

เหลียวมาบ้างหลัง:บางทศนะเกีย

ป่วยการอดเอื้อนอ้อมค้อมบายเบี่ยง ความจริงมีอยู่ว่าขบวนการนิสิตนักศึกษาประชาชนที่ถูกกลไกรัฐราชการปราบปรามอย่างเหี้ยมโหดทารุณ ณ มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์เมื่อ 6 ตุลาคม พ.ศ.2519 และทั่วประเทศ ในเวลาต่อมานั้น เป็นขบวนการสังคมนิยม

เป็นสังคมนิยมโดยแนวคิดและอุดมการณ์

หากจะบอกว่าภูมิหลังทางสังคมของสมาชิกขบวนการนิสิตนักศึกษาส่วนใหญ่สมัยนั้นเป็นชนชั้นกลาง นายทุนน้อย ไม่ใช่กรรมกรชีพ และดังนั้นจึงไม่ใช่ขบวนการสังคมนิยมแล้ว ก็ต้องตอบว่าสถานภาพและวิถีชีวิตนิสิตนักศึกษาทำให้พวกเขาหลุดห่างจากสังคมชนชั้น และพลังกำหนดทางสังคมเศรษฐกิจของชนชั้นตนโดยสัมพัทธ์ เปิดโอกาสให้จิตใจรักความเป็นธรรมและรักชาติของพวกเขาต้อนรับแนวคิดและอุดมการณ์สังคมนิยม เพื่อรับใช้เพื่อนร่วมชาติชนชั้นอื่นที่ยากไร้ต่ำต้อย เสียดเปรียบกว่า อันนับเป็นการทรยศผลประโยชน์ทางชนชั้น ของตนเองและทรยศรัฐราชการไทยผู้มีพระคุณ ขูดเกลี้ยชนชั้นตนมาผ่านการพัฒนาระบบเศรษฐกิจสังคมนิยม อันไม่สมมูลและอวยุติธรรม

ที่พวกเขาถูกปราบปรามฆ่าหมู่เมื่อ 6 ตุลาคม จึงมีอะไรเกิดขึ้นทั้งๆ ที่พวกเขาเป็นชนชั้นกลางนายทุนน้อย แต่หากเป็นเพราะพวกเขาถือถูกหลอกลวงชนชั้นกลางนายทุนน้อยผู้ทรยศผลประโยชน์ทางชนชั้นของตนและทรยศรัฐทุนนิยมราชการไทยด้วยการหันไปเป็นสังคมนิยมต่างหาก ถึงได้ถูกต่อต้านปราบปราม หากจะบอกว่าข้อเรียกร้องเฉพาะหน้าของพวกเขาคือการกอบกู้พิทักษ์ประชาธิปไตยไว้จากเผด็จการทหารเหมือนเมื่อครั้ง 14 ตุลาคม พ.ศ.2516 แล้ว ก็ต้องตอบว่า “ประชาธิปไตย” ของพวกเขาได้ถูกตีความ ใหม่ผ่านแนวคิดและอุดมการณ์สังคมนิยมจนแตกต่างจากระบอบรัฐสภาประชาธิปไตยที่ไปมากแล้ว คำว่า “ประชาธิปไตย” ของพวกเขาคือหมายถึง “ประชาธิปไตยแบบใหม่” ที่ไม่เน้นลักษณะหรือกลไกเชิงสถาบันต่างๆ ของระบอบเสรีประชาธิปไตย เช่น รัฐสภาหรือการเลือกตั้ง หากมุ่งเนื้อหาสาระที่ลึกและกว้างกว่า กล่าวคือ

เน้นระบอบความสัมพันธ์ทางอำนาจทั้งที่เป็นทางการและไม่เป็นทางการ ทั้งที่ผ่านผู้แทนและประชาชนมีส่วนร่วมโดยตรง อันจักอำนาจส่งเสริมอำนาจและผลประโยชน์ของชนชั้นล่างผู้ไร้แรงงานซึ่งเป็นชนส่วนใหญ่ของประเทศอย่างแท้จริง อีกทั้งครอบคลุมประเด็นเอกราชโดยสมบูรณ์จากมหาอำนาจจักรวรรดินิยมต่าง



เกียร ทัศนะ

ชาติและประเด็นความเสมอภาคทางเศรษฐกิจโดยเฉพาะกรรมสิทธิ์เหนือปัจจัยการผลิตหลักของสังคมด้วย สำหรับพวกเขา ประชาชนจะเป็นใหญ่ในแผ่นดินตามความหมายของ “ประชาธิปไตย” ไม่มีได้ หากเอกราช ประชาธิปไตย และความเป็นธรรมทางเศรษฐกิจสังคมยังไม่สมบูรณ์ด้วยประการฉะนี้

ทุกวันนี้พี่น้องผองเพื่อนร่วมขบวนการในอดีตหลายท่านแม้ยังยืนหยัดอยู่ข้างความเป็นธรรม แต่ก็มิได้หันด้วยกับสังคมนิยมดังก่อน ต่อไปในอนาคตข้างหน้าจิตใจรักความเป็นธรรมจะน้อมนำเราให้เห็นด้วยกับแนวคิดอุดมการณ์หรือแนวทางนโยบายใดก็ยังมีอาจล่วงรู้ได้ อันที่จริงนั้น ไม่ใช่เรื่องแปลก ผู้ผ่านประสบการณ์การต่อสู้ขัดเคี่ยวกันอาจสรุปบทเรียนต่างกัน เหมือนคนอ่านนิทานเรื่องเดียวกันอาจได้สุภาษิตสอนใจต่างกันก็ได้ เป็นธรรมดา

อย่างไรก็ตาม เพื่อเข้าใจประสบการณ์ชุดนั้นให้ถ่องแท้และสรุปบทเรียนให้ได้ประโยชน์เต็มที่ จำต้องเข้าใจมันอย่างเที่ยงตรงคือข้อเท็จจริง อย่างน้อยก็เพื่อเป็นการเคารพเพื่อนผู้จากไปโดยยึดมั่นแน่วแน่กับความเชื่อของตนเอง และเคารพงานแห่งการกระทำของตัวเองลงในประวัติศาสตร์

การที่ขบวนการนิสิตนักศึกษาประชาชนสมัยนั้นหันไปเป็นสังคมนิยม มีเหตุผลความจำเป็นทางประวัติศาสตร์ของมันอยู่หลัง 14 ตุลาคม พ.ศ.2516 ประเทศไทยเพิ่งไต่เส้นทางการปกครองภายใต้ระบอบเผด็จการทหาร “ล้ม-บูรณาญาสิทธิ” ของคณะปฏิวัติจอมพลสฤษดิ์-ถนอม-ประภาสรวมนร่วม 16 ปี อันเป็นระบอบที่รัฐบุรุษอาวุโส ปรีดี พนมยงค์ ชี้ว่าทำให้ “คณะปฏิวัติ” มีอำนาจยิ่งกว่าพระมหากษัตริย์ในระบอบสมบูรณาญาสิทธิราช (จากบทความของท่านเรื่อง จงพิทักษ์เจตนารมณ์ประชาธิปไตยสมบูรณ์ของวีรชน 14 ตุลาคม, พ.ศ. 2516)

และผลงานหลักด้านเศรษฐกิจสังคมของระบอบเผด็จการนี้ก็คือการร่วมมือกับจักรวรรดินิยมอเมริกาทุ่มเทพัฒนาระบบทุนนิยมอิงฟลังตลาด ที่ไม่สมมูล ไม่เสมอภาค ไม่เป็นธรรมและไม่ยั่งยืนขึ้นมา ท่ามกลางการกดขี่ ปิดปากขูดเกลี้ยสภาพแรงงาน สมาคมชาว

นา และปัญญาชนฝ่ายค้าน และการริบฐานทรัพยากรที่ดิน ป่าไม้ ลำน้ำ แรงงานราคาถูกของเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงชนบทมารองรับส่งเสริมการสะสมทุนสร้างอุตสาหกรรมบริการการท่องเที่ยวของเศรษฐกิจการค้าในเมือง และส่งออกในตลาดโลก

ปัญหาชาวไร่ที่ดิน คนจนไร้ทรัพยากรในชนบท คนจนด้อยฝีมือค่าแรงต่ำและคนดองงานในเมือง โสเภณี อาชญากรรม สลัม ยาเสพติด ฯลฯ รวมถึงปัญหาชาวบ้านและเอดส์ในปัจจุบัน ล้วนสืบสาวต่อเนื่องมาจากความล้มเหลวของการใช้อำนาจเผด็จการเพื่อพัฒนาทุนนิยมตามแนวทางนั้นทั้งสิ้น

การต่อต้านเผด็จการกับการต่อต้านทุนนิยมอวยุติธรรมที่เผด็จการเป็นผู้พัฒนาขึ้นจึงมีอาจแยกขาดจากกันได้ หากมีพลวัติสืบเนื่องเป็นเรื่องเดียวกัน ที่ต่างก็ล้วนเป็นความจำเป็นทางประวัติศาสตร์แห่งยุคสมัยควบคู่ไปด้วยกัน

การลุกขึ้นสู้เผด็จการทหารราชเพื่อประชาธิปไตยของขบวนการนิสิตนักศึกษาประชาชน 14 ตุลาคม 2516 เป็นความจำเป็นทางประวัติศาสตร์ครั้งใด

การต่อต้านทุนนิยมและกลายเป็นแบบสังคมนิยมของขบวนการนิสิตนักศึกษาประชาชนที่สืบเนื่องจากนั้นมาจนถึง 6 ตุลาคม 2519 ก็เป็นความจำเป็นทางประวัติศาสตร์เช่นกัน

ตราบดีที่เรายังพัฒนาทิศทาง และเหยื่อแห่งการพัฒนาอย่างไม่คายนาคายสิ้นไปจากโลกนี้ การต่อต้าน ทุนนิยมก็ยังคงดำเนินต่อไปไม่สิ้นสุด ไม่ในรูปแบบแนวทางสังคมนิยม ก็ในรูปแบบแนวทางอื่นที่เสนอตัวขึ้นมา เป็นทางเลือกในประวัติศาสตร์

แต่ความจำเป็นเชิงโครงสร้างแห่งยุคสมัยก็ยังมิใช่และไม่อาจกลายเป็นปฏิบัติการที่เป็นจริงในประวัติศาสตร์ได้ หากปราศจากเสียงซึ่งปัจจัยสำคัญทางอวัธยประการหนึ่ง นั่นคือ การคัดลั่นใจเชิงมโนธรรมศีลธรรม ใจว่านักศึกษาปัญญาชนและประชาชนทุกคนหรือแม้กระทั่งส่วนใหญ่สมัยนั้นจะ

กลายเป็นักสังคมนิยมได้ ตรงกันข้าม ส่วนการเมือง และจำนวนฝ่ายขวามันมาต่อต้านศึกษาประชาชนด้วยซ้ำ

การเป็นฝ่ายซ้ายนั้นพูดตามตรงแล้ว ‘ตอบแทนทางวัตถุแต่ยังเสี่ยงอันตรายมาก’ แต่ละครั้ง เดินขบวนติดโปสเตอร์แต่ละคำเตรียมตัวเตรียมใจเสียหรือแม้แต่ชีวิตราวกับมิปาน

และมันก็เป็นอย่างเกิดระเบิดหัวกระสุนแรงขึ้นเรื่อยๆ จนถึงวันที่ 6 ตุลาคม มหาโหด

การเป็นสังคมนิยมของแพชั่น ถ้าใครหาพวกห้อง เราไม่ได้ และหากคิดแค้นเคืองเราอาจรวดไปนาน นั่นคือ เราบังเอิญแะหาก แต่กลับคิดถึงเสียเปรียบกว่า คิดถึงอนาคตลึกลงไปเสีย เพราะเราเชื่อว่า

เกิดมาในฐานะมนุษย์หนึ่งพึงกระทำเพื่ออะไรเช่นนี้ ต่อให้มีเผด็จการ หรืออวยุติธรรม หรืออุดมร้อยพันหมื่นขบวนการสมัยนั้นก็จะไม่เกิดแะนิยมเด็ดขาด

กล่าวในแง่นี้ จึงไม่เห็นว่าเคยเป็นสังคมนิยมใจด้วยซ้ำ ภูมิโจนานัปการและสภาพเราได้คัดลั่นใจเลือกเพื่อคนอื่น” ตามเอก

ลี้ลับ:บางทรศณะเกี่ยวกับ 6 ตุลาฯ

กษียร ทัศนะ

ความเสมอภาคทางเศรษฐกิจโดย
ให้เงินปัจจัยการผลิตหลักของสังคม
เขา ประชาชนจะเป็นใหญ่ในแผ่นดิน
ของ “ประชาธิปไตย” ไม่ได้ หากเอก
คย และความเป็นธรรมทางเศรษฐกิจ
ด้วยประการฉะนี้
องผองเพื่อนร่วมขบวนการในอดีต
ยืนหยัดอยู่ข้างความเป็นธรรม แต่ก็มี
กมนิยมดังก่อน ต่อไปในอนาคตข้าง
ามเป็นธรรมจะนำมาให้เห็นด้วย
การหรือแนวทางนโยบายใดก็ยังมิ
ที่จริงนั้น ไม่ใช่เรื่องแปลก ผู้ผ่านประ
เสฐติเดียวกันอาจสรุปปณิธานต่างกัน
โพทานเรื่องเดียวกันอาจได้สุภาษิตสอน
ป็นธรรมดา
ม เพื่อเข้าใจประสบการณ์ชุดนั้นให้
บทเรียนให้ได้ประโยชน์เต็มที่ จำต้อง
ที่ยังตรงต่อข้อเท็จจริง อย่างน้อยก็เพื่อ
เพื่อนผู้จากไปโดยยึดมั่นแน่วแน่กับ
ตนเอง และเคารพแห่งการกระทำของ
ประวัติศาสตร์
การนิสิตนักศึกษาประชาชนสมัยนั้น
นิยม มีเหตุผลความจำเป็นทางประวัติ
ยุหลัง 14 ตุลาคม พ.ศ.2516 ประเทศ
การปกครองภายใต้ระบอบเผด็จการ
ณาญาสิทธิ์” ของคณะปฏิวัติจอมพล
ประกาศนาร่วม 15 ปี อันเป็นระบอบ
ปฏิวัติ พนมยงค์ ชั่วทำให้ “คณะปฏิ
ยิ่งกว่าพระมหากษัตริย์ในระบอบสม
(จากบทความของท่านเรื่อง จงพิทักษ์
ประชาธิปไตยสมบูรณ์ของวีรชน 14 ตุล
)
หลักด้านเศรษฐกิจสังคมของระบอบ
การร่วมมือกับจักรวรรดินิยมอเมริกา
บทนุญนิยมอิงพลังตลาด ที่ไม่สมดุล ไม่
เป็นธรรมและไม่ยั่งยืนขึ้นมา ท่ามกลาง
ากยุบเลิกสหภาพแรงงาน สมาคมชาว

นา และปัญญาชนฝ่ายค้าน และการบริหาร
ทรัพยากรที่ดิน ป่าไม้ ลำน้ำ แรงงานราคา
ถูกของเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงชนบทมารองรับส่ง
เสริมการสะสมทุนสร้างอุตสาหกรรมบริการ
การท่องเที่ยวของเศรษฐกิจการค้าในเมือง
และส่งออกในตลาดโลก
ปัญหาชาวนาไร้ที่ดิน คนจนไร้ทรัพยากร
กรในชนบท คนจนด้อยฝีมือค่าแรงต่ำและ
คนตกงานในเมือง โสเภณี อาชญากรรม
สลัม ยาเสพติด ฯลฯ รวมถึงปัญหาบ้านและ
เอดส์ในปัจจุบัน ล้วนสืบสาวต่อเนื่องมาจาก
ความล้มเหลวของการใช้อำนาจเผด็จการ
เพื่อพัฒนาทุนนิยมตามแนวทางนั้นทั้งสิ้น
การต่อต้านเผด็จการกับการต่อต้านทุน
นิยมอยู่คู่กรรมที่เผด็จการเป็นผู้พัฒนาขึ้น
จึงมีอาจแยกขาดจากกันได้ หากมิพลวัตสืบ
เนื่องเป็นเรื่องเดียวกัน ที่ต่างก็ล้วนเป็น
ความจำเป็นทางประวัติศาสตร์แห่งยุคสมัย
ควบคู่ไปด้วยกัน
การลุกขึ้นสู่เผด็จการทหารราชเพื่อประชา
ธิปไตยของขบวนการนิสิตนักศึกษาประชา
ชน 14 ตุลาฯ 2516 เป็นความจำเป็นทาง
ประวัติศาสตร์อันใด
การต่อต้านทุนนิยมและกลายเป็นแบบ
สังคมนิยมของขบวนการนิสิตนักศึกษาประ
ชาชนที่สืบเนื่องจากนั้นมาจนถึง 6 ตุลาฯ
2519 ก็เป็นความจำเป็นทางประวัติศาสตร์
อันนั้น
ตราบใดที่เราจะพัฒนาจิตทาง และเหยื่อ
แห่งการพัฒนาอย่างไม่ตายหมดตายสิ้นไปจาก
โลกนี้ การต่อต้าน ทุนนิยมก็ยังจักดำเนินต่อ
ไปไม่สิ้นสุด ไม่ในรูปแบบแนวทางสังคม
นิยม ก็ในรูปแบบแนวทางอื่นที่เสนอตัวขึ้น
มา เป็นทางเลือกในประวัติศาสตร์
แต่ความจำเป็นเชิงโครงสร้างแห่งยุคสมัย
ก็ยังมิใช่และไม่อาจกลายเป็นปฏิบัติการที่
เป็นจริงในประวัติศาสตร์ได้ หากปราศจาก
เสียซึ่งปัจจัยสำคัญทางอัตวิสัยประการหนึ่ง
นั่นคือ การตัดสินใจเชิงมโนธรรมศีลธรรม
เชื่อว่านักศึกษาปัญญาชนและประชาชน
ทุกคนหรือแม้กระทั่งส่วนใหญ่สมัยนั้นจะ

กลายเป็นักสังคมนิยมหรือฝ่ายซ้ายก็หา
มิได้ ตรงกันข้าม ส่วนใหญ่ไม่แสดงออกทาง
การเมือง และจำนวนไม่น้อยก็กลายเป็นพลัง
ฝ่ายขวาหันมาต่อต้านคัดค้านขบวนการนัก
ศึกษาประชาชนด้วยซ้ำไป
การเป็นฝ่ายซ้ายหรือนักสังคมนิยมสมัย
นั้นพูดตามตรงแล้ว ไม่ได้ประโยชน์ใดผล
ตอบแทนทางวัตถุแต่อย่างใด กระทั่งนับวัน
ยิ่งเสี่ยงอันตรายมากขึ้นทุกทีด้วยซ้ำ ชุมชน
แต่ละครั้ง เดินขบวนแต่ละหน แม้จนออก
ติดไปสเตอร์แต่ละลำคั้น เราต้องจัดประชุม
เตรียมตัวเตรียมใจเสียสละเลือดเนื้อร่างกาย
หรือแม้แค่ชีวิตราวกับออกไปรบทัพจับศึกก็
มิปาน
และมันก็เป็นอย่างนั้นจริงๆ ท่ามกลางสะ
เทือระเปิดห่ากระสุนที่พร่างพรูมาถล่มและรุน
แรงขึ้นเรื่อยๆ จนถึงจุดสุดขั้วเมื่อเช้ามืดวัน
ที่ 6 ตุลาฯ มหาโหดที่ธรรมศาสตร์
การเป็นสังคมนิยมสมัยนั้นจึงไม่ใช่เรื่อง
ของแฟชั่น ถ้าไร หรืออำนาจส่วนตัวหรือ
พวกพ้อง เราไม่ได้คิดอะไรทำนองนั้นเลย
และหากคิดแค่นั้นน้อยนิด เราคงหยุดและเลิก
เราเอาตัวรอดไปนานแล้ว ปัญหาของเราสมัย
นั้นคือ เรามัวเฝ้าแต่ไม่คิดถึงตัวเองต่าง
หาก แต่กลับคิดถึงคนอื่นโดยเฉพาะผู้ยากไร้
เสียเปรียบกว่า คิดถึงประเทศชาติบ้านเมือง
จนเร้าตัดสินใจไปเสียสละเพื่อพวกเขา
เพราะเราเชื่อว่านั่นเป็นสิ่งดีงามซึ่งเราผู้
เกิดมาในฐานะมนุษย์คนหนึ่งและลูกไทยคน
หนึ่งพึงกระทำเพื่ออุทิศให้ส่วนรวม ไม่มีจิต
ใจเช่นนี้ ต่อให้มิเผด็จการทหาร ทุนนิยม
อยู่ดีธรรม หรืออุดมการณ์สังคมนิยมสักสิบ
ร้อยพันหมื่นขบวนการนักศึกษาประชาชน
สมัยนั้นก็จะไม่เกิดและจะไม่กลายเป็นสังคม
นิยมเด็ดขาด
กล่าวในแง่นี้ จึงไม่มีอะไรน่าละอายที่ครั้ง
หนึ่งเราเคยเป็นสังคมนิยม ตรงกันข้ามเรา
ภูมิใจด้วยซ้ำ ภูมิใจที่ท่ามกลางภัยอันตราย
นานัปการและสภาพการณ์อันเลวร้ายมืดมิด
เราได้ตัดสินใจเลือกเป็น “นักต่อสู้เสียสละ
เพื่อคนอื่น” ตามเอกลักษณ์ ความหมายและ

แนวคิดอุดมการณ์ที่เป็นไปได้เท่าที่ประวัติ
ศาสตร์สมัยนั้นตีกรอบจำกัด และเปิดช่องให้
พวกเราชาวเราท่านระลึกถึงลักษณะเนื้อแท้
บางอย่างของขบวนการนักศึกษาประชาชน
จาก 14 ถึง 6 ตุลาฯ ในวาระนี้ก็เพื่อสะกิด
แง่คิดเปรียบเทียบกับสภาพทางการเมืองปัจจุ
บันที่โง่งม แก่งแย่ง โทกหัก ช่างฟัน ทำลาย
ล้าง เห็นแก่ตัวแก่မွ่งแก่พรอคพวกแก่อำนาจ
ผลประโยชน์ ยิ่งกว่าจะเสียสละด้วยมองเห็น
และเห็นแก่ปัญหาใหญ่ของชาติบ้านเมือง
ซึ่งอนิจจาก็ยังคงเป็นปัญหาเอกราช
ประชาธิปไตย และความเป็นธรรมทาง
สังคมเศรษฐกิจที่ทั้ง สืบเนื่องมาจากอดีตแต่
ก็วิวัฒนาการอย่างกลลบบัซซันจนกว่าเดิ
ม
ผมไม่คิดว่าคำตอบเก่าเมื่อ 20 กว่าปี
ก่อนจะยังใช้ได้ทุกวันนี้ แต่ผมก็เห็นว่าเรา
ต้องเก็บรับจดจำบทเรียนในการแสวงหากำ
ตอบที่ล้มเหลวของเราให้จงดี เทียงตรง
และแม่นยำ เพราะมันจะช่วยให้การแสวง
หากำตอบรอบใหม่ของเราไม่ย้อนรอยเย็น
เยื่ออีกเอื้อเกินจำเป็น และที่สำคัญเพราะผม
เชื่อว่าแบบอย่างจิตใจอันดีงาม แต่สมัย
ก่อนของเพื่อนเรารู้เสียสละไปจะช่วยปลูก
ขวัญกำลังใจพวกเราและคนอื่น ๆ ที่ยังคงสู้
อยู่ในปัจจุบันนี้ได้
จิตใจที่บริสุทธิ์สะอาด คิดถึงและเสียสละ
เพื่อคนอื่นที่ด้อยกว่า พร้อมจะต่อสู้ทนถลำ
บากทนสูญเสียอย่างมีความสุข ในงานการ
เมืองใหม่เพื่อสร้างบ้านแปลงเมืองให้พี่น้อง
ไทยคนอื่นๆ และลูกหลานเราในอนาคตได้
กินอิ่มนุ่งอุ่น กินแซ่บนุ่งงาม ร่มเย็นเป็นสุข
อยู่อย่างอิสระเสรีและมีเกียรติมีศักดิ์ศรีอย่าง
แท้จริง
จิตใจอย่างนั้นครั้งหนึ่งเราเคย
ประสบมาแล้ว มันเกิดขึ้นและเป็นไป
ได้จริง แม้เราแทบจะไม่ได้พบเห็น
มันอีกเลยในวงการเมืองบ้านเราเป็น
เวลาช้านานมาแล้วก็ตาม

มส. ๖ ๗ ๓๐. ๔๓

TRUTH AND HISTORY

Thailand Hides a Bloody Past

Pursuing justice requires memory and commitment. Much more needs to be done if Thais are to face their past.

BY PETER ENG

Thailand has significantly strengthened its democracy since the May 1992 uprising against the government, but not, unfortunately, one of its main pillars: justice. Pursuing justice requires memory and commitment. But unlike several other countries that also rebelled against dictators, Thailand still refuses to seriously confront the atrocities of the past—even though the release of a report on the uprising has given some outsiders the impression that this finally is changing.

The 1992 uprising toppled the country's pro-military government, but not before soldiers shot dead at least 44 demonstrators and wounded thousands. The successor government ordered a probe, but appointed a top general to lead it. For many months, the military and Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai—who owes his political fortunes to the uprising—hedged on demands for the release of the report. It would never have been released but for a new law that allows citizens to seek the disclosure of state information.

When first seen by the public on May 29, more than half the report, including the names of key military officers involved, was blacked out. After the media and human rights activists objected, Mr. Chuan, who is also defense minister, asked the ministry to reconsider. The second, less-censored version released on June 21 did cite some brutality against demonstrators. But it basically echoed the military's long-held claims that no one gave orders to shoot, that soldiers exercised restraint and had no choice but to fire warning shots when the demonstrators grew violent, and that opposition politicians instigated the violence. The investigators focused on why the military's plan to suppress the demonstrations failed, not what happened to those who died and who was responsible.

They cited neither civilian nor independent witnesses, such as the journalists and doctors who have insisted soldiers aimed directly at demonstrators and shot them in the backs as they fled. The report tries to cloud the brutality clearly shown in news photographs and video footage shown worldwide at the time. It also shed no light on the fate of dozens of people still reported missing. Aggrieved relatives called it a coverup.

All this is strikingly similar to how the country's two previous mass pro-democracy uprisings were quashed and then covered up. On Oct. 14, 1973, soldiers massacred students protesting military rule. The king intervened and sent the three main dictators into exile abroad. Younger Thais know little or nothing of the 1973 massacre, or of another that occurred in 1976, because by law, the Ministry of Education must approve all history textbooks for primary and secondary schools. The result is that the textbooks either ignore or gloss over those

events (official textbooks mostly celebrate the victories of the elite in building or protecting the country, and present all Thais as a harmonious family).

In 1994, the ministry approved the writing of a textbook that included information about the 1973 debacle. It was scheduled for publication last year but today remains mired in controversy. A poet, not a historian, was asked to write it. A son-in-law of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, one of three dictators heading the government in 1973, was appointed to a panel to review it. The draft turned in last year not only had factual mistakes, but it avoided naming people involved in the bloodshed and blamed a "third party" for it, according to Charnvit Kasetsiri, a respected historian who is on the



ILLUSTRATION/H. HARRISON

review panel. Mr. Charnvit believes an accurate textbook will never be produced unless the government relinquishes its monopoly on the writing of history.

Hardly anyone in Thailand talks about the possibility of textbooks mentioning the events of Oct. 6, 1976, when right-wing mobs raided Thammasat University and massacred students protesting Mr. Thanom's return from exile. This incident was much bloodier than the 1973 and 1992 clashes. Whereas a few leaders could be blamed for those suppressions, every institution of the Thai ruling elite was involved in the 1976 tragedy.

Burning questions remain after all three events: Who ordered the killings? How many died? What happened to the missing? Were the students of 1976 martyrs for democracy or were they communist saboteurs who deserved their fate? Without a public declaration of the truth, there can be no honor for the dead, no healing for their relatives, and no closure for members of that generation or Thailand as a nation. To this day, no one has been tried and punished for any of the atrocities; indeed, no one has even apologized.

The result is a continuing culture of impuni-

ty. Last January, for example, security forces killed all 10 Burmese insurgents who seized a hospital in Thailand. The hostages saw some of the insurgents shot at close range after being disarmed.

Why won't Thailand confront the past? First, many of those involved in the three massacres remain in power today, holding either state offices or wielding influence over those who do. Current leaders who had nothing to do with the killings believe they need the support of the guilty to stay in power. Others simply don't have the courage to reopen the past to scrutiny.

For most ordinary Thais, a complex of attitudes fend off the past: readiness to forgive and forget, dislike of public confrontation, and a submissiveness to authority are cultural characteristics often mentioned by Thais themselves. But equally important is the fear that reviving the past will bring turmoil. The largely middle-class demonstrators of 1992 are unwilling to rock the boat.

In general, Thai politics has focused primarily on personalities and ignored issues. Thai opposition groups are weak, unlike those in the West, where more activists and journalists seek to force out the truth.

"I'm not sure if it is cultural or because of the way the ruling class tries to stay in power by making history vague, confusing and boring, like a good sleeping pill," says Mr. Charnvit, the historian. "Thai people have been had. You grow up with lots of indoctrination, not with education."

In this atmosphere, the tainted leaders can return to prominence. Last year, Mr. Chuan sought to bestow military honors on Field Marshal Thanom, although Mr. Thanom turned it down after protests by the media and activists. Right-wing politician Samak Sundaravej won the July 23 election for the Bangkok governorship, and most people know Mr. Samak's name from his many years in high government posts. Yet few seem to care that academic Ji Ungpakorn charges he has "blood on his hands" for his role in the 1976 massacre. In other countries, candidates would seize every issue to attack the front-runner. But all of Mr. Samak's main rivals steered clear of talk about his past.

Thanks to a few determined activists, not all is gloomy. In 1996, participant-survivors marked the 20th anniversary of the 1976 uprising by speaking openly for the first time about their experiences. Delayed for years by political sensitivities, public monuments to the victims of 1973 and of 1976 massacres will be unveiled this October. There is pressure for the release of two other investigative reports about the 1992 uprising and its quelling. But in school, community and government much more needs to be done if Thais are to see their past and finally escape, as one Thai newspaper put it, their "world of illusion."

Mr. Eng, a former correspondent for the Associated Press, is a freelance writer based in Bangkok.

The NATION

THAILAND'S INDEPENDENT ONLINE NEWS & INFORMATION SERVICE

HOME
 HEADLINES
 NATIONAL
 REGIONAL
 POLITICS
 BUSINESS
 IT & SCIENCE
 SPORTS
 SOCIAL
 FEATURES
 TRAVEL & TOURISM
 OPINION & ANALYSIS
 LETTERS
 CARTOONS
 DAILY SPECIALS
 WHAT'S ON
 ENTERTAINMENT
 LEADERS & OPINION
 VIDEOS
 BULLETINS

Nation search

Go

October 7, 2000

Dead 'should be respected' despite politics

FORMER student leaders yesterday called for the record to be set straight about the October 6, 1976 massacre, saying those who sacrificed their lives ought to be remembered with respect regardless of their socialist ideology.

Thongchai Winichakul, now an associate professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, said there were people, including some involved in the movement, who felt uneasy remembering those who lost their lives as leftists and socialists.

"They may not wish to see [fallen comrades] further ostracised from society," he said.

"But we don't have any choice but to honour the personal dignity of those who have departed," he said.

Thongchai joined about 200 former student activists, academics and relatives of the martyrs to commemorate the 24th anniversary of the massacre at Thammasat University yesterday.

The group also witnessed the inauguration ceremony of the monument built in memory of the event and people who were treated with brutality and killed in the massacre.

About 5,000 students and people from all walks of life demonstrated at Thammasat on that fateful day to protest the

MAIL TO A FRIEND

PRINT THIS PAGE

YOUR COMMENTS

return of military dictator Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, who was forced to stay in exile after his defeat to the people's pro-democracy movement on October 14, 1973.

Scores of students and citizens were killed while many others were brutally assaulted and arrested.

Thongchai insisted that many students and people who rallied at Thammasat wanted to change society at its roots to become socialist.

Whether they were right or wrong, he said, they should not have been regarded as enemies of the Thai citizenry. Nor should they still be.

"We should not deny the past of the Left in those days. [The state] arrested them, killed them and now we don't allow them to be remembered the way they were.

"We should accept them instead of softening them or making them look more attractive. No matter how or if they loved the nation, religion and monarchy, we should allow them to be remembered as they were," he said.

Thai society has never accommodated people who believe in different ideologies other than those held by the state and the majority, Thongchai said.

On the contrary, the state has adopted excessive and destructive means of promoting unity that have instead alienated those with different ideas.

Moreover, it has used sheer force to control citizens and keep them compliant, living only within the framework designed by the state.

"In the name of the national interest and the majority, the state has abused the minority," he said.

"Democracy is not a licence for the so-called majority to destroy the minority. Otherwise, it would turn into tyranny in the name of unity."

Thongchai cited the Pak Mool dam case as one example.

Villagers living along the river did not wish to have the dam constructed on the river, he said.

However, the government and Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (Egat) insisted the dam was for the benefit of the country and turned their back on the people.

"Thai politics has not really gone beyond the epoch of Sarit (Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat). This is tyranny in the name of national benefit," he said.

The historian asserted that differences in ideas and ideologies are not only valuable assets of society.

They may also become alternatives for society, when mainstream ways of thinking are no longer relevant, by responding to the needs of people in these increasingly complex times.

BY NANTIYA TANWISUTIJIT
and

SUBHATRA BHUMIPRABHAS

The Nation

LAST MODIFIED: Friday, 06-Oct-00
12:28:08 EDT



Economic Review

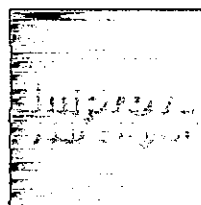
COMMENT

A lie perpetuated in the name of truth

The accusers include people who were neither involved in the traumatic events nor willing, 24 years later, to take the trouble to seek the truth

For 24 years, the Bangkok Post has been accused wrongly of inciting the bloodbath of 1976 by publishing a picture of a mock hanging at Thammasat University which occurred two days before Oct 6. This year, the charge has been levelled again.

On countless occasions, the Bangkok Post has demonstrated that it played no part in any plot to incite the violent crushing of the student movement. The picture in question was a faithful reproduction of the negative. There was no suggestion the subject resembled a member of the Royal Family or that the students had ill intentions towards the institution.



Daily

[Main Entrance](#)
[Page](#)
[Local News](#)
[Business](#)
[Outlook](#)



Weekly

[IT news](#)
[Horizons Travel](#)
[NiteOwl \(Trink\)](#)
[Real Time](#)
[Motoring](#)
[Student Weekly](#)

[Click Here](#)

Entertainment & Lifestyle

[What's on](#)
[Dining out](#)
[Recipe of the week](#)
[Movies](#)
[Music](#)
[Book Review](#)
[Beauty](#)
[Fitness](#)
[Nutrition](#)

The negative was confiscated by Special Branch police on the day of publication, reportedly on the orders of then prime minister Seni Pramroj, who had been pressured to launch an inquiry. Had the negative been changed, the consequences for this newspaper would have been dire.

Dr Puey Ungpakorn, in his article in the book From October 14 to October 6, published by the Foundation for Social Science and Humanities Textbooks Programme, wrote that the face of the character in the picture run by Dao Siam resembled a member of the Royal Family. Importantly, the same pictures published in other dailies did not, he claimed.

In spite of repeated clarifications, the Bangkok Post continues to be implicated. The accusers include people who were neither involved in the traumatic events nor willing, 24 years later, to take the trouble to seek the truth from the Bangkok Post.

The latest accusation comes from Ji Ungpakorn, a lecturer at Chulalongkorn University, who had earlier agreed to write for the Outlook section of the Bangkok Post an account of the event to mark the anniversary. Mr Ji's article included a few words which required editing. Mr Ji refused to subject his account to editing and withdrew the article, saying he would expose the Bangkok Post's role in Oct 6. Leaflets carrying the rejected article were circulated at Thammasat yesterday. The leaflet accused the Bangkok Post and Dao Siam of contributing to the bloodshed. Mr Ji made the same allegation in the Nation, which neglected to seek our comment in a clear and fundamental breach of journalistic ethics. This newspaper views with dismay the unprofessional conduct of an academic of Mr Ji's standing in what is otherwise a noble crusade. To threaten to repeat a proven falsehood in a fit of pique brought on by a refusal to accept limited editing is doubly unacceptable. Worse, the threat was carried out. Had we bowed to Mr Ji's demand, after all, we would have been spared the manifestation of his pique.

The right to edit is fundamental to the operation of any newspaper. Contributions written by staff members and outsiders alike are subjected to editing. It is also normal for outside contributors unhappy with changes made to withdraw their stories and take them to other publications without

NEW!

**Prominent
Businesses
Travel Thailand
& beyond**

**Special
Publications**

[Current Issues
in Thailand](#)
[Silpa Thai site](#)
[2000 Mid-year
Economic
Review](#)
[Post Database](#)
[10 years
Annual
Report 1999](#)

Education

[Learn English
with the
Bangkok Post](#)

Society

[We Care](#)
[Phudhong
Leper Colony
Foundation](#)
[Bangkok Post
Newspaper
Foundation](#)

Past Issues

[Calendar Page
for recent issues](#)

[Bangkok Post
Archives by
Samart](#)

Classifieds

[Classifieds
index](#)
[Jobs](#)
[Property](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Investment](#)
[Education](#)
[Travel](#)
[Sales](#)

Bookstore

[Post Books](#)


**Company
Services**

[Contact Us](#)

resorting to threats.

If our accusers, including Mr Ji, have unearthed evidence that this newspaper's role in the infamy of Oct 6 is as black as they allege, they should publish it in full.

[Subscriptions](#)
[Internet](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Allied Printers](#)

Home | About Us | Contact Us | 

© Copyright The Post Publishing Public Co., Ltd. 2000

Last Modified: Sat, Oct 7, 2000

For comments and letters to the editor see : [notes](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

Comments to: [Webmaster](#)

Advertising enquiries to [Internet Marketing](#)

NATION

Delivers Results

THAILAND'S INDEPENDENT ONLINE NEWS & INFORMATION SERVICE

October 8, 2000

Apology not enough, victims of massacre say

MOST of the victims and relatives of those who lost their lives in the October 6, 1976 massacre at Thammasat University do not want an apology from the government, but would like the wrongdoers identified so they can be "punished" by society, according to a recent inquiry into the massacre.

Sixty former student leaders and relatives of the "Bloody October" victims recently testified before the Public Inquiry Committee on Oct 6 1976.

The committee is chaired by academic Chontira Satyawadhna, who also took part in the student-led movement. Chulalongkorn University lecturer Ji Ungpakorn is its secretary.


The committee asked the victims who testified what the government should do to bring about justice, Chontira said.

"We asked if they wanted the government to say 'sorry' and 80 per cent of them said 'no'," Chontira said.

"They said they wanted more than an apology, but I can't say [publicly] what they want."


Scores of students and citizens who protested the return from exile of former dictator Thanom Kittikachorn were killed at

 MAIL TO A FRIEND

 PRINT THIS PAGE

 YOUR COMMENTS

Nation search

Thammasat in the early morning of October 6, 1976, while many others were brutally assaulted by police, military officers and angry mobs of rightists.

Punishment by law is impossible because the politicians and government officials behind the massacre issued an amnesty to protect themselves, Chontira said. "But legal means are not the only tool available," she said, suggesting that society can employ other forms of "punishment" to bring those with blood on their hands to justice.

As an anthropologist, she was interested in the way Thai people responded to the event, she said.

"Thai society has always believed in the rules of karma - that wrongdoers will be punished in one way or another," she said.

"Those masterminding the violence should face [for one thing] moral punishment by public consent," she said.

Information from the testimony would be published, Chontira said. The committee hoped it would pave the way for future research that revealed the truth about the bloodbath, she said.

BY NANTIYA TANGWISUTIJIT

The Nation

LAST MODIFIED: Saturday, 07-Oct-00 13:29:39 EDT

SUGGEST THIS STORY TO A FRIEND...

THAILAND'S INDEPENDENT ONLINE NEWS & INFORMATION SERVICE

October 8, 2000

HOME

EN

ABOUT

CONTACT

ADVERTISING

SUBSCRIPTIONS

SUPPORT

RSS FEEDS

PRIVACY POLICY

THAILAND'S INDEPENDENT

ONLINE NEWS & INFORMATION

SERVICE

CONTACT

ABOUT

ADVERTISING

SUBSCRIPTIONS

SUPPORT

PRIVACY POLICY

THAILAND'S INDEPENDENT

ONLINE NEWS & INFORMATION

SERVICE

Nation search



All of us must come to terms with October 6

IF the Bangkok Post has been unable in 24 years to clear public doubts about its role in the October 6, 1976 bloodbath, it should not blame a respected academic and a rival newspaper.

In its page-one commentary yesterday and in its filing with the Press Council of Thailand, the Bangkok Post accused The Nation of conspiring with Ji Ungpakorn, a Chulalongkorn University lecturer, to discredit it. It also accused this newspaper of breaching journalistic ethics.

The Nation strongly denies the allegations and is ready to make our case before the Press Council. We deplore the Bangkok Post's attempt to discredit Ji as a means to extricate itself from the shame of the October 6 massacre. There has never been an independent investigation into the Bangkok Post's prominent use of a picture of a mock hanging at that time, but the fact remains that it was used by extreme rightist groups to incite violence.

It was this point that Ji was trying to make with his report on his investigation into the October incident - that the press establishment was among the decisive players.

Apart from his academic qualifications, Ji has other

MAIL TO A FRIEND

PRINT THIS PAGE

YOUR COMMENTS

credentials that make him an authoritative source of information on the subject. Not least is that his father, Dr Puey Ungpakorn, was the top civilian leader at time. Puey, the then rector of Thammasat University, fought in vain for peace and for the right of the students and protesters to voice their opposition to dictatorship and the rightist groups. The consequences for him were to be tragic.

It is preposterous to suggest that people not directly involved in the event should not have a view or to say that the establishment of the truth lies solely with the Bangkok Post. The Nation believes the search for the truth by Ji and the public at large is an ongoing process and that the press can play an integral part in that process.

The Nation also wants to make it clear that we published Ji's two-part article on the bloodbath in good faith, not because it was rejected by the Bangkok Post but because of its own merits. As a demonstration of this neutral and independent judgement, we asked Ji to omit references to the Bangkok Post and the defunct Dao Siam newspaper.

The report on the front page of The Nation's Thursday edition quoting Ji on the role of the press in the October 6 event was translated from a Thai News Agency report. Ji's statement did not implicate the Bangkok Post or Dao Siam as being willing partners in the rightist conspiracy but sought to highlight how information had been fabricated. We did not contact the Bangkok Post because Ji did not accuse the newspaper of being directly involved in the misinformation campaign.

The Bangkok Post's editorial dispute with Ji and its subsequent refusal to publish his essay after commissioning him to write it should not be used as an excuse to sling mud at The Nation.

It has been difficult for all of us and not just the Bangkok Post to come to terms with the horror of October 6, 1976.

History needs to be accurately written if such wounds are to heal. Sadly but truly, we have not yet done so. That is why the doubts continue. The political and social environment at the time coerced the press establishment to censor itself in order to survive, regardless of the truth. It was a reflex which lasted until the bloody events of May 1992, when one newspaper published blank news columns rather than reports on what was to become the Thai people's greatest victory.

The Nation

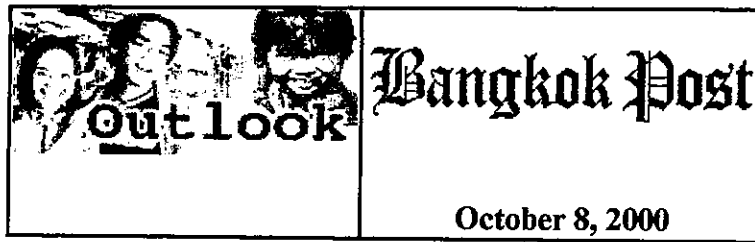
LAST MODIFIED: Saturday, 07-Oct-00 13:29:45 EDT

SUGGEST THIS STORY TO A FRIEND...

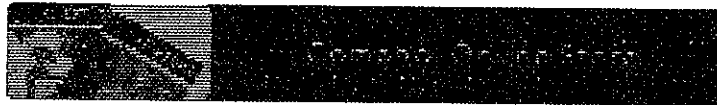
	Name	E-Mail Address
You	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Friend 1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Friend 2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Your Message

SEND



October 8, 2000

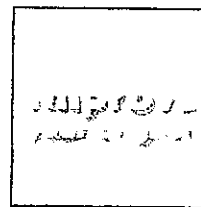


**My childhood: Cholthira
Satyawadhna**

Better red than misled

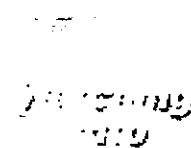
At the height of communist persecution in the late '70s, Cholthira Satyawadhna, a rising star in the field of literary criticism, stunned the academic world by joining the underground Communist Party of Thailand in the jungles.

- Seven years later, Cholthira returned to the city, down with malaria and three months pregnant. After six months in jail along with other political prisoners, Cholthira's defiant wish to raise her baby behind bars prompted highly-publicised campaigns to have both mother and child released shortly after the baby was born.
- Graduating in 1991 with a doctorate degree in anthropology from Australia's National University, Dr Cholthira continues her crusade for the rights of indigenous peoples nationwide. Her research on the Muslims of Ban Krua, for example, has been a boost for this ethnic group's decade-long protest against the plan to build an expressway link across their community.



Daily

[Main Entrance](#)
[Page](#)
[Local News](#)
[Business](#)
[Outlook](#)



Weekly

[IT news](#)
[Horizons Travel](#)
[NiteOwl \(Trink\)](#)
[Real Time](#)
[Motoring](#)
[Student Weekly](#)



[Click Here](#)


Entertainment & Lifestyle

[What's on](#)
[Dining out](#)
[Recipe of the week](#)
[Movies](#)
[Music](#)
[Book Review](#)

- A prolific researcher and lecturer at Rangsit University, Dr Choltira's days are now shuffled between chairing the Thai Studies Programme (International) as well as the institute's first Lecturers and Staff Committee, sitting on the board of directors of the Dulwich International College in Phuket, and most recently, heading the Committee for the Collection of Evidence and Witnesses of the '6 October 1976' History.

Interview By Vasana Chinvarakorn

'That day I walked out of Lua village, until then the stronghold of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), remains the most memorable moment of my life.



The government infantry was descending on us; the air was crowded with heavy bombing. We had to pull out, fearing any delay might put the lives of those ethnic people we lived with in great peril. "Tears flushed down everyone's faces, including mine. I had spent day and night with these people, eating from the same plates, teaching their children, working alongside them in the fields.



They were crying as they asked me 'Karwon-that's the name I adopted as a CPT comrade-why are you deserting us?' I made a vow that as

long as I still breathed, I would try every possible way to go back to see them again. "Back then our greeting custom was to give each other a handshake.

As our hands touched for the last time, I thought what a great contrast there was between the soft, limp flesh of intellectual elites like us and the rough, sturdy skin of those villagers. That memory continues to remind me of the hard lives of the people out there, how all the comforts we are enjoying now come at their expense.

"I don't know what was in my upbringing that made me turn out this way. Could it have been a germ of 'insanity' deep inside myself? I was born into a middle class family. My parents ran a hat-making factory. During the military regime of Field Marshall Por (Plaek Pibulsongkram), there was state propaganda that promoted hat-wearing as a sign of modernity.

[Fitness](#)
[Nutrition](#)

NEW!

[Prominent Businesses](#)
[Travel Thailand & beyond](#)

Special Publications

[Current Issues in Thailand](#)
[Silpa Thai site](#)
[2000 Mid-year Economic Review](#)

[Post Database 10 years](#)

[Annual Report 1999](#)

Education

[Learn English with the Bangkok Post](#)

Society

[We Care Phudhong Leper Colony Foundation](#)
[Bangkok Post Newspaper Foundation](#)

Past Issues

[Calendar Page for recent issues](#)

[Bangkok Post Archives by Samart](#)

Classifieds

[Classifieds index](#)
[Jobs](#)
[Property](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Investment](#)
[Education](#)
[Travel](#)
[Sales](#)

Bookstore

[Post Books](#)

Company

Our business was flourishing then; we hired over a hundred workers. "Suddenly, the favourable political atmosphere came to an end. So did my parents' factory. Their subsequent venture, forming a partnership with the Central Group to set up a garment factory, eventually experienced a similar fate-this time it was a takeover by the big capitalists. Perhaps my personal experiences witnessing the rise and fall of businesses as a result of fluctuations in the political and economic spheres make me understand Marxist analyses without much difficulty.

"With a relatively affluent background, I had the privilege of enjoying a good education, unlike the majority of my generation. For example, I was sent to a kindergarten and later to a convent-something quite rare at the time. And yet, in my free time, my parents would put me to work at the factory, to teach me to appreciate how every baht was earned through hard sweat.

"When my family's business flopped the second time, my elder sister had to drop out of school to support the rest of the family. I myself had to teach part-time while continuing my graduate studies at Chulalongkorn University.

Later, I was admitted to the teaching staff at Chula. Somebody told me I was the first lecturer to wear sarong to the campus. At the time, the public was embroiled in a patriotic mood against Japanese goods. But another reason I did that was simply because I never cared for any social norms.

Unfortunately, all the pictures of that period were destroyed as I had to flee from one place to another.

"The first time I learned about the hard lives of rural people was when, as a freshie, I joined camping trips upcountry.

I was exposed to the outside world, to have a better glimpse of how villagers struggled to earn a living from one day to the next. Some poems, though, evidently brooding in romanticism, also talked about the poor, the suffering of the peasants.

"Curiously, for all the six years I studied at Chula, nobody ever mentioned the name of (radical thinker) Jit Phumisak, even though he was one of the faculty's alumni. The atmosphere of academic freedom was pretty bleak. It was a real labour when later I worked with some of my students to piece

[Contact Us](#)
[Subscriptions](#)
[Internet](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Allied Printers](#)

"But until the October 14, 1973 demonstration, I had been little aware of this tacit alienation nor had I been exposed to Marxist thinking. I joined the mass movement on that historic day as an observer, although I did feel deeply involved. From then on, I studied Jit's works and others in the 'art for life, art for the people' school. All of a sudden those so-called progressive books came out in floods, and I had a great time meeting and sharing ideas with several leading literary critics.

I was invited to discussions where I learned from other progressive-minded panellists. Many around me were raising the banner to burn all the 'feudalistic' literature. Years later, a guy I worked with on an ancient manuscript project said he remembers me crying on the stage as I tried to defend the old works. I had to go through a difficult period of reviewing all I used to cherish dearly.

http://www.bangkokpost.co.th/today/081000_Outlook04.html

"Then the right-wing movements started to gain force. One by one, the leftist leaders-farmers, workers, students-were murdered. A senior police officer paid regular visits to my office at Chula. In one of my classes, somebody suddenly shouted a threat at me. Once, I was walking home alone when a group of teenagers followed me, singing a propagandistic song in a bid to harass me. As I tried to run away from them, one pulled at my hair trying to jerk me back. Fortunately, I fled from them in time.

"But instead of scaring me off, all the suppression propelled me to move faster 'intellectually'. A few days leading to October 6, I had been staying up late at Thammasat, joining a protest against the return of (ex-prime minister) Thanom. On the night of the 5th, one of the student guards came to tell me to go home, expressing his worries at the eerie atmosphere.

As I walked across Sanam Luang, I saw a few village scouts and Red Gaurs members hanging around the public ground. A hunch told me there was definitely something wrong. "The following morning I went to work at Chula, and learned of the massacre on television. It's hard to describe what kinds of emotion-grief, remorse, anger-rushed through me at that moment. One thing I knew was everything was past redemption. "I continued my daily routines at Chula. But the liberal atmosphere was completely gone.

No more teaching about Jit nor Nai Phee. Every lecture topic had to be scrutinised. Although nobody expressed it, I sensed a number of senior staff must have been rattled by my presence. All in all, I feel I was luckier than my colleagues at Thammasat, many of whom suffered from persecution by right-wing scholars in the same departments. "As each of my students took turns to bid me farewell, on their way to the CPT, my heart ached.

I couldn't help asking them to take me along. Finally, I decided to join their ranks. At the time, I was offered a prestigious Harvard-Yenching scholarship, but I turned it down. My decision was not a rash one, nor did it come out of fear or a search for revenge. I strongly felt that revolution was the only way for Thai society. Another motive was an academic one, as I had for a long time been

fascinated by an ethnic group called the Lua, so I requested to be posted at their village. "I took off with a close friend from Chula. The last person I saw was my grandmother. But I only told her I was going upcountry. Then I wrote a note telling my father of the decision.

"I ended up staying with the CPT probably longer than anybody else. In fact, if I didn't come down with malaria, I might not have left them. I was most impressed by the discipline and courtesy of the red troopers. Despite their minimal education, many could perform difficult work. I myself had three major operations done by these barefoot doctors. Another plus was to have an opportunity to know the leaders of the CPT, who excelled in both Marxist theory and yet were full of humility.

"Two decades on, I don't think I have veered from my ideological stance. As a child, I studied the essence of both Buddhism and Catholicism, and I feel the Marxist way of thinking shares a lot in common with them. Fundamentally, I see myself as a bridge between the old and the upcoming generation. "The current project to collect evidence on the October 6th affair is, for me, an effort to both heal the wounds of the past and to reveal what actually took place, and not what the state wants to have us believe."

© Copyright The Post Publishing Public Co., Ltd. 2000

Last Modified: Sun, Oct 8, 2000

For comments and letters to the editor see : [notes](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

Comments to: [Webmaster](#)


Advertising enquiries to [Internet Marketing](#)

THAILAND'S INDEPENDENT ONLINE NEWS & INFORMATION SERVICE

October 8, 2000

HOME
 ABOUT US
 CONTACT
 POLICE
 POLITICS
 BUSINESS
 SPORTS
 CULTURE
 ENTERTAINMENT
 TRAVEL
 EDUCATION
 HEALTH
 SCIENCE
 ARTS
 OPINION
 ARCHIVE
 SEARCH
 FEEDBACK

Nation search

Recalling a massacre

TWENTY-FOUR years ago today, Jaran Distha-apichai and Amorn Amornratananont were two of the roughly 5,000 students and people from all walks of life who gathered at Thammasat University to fight for the survival of Thailand's fragile democracy.


They had gathered to protest the return of former military ruler Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, who had been forced into exile three years earlier during the October 1973 democratic movement. To diminish chance of arrest or political action taken against him, Thanom returned to Thailand as a novice monk.

Last month, Jaran, now a lecturer at Rangsit University, provided testimony before the Committee on Clarifying the History of 6 October 1976 on his experiences during the protest that would end in tragedy. He hopes that with the help of the committee, he and others can help set the record straight on the events 24 years ago, when the peaceful nature of the October 5 demonstration was shattered the following morning by right-wing forces within the army massacring many demonstrators.

An official government report states that 46 people died in the event and that 3,154 protesters were arrested.

But Jaran and Amorn, eye-witnesses to the events, said the true number of those killed is far greater.

 MAIL TO A FRIEND

 PRINT THIS PAGE

 YOUR COMMENTS

"Around 5am on October 6, I was standing in a corner of the football field in front of the Law Faculty building when the first set of bullets hit the protesters," Jaran said.

Immediately diving to the ground, he first noticed the smell of blood that would be so prevalent throughout the day. "Many people in front of Thammasat's main auditorium, were shot," he recalled.

After half an hour of what he describes as random shooting, Jaran saw two white buses smash through the university's main entrance across the street from Sanam Luang. Not wanting to stay and find out who was arriving, Jaran quickly got up and ran across the field to the Administration Faculty building, where he found shelter behind a counter on the first floor, seconds before soldiers arrived.

The invading government soldiers were members of three major right-wing groups established and supported by the government agencies and military: Look Sue Chao Baan (Village Scouts) Krating Daeng (Red Gaur), and Nawapol.

"They sang 'Nak Paen Din' (Burden to the Motherland) and shouted that they wanted to kill us," Jaran recalled.

The soldiers drove many people hiding in the building out onto the football field, but failed to spot Jaran.

"I stayed there many hours until I didn't hear the sounds of shooting. Then I moved to hide under a staircase in that building," he revealed.

Jaran said he became the last person arrested at Thammasat when border police found him at noon on October 7 hiding under the stairs, where he had spent the last day and a half.

At another corner of the football field on the fateful morning of October 6, Amorn was making the tortuous decision to leave a female student who he knew was dying. But he didn't want to share her fate. "Everyone had to run away from the bullets," he said.

"I will never forget that girl slumped on the ground before me. I saw her student's uniform full of blood."

Amorn, then 17, was the secretary-general of the School Students Centre of Thailand (SSCT). At the demonstration, the SSCT had been responsible for providing and distributing food for the demonstrators.

To escape from the soldiers, Amorn and many other students jumped into the Chao Phraya River. But afraid they would not survive the long and treacherous swim to the Thonburi side, most returned to land, where they were promptly arrested and forced to lie prone on Tha-Prachan Road.

Jaran, hiding under the stairs, and Amorn, lying on Tha-Prachan Road, were unable to see one of the cruellest scenes to take place that day. Members of the Krating Daeng Group had tied a loin cloth around the neck of Jaruphong Thongsing, and dragged his body along the field before the eyes of police and television cameras.

The young victim was a second-year student of Thammasat University's Faculty of Political

Science.

Not long after, Wichitchai Amornkul, a second-year student from Chulalongkorn, was beaten and hanged by a Tamarind tree at Sanam Luang as thousands looked on. (See related story on today's dedication of a memorial to Wichitchai).

"Students ran out of the university because they hoped that the police would protect them from the bloodthirsty crowd. They didn't think that they would become victims," said Amorn.

The students were punished for being 'communists' and kaew (Vietcong) in the minds of the largely right-wing crowd on Sanam Luang.

The return of Thanom on the September 19, 1976 immediately created atmosphere of tension around the country. Posters condemning the tyrant were distributed all over the country. And on the night of September 24, violence portending the October massacre took place when two electricians from the Provincial Electricity Authority in Nakhon Prathom were tortured and hanged for distributing such posters.

The following day, the National Student Centre of Thailand (NSCT) organised a protest, demanding the government to investigate the murders, as well as ask Thanom to leave the country again.

Instead of leaving Thailand, Thanom showed his determination to stay, and was ordained as a monk and invited to stay at Wat Boworniwet, not far from Sanam Luang.

The former ruler's continuing presence in the country led the NSCT to hold a major protest on October 4 at Sanam Luang, which was attended by 30,000 people from all walks of life. That night, the NSCT decided to shift the demonstration to Thammasat's football field, where as part of the protests, they put on a play focusing on the murder of the electricians.

In the play, organised by the Student Drama Club of Thammasat University, two student actors were 'hanged' on a tree to satirise the murder. No one then expected that the satirical drama would trigger the massacre that would take place a day and a half later.

The next morning the Thai daily Dao Siam and the Bangkok Post published pictures of the actors. Many angered readers believed that in using one actor who resembled the Crown Prince, the organisers of the play had committed lese majeste.

The inflamed feelings were exacerbated in the afternoon, when the photos were published in leaflets that were distributed all over Bangkok. Some analysts say that the photos printed in the leaflets were doctored to make the resemblance even greater.

"Yaan Kroh [the military-run radio station] implored Thais to join a counter-demonstration," Jaran Distha-apichai recalled. "Yaan Kroh's announcer told listeners that demonstrators in Thammasat were communists who wanted to demolish the monarchy."

Coming at a time of instability in Southeast Asia, the charge hit a raw nerve in many Thais. It had

been only little over a year since victorious communists had deposed the King of Laos, Sisavang Vattana, and had otherwise taken over in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Jaran was one of those accused of being a communist after the police located him. "They found me by following my footprints," he said.

Jaran was dismayed but not surprised to find that the university was now occupied by the border police and the armed forces.

"I was tied with wire and had two machine-guns pointed at me," Jaran revealed.

"They called me Ai Kaew while beating me. "One of them rudely informed me that [Thammasat University dean] Ajaan Puay had been shot in the head and later died at Don Muang Airport."

At the Office of the First Army, high-ranking officials told Jaran that he should be co-operative and obey them, as otherwise there would be more bloodshed.

"The history of October 6, 1976 has been distorted for 24 years," said Jaran. "It's time that our children learn the truth for posterity."

BY SUBHATRA
BHUMIPRABHAS

The Nation

LAST MODIFIED: Wednesday, 04-
Oct-00 10:57:43 EDT

THAILAND'S INDEPENDENT ONLINE NEWS & INFORMATION SERVICE

October 8, 2000

HOME

ABOUT

CONTACT

ARCHIVE

POLITICS

BUSINESS

TECHNOLOGY

SPORTS

CULTURE

FEATURES

HUMAN RIGHTS

ENVIRONMENT

LIFE

CARTOON

RANDOM SELECTION

ADVERTISEMENT

SPECIAL

INFORMATION

LINKS

FAQ

Glossary

Feedback

Nation search



A hazy picture for the next generation

A MONUMENT to martyred student Wichitchai Amornkul is being dedicated today at the Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Political Science, where he studied in 1976.

Many present students at the faculty may have no idea about who he was, but those who witnessed the massacre of October 6, 1976 cannot forget the picture of the young man who was hanged on a tamarind tree at Sanam Luang.

"I saw this scene on video. I saw militants killing lots of people," said Patinya Amornratananont, a 19-year-old student of the university.

"My father told me that these people gathered to fight against the dictators at that time," he said.

Patinya's father was a student leader. Perhaps not surprisingly, the story that Patinya learned from his father is quite different that which his friends at the Faculty of Engineering tell him.

"They urged me to believe that the government at that time had to do act as they did because those people were communists," said Patinya.

Even though their parents were involved in the student movement of 1976, Satdha and Santdhai Hunpayon learnt nothing about the massacre from them.

MAIL TO A FRIEND

PRINT THIS PAGE

YOUR COMMENTS

"As I understand it, what took place on October 6 was a massacre by armed people against unarmed people," explained Satdha, 22, a law student at Thammasat University.

"But my father and mother never told me about the event," he said.

Santdhai, Satdha's younger brother who is a law student at Chulalongkorn University, added that he had heard from the military teacher of his defence territory course that Thammasat University at that time was effectively a branch of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT).

"I heard from Ruamsak Chaikomol that there were lots of red flags and pictures of communist leaders in Thammasat University," said Santdhai.

"But my mum explained to me that the university had only organised an exhibition about the People's Republic of China."

Patinya worries that too many of his peers lack a sufficient understanding of the tragedy. Or that they have never heard of it. He wonders which is worse.

"I would like to see many people at the commemoration of this historic day. The government should place greater emphasis on this important day," said Patinya.

"I personally refer to the events of October 6 as Wan Kaa Phirab Khao [Day that the white doves were killed]."

The Nation

I Chulalongkorn University's
Faculty of Political Science is

holding an opening ceremony for the Wichitchai Amornkul Monument at the Faculty's Building 1 today from 12.30 to 2pm.

Relatives, friends of Wichitchai and members of the general public are welcome to attend. For further information, call 01-813-4792.

[illegible]

Chronology of events of September - October 1976

September 19 Field Marshal Thanom, newly ordained as a novice monk in Singapore, returns to Thailand and stays in Wat Boworniwet.

September 1922 Various groups protest against the return of Thanom.

September 23 Prime Minister MR Seni Pramoj resigns, saying that he is unable to control the escalating protests.

September 24 MR Seni Pramoj secures the support of four political parties and forms a new government.

Two electricians of the Provincial Electricity Authority in Nakhon Prathom are tortured and hanged for distributing posters criticising Thanom.

September 2526 The NSCT organises a protest in Chulalongkorn University, demanding the government to ask Thanom to leave the country, and to investigate the murder of the two electricians.

September 29 The NSCT organises a protest at Sanam Luang. 20,000 people attend.

October 1 University students refuse to take their examinations in protest against Thanom's return to Thailand.

October 3 Relatives of the heroes of the October 14, 1973 hungerstrike start a protest against Thanom.

October 4 The NSCT organises a demonstration at Sanam Luang, which later shifts to Thammasat University.

At Thammasat, the Student Drama Club puts on a satirical performance about the murder of the two electricians in Nakhon Prathom province.

October 5 Two newspapers publish pictures of the two actors 'hanged' in the play.

In leaflets published and distributed throughout Bangkok, the play's organisers are accused of intentionally using an actor resembling the Crown Prince.

Military Radio implores people to join in counterprotests against the 'communists' in Thammasat University.

October 6 Dozens of students and other protestors are massacred at Thammasat University and Sanam Luang. More than 3,000 protestors are detained.

LAST MODIFIED: Wednesday, 04-Oct-00 10:57:49 EDT

NATION

Delivers Results

THAILAND'S INDEPENDENT ONLINE NEWS & INFORMATION SERVICE

October 8, 2000

Battles still raging about 1976 incident

ASSISSANT Professor Ji Ungpakorn's integrity was yesterday defended by the chairperson of the Public Inquiry Committee on the October 6, 1976 Incident.

Rangsit University's Professor Chontira Satyawadhna came to Ji's defence while around him debate raged.

The Bangkok Post has accused Ji and The Nation of leading a smear campaign against the Post and its alleged role leading to the bloody murder of students on October 6, 1976.

The Bangkok Post on Friday filed a complaint with the Press Council of Thailand requesting an investigation of an alleged breach of journalistic codes by The Nation.

Bangkok Post editor Pichai Chuensuksawadi stated in the complaint to the press council: "The news report of The Nation is considered a violation of journalistic ethics and morality.

"It exploited an opportunity to destroy its rival the Bangkok Post newspaper by collaborating with Mr Ji, who harboured displeasure from the fact that the editor of the Bangkok Post requested minor language adjustments to make his article suitable for publication."

 MAIL TO A FRIEND

PRINT THIS PAGE

YOUR COMMENTS

Nation search



Chontira said Ji, who has been researching the incident for the past month, had carried out his work with responsibility in the search for the truth behind the incident.

Ji was not available for comment yesterday, as he was flying to England.

Scores of students were lynched, shot and burned to death around Thammasat University and Sanam Luang 24 years ago.

"He collected all the details of the event, in every building in Thammasat University [and regarding] all times - from the moment M79 grenade-launchers were fired and machine-guns heard," Chontira said.

"I am impressed with Ji's work," she said.

"His method is scientific, because he takes accounts from primary sources.

"His presentation of the events is thus very reliable and accurate. It will lead to the unlocking of many of the mysteries that are still burning in our hearts," Chontira said.

The Bangkok Post yesterday stated in a front-page comment article that it doubted Ji's qualifications, because he was not involved with the traumatic event.

However, historian Charnvit Kasetsiri, also a former rector of Thammasat University, said that at times people who are not directly involved with the incident write an even better historical account.

Social critic Sulak Sivaraksa added that history should be open to everyone to debate, otherwise there would be no point studying it.

Chontira said that to some extent the CIA must have been involved in the incident, because students were demanding the withdrawal of US forces from Thailand and opposing American imperialism.

"If my memory serves me right, the Bangkok Post ran the photo before Dao Siam [newspaper].

"The question is, where did it all start?

"At that time it was known that the stance of the Bangkok Post was not close to the people.

"However, the Bangkok Post of today has gradually become so much more clear that it is different from the newspaper of 24 years ago, especially in its front-page news and Outlook section, which is sympathetic to the sufferings of the Thai people."

Charnvit said that the fact that the photo which appeared in the Bangkok Post depicted someone being hanged who bore a resemblance to the Crown Prince "was a coincidence".

Sulak said it was unfortunate that the person who wrote yesterday's front-page comment piece had not been around 24 years ago to run the newspaper.

"The role of the Bangkok Post was closely linked to the ruling elite," he said.

Sulak noted that the Bangkok Post ~~had not been closed down~~ at that time, while liberal

newspapers had been.

He did, however, add that the newspaper had much improved since.

BY PRAVIT ROJANAPHRUK

The Nation

LAST MODIFIED: Saturday, 07-Oct-00 13:29:52 EDT

SUGGEST THIS STORY TO A FRIEND...

	Name	E-Mail Address
You	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Friend 1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Friend 2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Your Message

<div></div>

SEND

© 2000 Nation Multimedia Group
44 Moo 10 Bang Na-Trat KM 4.5, Bang Na district, Bangkok 10260 Thailand
Tel 66-2-317-0420 and 66-2-316-5900; Fax 66-2-317-2071
Contact us: bangna@nation.nationgroup.com