendente de injusticias y atropellos cometidas,

personal y colectivamente, por altos y bajos funcionarios públicos, personas civiles, soldados y oficiales de nacionalidad japonesa desde el triste día 2 de Enero de 1942, fecha de la caída de Manila en sus manos, hasta la fecha de su liberación final.

Lo antecedente de una idea, aunque vaga, de nuestra vida en Manila con anterioridad a los trágicos días que a continuación voy a relatar. El relato es una serie de acontecimientos ocurridos en una residencia particular a un grupo mixto de personas entre las cuales me encontraba. Otros acontecimientos, innumerables mas, y mas o menos trágicos, han ocurrido en el vasto área que comprenden los distritos de Intramuros, Ermita, Malate y Paco, hoy completamente en ruinas. El relato de lo ocurrido allí no me incumbe. Me limitare en este informe, como ya queda dicho, solo al relato del atropello cometido en la residencia del Dr. R. Ma. De Moreta, en el cual perecieron asesinados a sangre fría seres allegados a mí, y del cual fui testigo ocular:

Por un vasto y destructor incendio ocurrido a raíz de fuerte bombardeo artillero en la noche del 14 de Febrero de 1945 nos refugiamos en la residencia abandonada del mencionado doctor 67 personas. Integraban este grupo los siguientes:

	Hombres	Mujeres	Niños	Total
Espanoles	4	6	4	14
Filipinos	11	20	11	42
Chinos	10	-	-	10
Portugueses	-	1	-	1
TOTAL	25	27	15	67

Doy a continuación los nombres de los 14 Espanoles:

Carlos Garcia Buch, Paquito Chicote de Garcia, Carmina Garcia Chicote (5 años) Carlitos Garcia Chicote (11 meses), José de Maldonado, María Elena L. de Maldonado, Tirso de Maldonado Lizárraga (6 meses), Asunción Cedrun, Vicente Julia, Trinidad de Julian, Pilar Julian, Prudencio Chicote Lalana, María Luisa C. de Chicote y Prudencio Chicote Carbó (1 año y 8 meses).

En el área comprendido por las Calles M. H. del Pilar, San Luis, Avenida de Taft y Padre Faura, era la casa del Dr. De Moreta la única en pie y por ello fuimos a parar en ella. Era el piso inferior de la misma de concreto y esto ofrecía cierto resguardo contra el fuerte fuego artillero a que el área mencionada estaba sujeta. Los refugiados éramos, en

su mayoría, vecinos de las Calles de San Luis y de San Carlos. Imposibilitados a refugiarnos en lugar más seguro aun y de alejarnos de dicho área, por prohibírnoslo los centinelas japoneses bajo pena de ser disparados, no tuvo el grupo más remedio que refugiarse en la mencionada casa.

Acomodadas las 67 personas en los bajos de la susodicha casa, tomamos las necesarias medidas precaucionarías contra el bombardeo artillero incesante. Así y todo, en fecha 15 de Febrero, un proyectil explotó dentro del comedor, hiriendo mortalmente en la pierna a la señora del español Vicente Julia, quien falleció media hora después. Alebrestandos por el trágico suceso, decidimos hacer una salida en dirección a los edificios del Philippine General Hospital, los cuales nos parecían ofrecían mayor seguridad. Para ello, en señor filipino, ex-miembro de la Asamblea Legislativa Filipina, el Representante Emilio de la Paz, parlamentó con un centinela japonés, exponiéndole nuestra decisión. Este centinela dio conocimiento a su oficial, y este aprobó nuestra idea y se ofreció, a instancias nuestras solamente, acompañarnos.

Salió la comitiva, hombres mujeres y niños, esperanzados en hallar lugar seguro a pesar de fuerte fuego artillero. Durante el trayecto caían los obuses a metros escasos de la comitiva. A mitad del trayecto que hay entre la casa del Dr. De Moreta a los edificios del Hospital General Filipino, el oficial japonés comunica al Sr. De la Paz que el se volvería pues estaba el camino franco y no había peligro alguno que los puestos japoneses ametrallaran a la comitiva. Por una vez más creímos en las palabras de un japonés, y por creerle caímos en una trampa. En efecto, en el momento preciso de cruzar la esquina formada por las calles de P. Faura y Florida, en dirección al hospital, empezaron a ametrallarnos desde un parapeto japonés. A resultas del mismo, cayeron heridas la Señora de José de Maldonado y su hermana Victoria.

Por este mismo suceso, y en la imposibilidad de proseguir con nuestro intento, decidimos regresar. Quedaron en la mencionada esquina, sin embargo, refugiadas en un refugio antiaéreo allí construido, las dos heridas y sus familiares. De estos, regresaron en días sucesivos a la casa de refugiados, el Sr. De Maldonado, su esposa e hijito, su suegro (Tirso Lizárraga) e hija menor y una señora de ciudadanía filipina (la Sra. F. E. H. de Gonzales). Regresamos pues, de las 66 personas que integraba el grupo, solamente 61, compuesto como sigue:

Espanoles	13
Filipinos	37
Chinos	10
Portugueses	01

En el entretanto recordemos que el cadáver insepulto de la Sra. De Vicente Julián quedaba en la casa en la imposibilidad de enterrarlo, por vedarnos los japoneses la salida de la casa. Solo después de constantes rogativas e interminables cuestionarios y averiguaciones conseguimos permiso para darla cristiana sepultura el día 17 hacia las diez de la mañana. Quedo pues la señora de Julián sepultada en una pobre fosa construida por 4 españoles entre explosiones y tiroteos en el solar adyacente de una finca en ruinas.

En el mencionado día 17, hacia las doce y media de la tarde, hallándonos los refugiados reunidos en la sala, irrumpieron en la misma, con fusil y bayoneta calada unos 20 soldados de Infantería de Marina Japonesa al mando de un oficial, pistola en mano. De malas formas ordenan nos reunamos los varones en el comedor y después de detenido cacheo en el cual nos quitaron relojes, plumas estilográficas y otros objetos de valor que llevamos, nos llevan a empujones al cuarto de baño. Inútiles fueron las protestas de los que éramos españoles y enseñábamos nuestra documentación. Se mofaban de ella y nos amenazaban más. Quedamos reunidos en el cuarto de baño unos 15 o 16 varones pues el resto quedo escondido en un refugio antiaéreo en el jardín de la casa. Nos encerraron en el mencionado cuarto de baño después de haberle sacado afuera al Sr. Vicente Julián, quien fue muerto a tiros en el patio interior de la casa. A los pocos minutos volvieron y se llevaron el Sr. Tirso Lizárraga, quien encontró semejante muerte al Sr. Julián. Volvieron después y vendaron los ojos a mi cuñado Carlos García Buch, vendaje que le quitaron a los pocos minutos después de cierta indecisión. Inmediatamente después me llaman a mí y me sacan del cuarto de baño, solo para que recién salido del mismo, custodiado por dos soldados, me ordenara el oficial volverá con el resto. Hacían solo unos minutos que había regresado cuando abren cautelosamente la puerta del baño y nos arrojan una granada de mano. La explosión de esta cogió tan de lleno a mi cuñado Carlos García, que el mismo, con la cara y el pecho desgarrado de metralla, fallecía unos minutos después. Los demás, sin excepción alguna, quedamos heridos. Y así, cada 7 o 10 minutos, arrojaron en sucesión 5 granadas más.

Cuando pasados el atolondramiento y terror sufridos, esperábamos sangrantes y exhaustos la 6ª granada, penetro en el cuarto de baño la Sra. De Maldonado malamente herida, en busca de su marido. Al verla entrar así, tuve tan mala impresión de la suerte que corrieran mi mujer e hijito, que salí corriendo, a pesar de mis heridas en la pierna, nalga y espalda, solo para encontrarme con un cuadro aterrador del cual jamás me olvidaré. En la sala, unas sobre otras y en verídico río de sangre, yacían muertas y agonizantes, treitaitantas mujeres y chiquillos . . . y entre ellos, mí querida esposa, María Luisa y mi hijito Prudencio. Acérqueme a ella pasando sobre cuerpos inertes y la halle, ay, fría y lívida ya, con cinco grandes heridas de bayoneta atravesadas de la espalda al pecho.

Bajo ella, amparado aun en los brazos de su madre, y muerto también, con tres heridas similares a la de ella, estaba mi hijito que solo contaba con 1 año y 8 meses.

A su derredor más cadáveres aun, todas con el sello inconfundible del terror en sus pálidos rostros; y todos, todas, sin excepción alguna con las mismas heridas de bayoneta en la espalda. El cadáver de una mujer nativa, llevaba una bayoneta clavada en las partes sexuales de la misma. Niños y criaturas de meses yacían bañados en sangre también, todos ellos muertos a bayonetazos por seres más crueles que bestias o salvajes . . . y entre los cadáveres, las agonizantes con sus ayes desgarradores y lastimeros. Vuelvo a repetir que el cuadro mas que trágico era aterrador, y todo ello sumido a mi tragedia personal y al dolor causado por mis heridas era insoportable.

Que había sucedido? La Sra. Conchita Ayala de Samson, una de las pocas supervivientes de aquella sarracina, me relato más tarde lo ocurrido: Poco después de habernos encerrado a los varones en el cuarto de baño, ordenaron los bestias japoneses se reunieran las mujeres en la sala. Cuatro de ellos escogieron a igual número de mujeres y forzosamente las llevaron a la cocina donde después de violarlas brutalmente las mataron a tiros y bayonetazos. Por razones obvias, y en respeto a las víctimas de dicha salvajada, me abstengo de mencionar los nombres de estas cuatro desgraciadas. Sus cadáveres, horriblemente mutilados y tensos aun sus músculos, los hallamos, mas tarde, en los rincones de la cocina, donde fueron sacrificadas.

En el entretanto había comenzado en la sala la matanza de los allí reunidos. Las iban llamando una a una, y al llegar a determinado lugar, en dirección al cuarto de baño, les hundían las bayonetas en la espalda. Y aun cuando caían desmayadas del dolor y sangrantes, uno de ellos terminaba la labor cometida por sus compañeros, hundiendo su bayoneta en los frágiles cuerpos, asegurando así lo cometido por aquellos. Cayeron de esta manera 19 mujeres y 14 chiquillos.

Doy a continuación dos tablas que muestran claramente al número de victimas con los cuales aquellos criminales saciaron sus crueles instintos:

Tabla I	<u>Muertos y Heridos Según su Sexo</u>			
		<u>Heridos</u>	<u>Muertos</u>	<u>Total</u>
	Hombres	11	13	24
	Mujeres	10	13	23
	Niños	-	9	14
	Total	26	35	61

Divídanse estos según nacionalidades en:

Tabla II Muertos y Heridos Según Nacionalidades				
		Heridos	Muertos	Total
	Espanoles	5	8	13
	Filipinos	17	20	37
	Chinos	4	6	10
	Portugueses	-	1	1
	Total	26	35	61

La relación de los ocho españoles, víctimas inmolados de aquella zarracina, es:

1. Carlos García Buch
2. Paquita Chicote de García
3. Carmina García Chicote (5 años)
4. Asunción Cedrún
5. Vicente Julián
6. Pilar Julián
7. Maria Luisa de Chicote
8. Prudencio Chicote Carbó (1 año y 8 meses)

Todo intento que nosotros los supervivientes, aunque heridos, hicimos de sepultar a nuestros muertos fue en vano. Estábamos tan vigilados y perseguidos que cualquier intento por nuestra parte de salir al jardín de la casa para cavar sepulturas era recibida a disparos. Después de intentar hacerlo en diferentes ocasiones, desistimos de la idea.

Y mientras tanto proseguía la persecución insaciable. Sabedores nuestros verdugos que quedaban supervivientes, testigos de sus crímenes y desmanes, y medrosos, quizás, de volver a matarnos, temiendo estuviésemos preparados a resistirles (que cobardía la de aquellos miserables seres) se dedicaron los muy valientes a tratar de exterminarnos a distancia prudente. Comenzaron primero a disparar sobre la casa, y luego a arrojar granadas de mano y bombas incendiarias hasta que en la noche del 18 consiguieron su intento, acercándose cautelosamente a la cocina, donde nos habíamos reunido los supervivientes, y arrojando sucesivamente una granada de mano primero y una incendiaria después. Dios quiso conservar nuestras vidas, pues aun cuando la casa prendió fuego enseguida, pudimos los heridos evacuar de la misma, escondiéndonos y arrastrándonos entre ruinas, y exponiéndonos a la fiera metralla que por todas partes volaba, con tal de huir de tan cruel persecución. Y así, sangrando, hambrientos, y materialmente muertos de sed llegamos a las ruinas aun humeantes de “La Casona”, casa

de materiales fuertes, cuyos bajos aun existían, residencia de mis padres y su familia en la esquina que forman las calles de San Luis y San Carlos.

Y allí, sin podernos mover para nada, pues estábamos aun rodeados de japoneses, quedamos refugiados hasta la tarde del 23, fecha en que fuimos liberados por 4 muchachos y una señorita, cuya valentía y arrojo en cruzar la línea de fuego para salvarnos merece mencione sus nombres en este informe:

Los cinco valientes se llaman: María del Pilar Casanovas, Alfredo González Anguita, Enrique Hymus, Antonio Lorenzo y José Ma. Chicote Lalana, esto último hermano mío que seguro que en “La Casona” quedaban refugiados, alisto a los otros para salvar a los que allí hubiere.

He tratado de hacer este informe lo más breve y conciso que me ha sido posible. He dejado de mencionar, siempre que he podido, pequeños detalles que, aunque importantes, y aterradores a la vez, eran prescindibles. Como ya he dicho, no me ha sido posible describir los actos y sucesos acaecidos con la claridad y precisión debidas. Es tan grande mi dolor ante la tragedia. Porque aparte de la pérdida de mis queridos esposa e hijito las circunstancias de cuyo asesinato quedan aquí consignadas, he perdido en similares circunstancias y en el mismo lugar 2 hermanas, 2 sobrinitas y un cuñado. También he sufrido en distintos lugares y en diferentes circunstancias a tres hermanas mas (1 asesinada y 2 muertas de metralla), un cuñado y una cuñada (ambos de metralla) y últimamente, posterior a mi liberación, a mi respetado padre muerto del dolor recibido de tanta tragedia y de una herida en el cráneo recibida en los fatídicos días. En resumen, de las 24 personas, todos de la familia, que vivíamos en la casa paterna, han perecido trece. Henchido de dolor por tan irreparable pérdida y herido en la pierna derecha y otras varias partes del cuerpo, por las cuales he necesitado hospitalización durante un mes, he escrito lo antecedente.

Repito que todo lo aquí contenido es verdad y para dar testimonio de su veracidad puedo citar a los otros supervivientes, entres los cuales se encuentran personas de muy alta estima en los círculos políticos, sociales y comerciales de esta ciudad.

PRUDENCIO CHICOTE LALANA
ORTEGA, 35
SAN JUAN, MANILA
5 DE ABRIL DE 1945