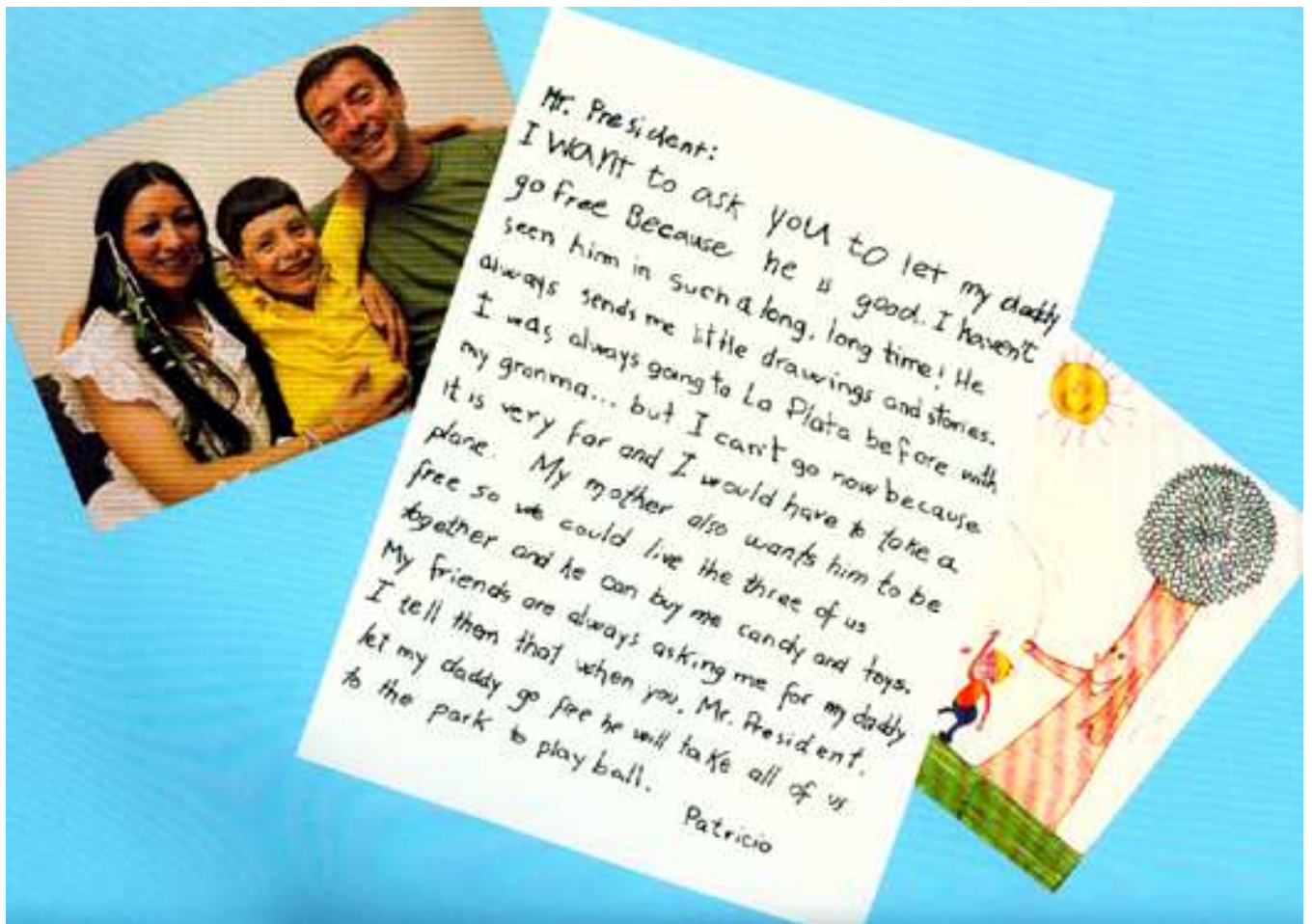




Amnesty International

1987



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 1987

From his cell in Argentina prisoner of conscience Juan Carlos Rodriguez drew for his son Patricio the pictures that illustrate this calendar.

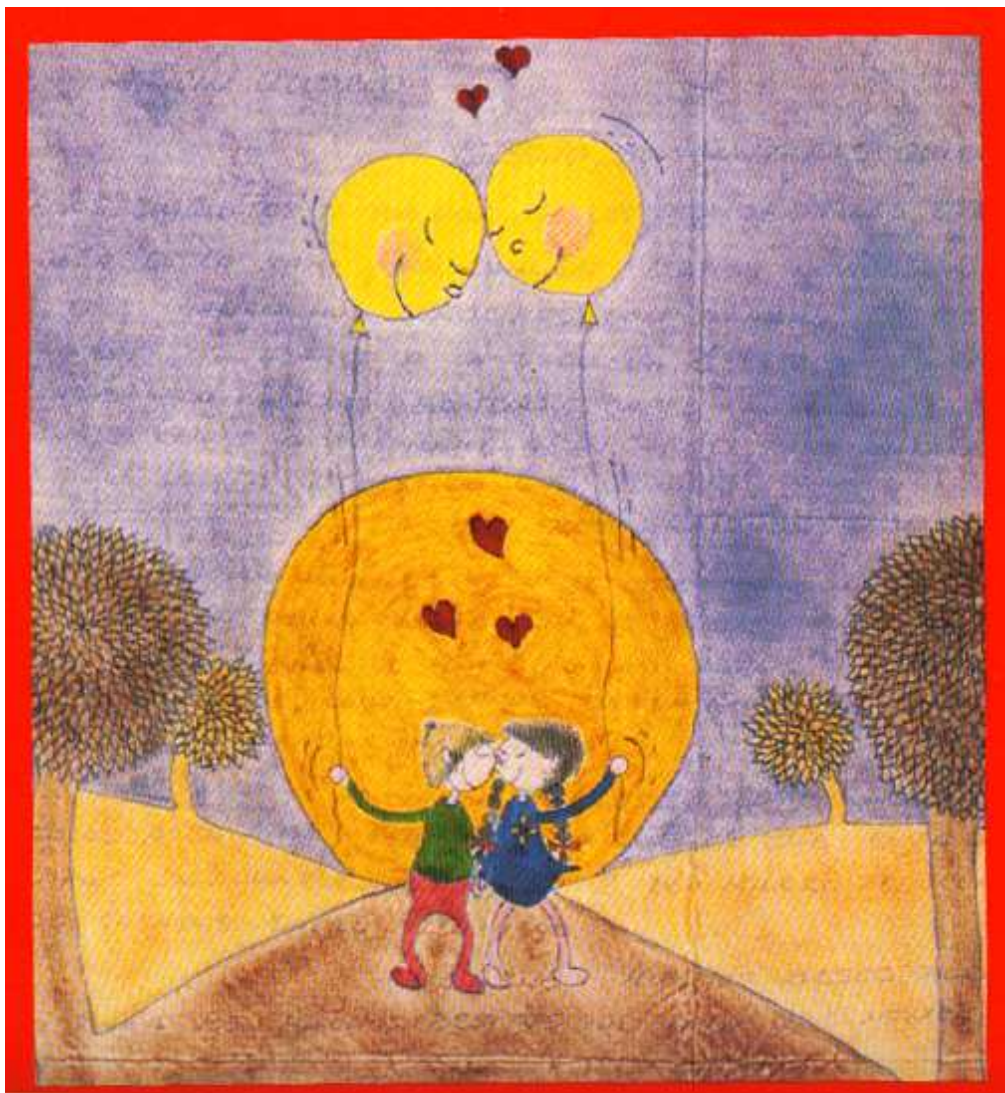
In 1976 Juan Carlos and his pregnant wife Marisa were arrested because of his work with a union. Like thousands of other political prisoners detained during Argentina's brutal reign of terror, «disappearances», and torture, the Rodriguezes suffered severe physical and psychological abuse. To their families, they were the «disappeared». For the first nine months they had absolutely no contact with the outside world.

Juan Carlos saw his wife once, just after she gave birth to their son. When the infant was three months old, the authorities took him away from his mother. Hundreds of other children taken from prisoners in Argentina never saw their parents again, but the Rodriguezes were lucky; when Patricio was one year old Marisa heard that he was safe with her family. Two years later Marisa was released and came with Patricio to the United States to work for the release of her husband and other political prisoners. Amnesty International adopted Juan Carlos as a prisoner of conscience and in February 1983 he was freed. The Rodriguezes were soon reunited in the United States, where they finally live together as a family.

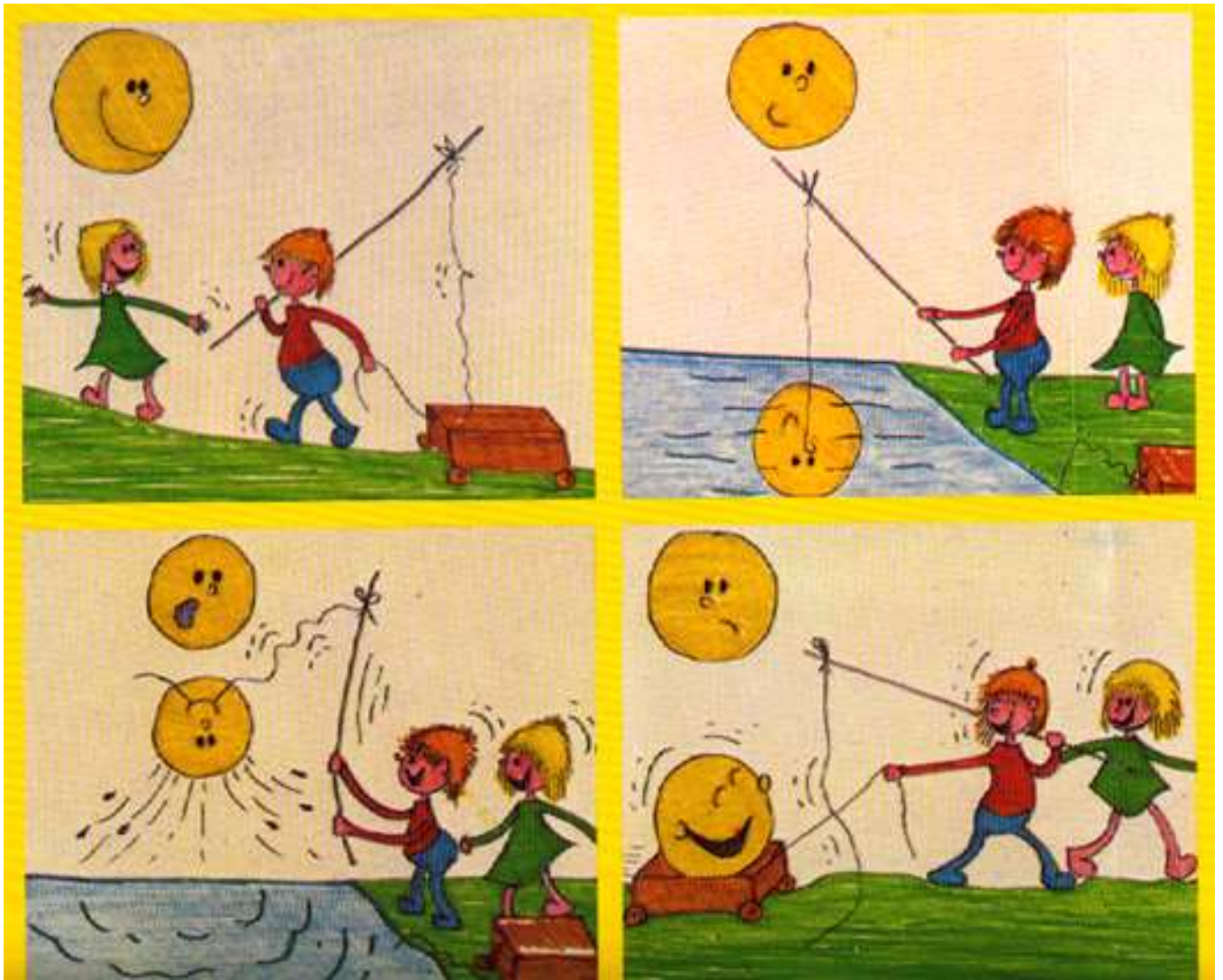
During the eight years in prison Juan Carlos survived a mock execution, electric shock, frequent beatings, and the despair of living in a world where men are as cruel as they can be. Three things kept him going: the knowledge that domestic and international groups, like Amnesty International, were pressuring the government to stop the torture and to release prisoners of conscience; the extraordinary solidarity of the prisoners, whose unity of emotion and resistance was as strong as the tyranny of their guards; and the hope of someday being with his wife and child.

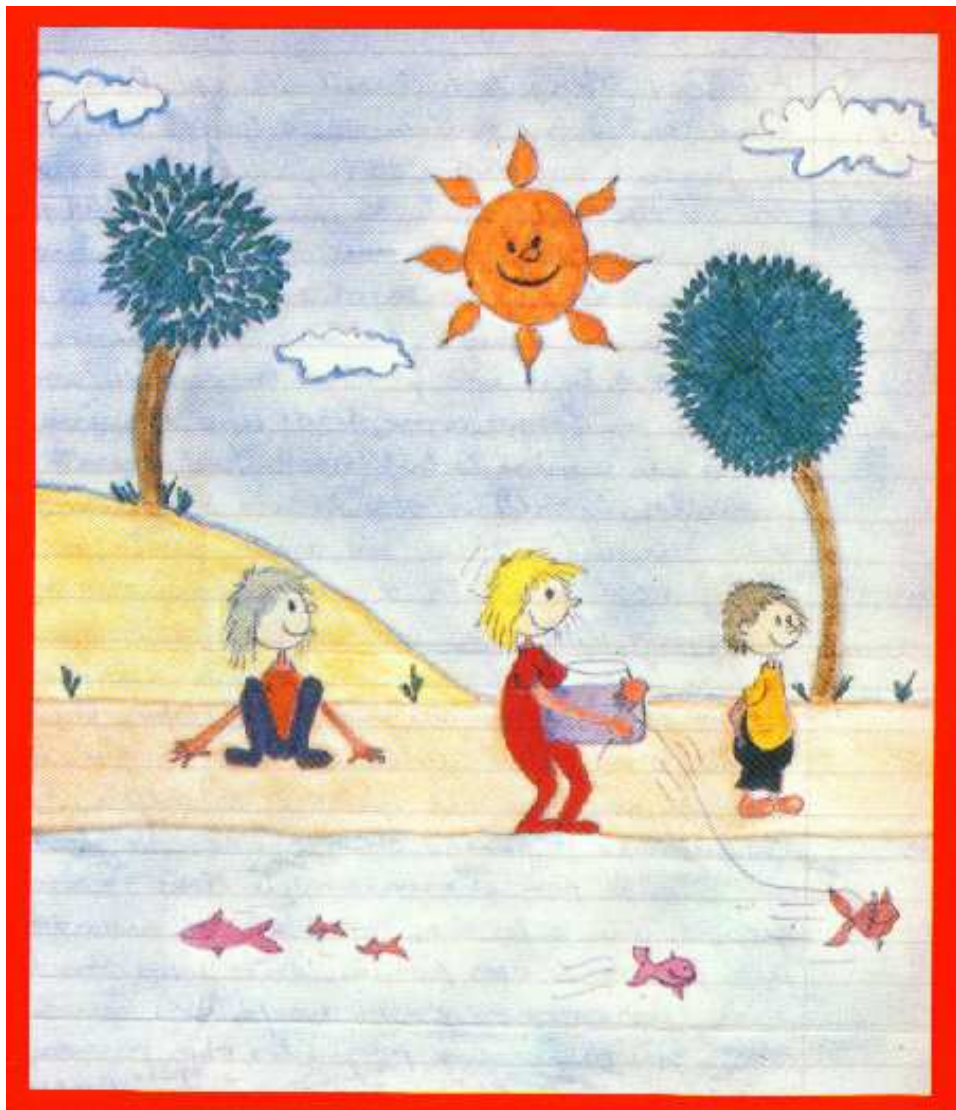
The officials did everything they could to destroy prisoners' hopes, and for many years efforts to communicate with families and sometimes even with fellow prisoners were often prohibited. A prisoner caught writing a letter to his wife might be punished with a month's solitary confinement. After the uproar caused by a 1980 report by the Organization of the American States on human rights abuses in Argentina, prison conditions improved somewhat.

Restrictions on communication eased; prisoners could occasionally write and receive letters and read magazines and newspapers. Illustrations by Teresa Sibils in *La Nation* inspired Juan Carlos' drawings for Patricio. A pen and paper were usually available to the prisoners, but the color for the drawings came from prison food. Beets were used for red and pink, coffee for maroon, herb tea for green, and water and the pen's ink for blue. Many of these joyful pictures were destroyed by guards who knew that they were all the father could give to the son he did not know. This only made the drawings more valuable to the prisoner as an expression that, no matter what they did to him, his heart still loved and his soul still hoped.













END