

# THAI STUDENT OFFERS EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Dear friend,

I arrived at Thammasat University at 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. on October 5, I ate my dinner in front of the University and then walked through the front gate. I saw a large number of protesters sitting in the open. My brother-in-law and eldest sister went into the accounting building. Another elder sister met a representative of the Union of Northern Region Students. They talked about things to be done that night such as distributing statements. After talking a while, my elder sister and I went around distributing statements from the Union. I felt proud doing the right thing.

Afterwards, I sat and listened to speeches denouncing the return of Thanom under the guise of a monk. Speakers took turns on the stage, alternated by musical groups and plays. My eldest sister and brother-in-law returned home at 1:00 a.m. I went to sleep near the water tank.

I was awakened by the sound of rushing feet and frightened faces. It was 2:00 a.m. Flares shot into the sky over Thammasat. Then the place became quite again. A little after two, someone fired into the university. An activist on the stage asked us not to be frightened and to calm down.

I then went to the group responsible for safety. From there I watched those trying to disrupt the rally. The safety unit was made up of volunteers carrying wooden sticks. I grasped a stick and joined them. I met a man who had been with the (rightist) Red Guard, but had been converted and took the side of the students because he could no longer endure immoral acts of the Red Guard. He told me the Red Guard had had a meeting and planned to attack Thammasat with 500 strong.

I stood guard until 4:00 a.m. Then I thought nothing would happen. I wandered back to the water tank.

Suddenly there was an explosion. Eight were wounded, six of them in critical condition. I followed them, running, to the first aid room. I wanted

to check if my sister was among them. She was lucky not to be there. I returned to re-volunteer as a guard and met my sister's friend. We sat down near the water tank and talked for a short time. Then people suddenly stampeded. Both of us lay down on the ground. Someone had tossed a grenade inside across the wall. Fortunately the grenade did not go off, nothing happened. Since that incident until dawn, gun fires and explosions died down. At sunrise, I went to sit beside the stage. There I met my sister who was looking for me; we were relieved to see each other. We took a stroll towards the restrooms at the Economic Building on the Chao Praya River side. At the time, I saw students waving their hands calling boats to come and take a critically wounded across the river to Siriraj Hospital. But the waterway police prevented boats to come near. The police placed its patrol boats in the middle of the river. When my sister came out of the rest room, we went to watch over the patients. Time passed until 6:00 a.m. when an ambulance broke the barricades inside the university to take away the wounded. But at the same time, the gangsters outside intensified their fires. All of us stayed close to the ground, while the ambulance risked gunfire and attempted to bring the wounded outside (I do not know its fate). Since then, the continuous and intensified gunfire had not subsided.

My sister and I made short cuts toward the Administration Building. I saw two Red Guards, one dressed like a student and one wore civilian clothes. Both of them shouted vulgar languages at the students inside with insulting manners. Riot policemen stood beside them. My sister left me to comfort a woman. She was sitting, crying. She told us that she cried, not out of fear, but anger and bitterness. Then there were countless salvos from every direction. A man came and told us to flee to the restrooms on the Chao Praya bank. After arriving there, we consulted one another--- what should we do? What would we do if those more than a hundred gangsters



reached our hiding place? We agreed that we would lie still, and let them do whatever they like to us. If one of us became angered, lost patience, and fought back while having but bare hands, we would only lose. They might even find an excuse to butcher us all. Let us smile to them! When we had agreed another converted Red Guard broke out and cried with bitterness. He opened his mind: "Why not fight them! Why let them treat us from one side? We calmed him down and tried to explain the objective conditions at the time, gave him a sense of security and reduced fear. We needed to control ourselves in order to find solution together. Another woman kept on crying. We don't know exactly why, she wouldn't talk.

My feeling then was without fearing or frightening. I kept on convincing myself that they would soon let us out as usual whenever we had a rally such as this. Up until around 8-9:00 a.m. when someone rushed to inform us that they would let females out of the siege. My sister and I separated then and there. I was a little comforted, thinking that my sister would reach safety somehow. Before leaving, she asked one of her friends to take care of me, worried.

We, the friend and I, agreed to slip away through the Chao Praya River. While we were trying to make our way through the river, the firing had resumed again. This time I felt they were so close to us; I jumped into grass, stayed low, and slowly crawled towards the fence where a hole was forced open for escaping protestors. We were one among them. Carefully, we went along the fence until we reached Ta-Prachan. However, we could not come out onto the pier. The salvos of guns closely followed our heels. We walked under wooden platforms along the river-bank. Both sides were densely lined up with houses. We continued to walk along. Soon, residents helped to pull us out of the polluted water. They cursed those who were engaging in the chase. Once outside the water. I ran to join my sister's friend and many other students.

#### SINKING STUDENTS

The sounds of gunfires continued, so I decided to jump into the water once more, and walked along under the platforms. By now, I had seen frightened people trying to swim across the river. They were shot while swimming. Three or four sunk. I continued my escape. I saw an overloaded passenger boat filled with students making its way towards Siriraj Hospital on the opposite side. The boat gradually turned over. Many could swim, but I saw no less than ten go under. I continued until I reached one place where there was a hole above the platform. I looked up, and saw a gun barrel pointing at my head. I quick-

ly jumped aside. A shot was heard from the barrel and the water near me rebounded. But I wasn't hit. Right then my mind felt spacy, so I held on tight to my sister's friend's arm. We continued until we reached a small dock, we got out and ran to join fleeing students. Like me, they were fleeing from death. While we were running, gunfire was chasing us. The friend, students, and I reached Ta-Chang Bridge and prepared to get down onto a boat in order to go across to the Thonburi Province. While we were waiting, another salvo was heard. Everyone got on the ground, except a female student who was still standing puzzled. I got up to push her head down. When the salvo stopped, everyone got up and ran. I saw the same girl prostrated and crying. I grabbed her hand, pulled her up, and ran into a store at Ta-Chang. The owner was willing to help us and urged us to hide in a restroom near the kitchen. I had found other students hiding there before me, more than 20 of them. I then went into the kitchen and lay face down. I met my uncle in the restroom. He told me that he got away in the same direction with my sister. They were chased by gunfires, and he himself staggered here.. and what about my sister?

While we were hiding inside, we heard continuous gunfires, some near, some far away alternately. When the gunfires stopped, we heard local residents saying: "The Village Scouts have gone". Nonetheless, we stayed motionless; even respirations were held to a minimum. A long moment passed before we heard a voice from a loudspeaker: "Our student friends who are hiding in stores, come out and give yourselves up to the police will let you go home." Many of us wavered; some wanted to go out there, many insisted on staying on. The latter reasoned, "If we got caught, whether because they found us or because we gave ourselves up, it would not make much difference." We came to the conclusion not to go out. There were announcements from outside all this time calling us to give up. When the loudspeaker quieted down, a salvo blasted in. Then we knew we'd made the correct decision. We looked at one another and smiled. Our smiles were rather dry, there was sorrow underneath.

I didn't know how long we had stuck at the store; I only knew that gunfire continued on nearby and faraway. The sounds gradually moved further away.. Finally, silence returned. The store owner who was an elderly Chinese woman, arranged for us to go across the river in groups of three. Men went first. She thought that in case something happened, men could run away faster than women, who better stay with her in safety. I let the others go first. Finally, my sister's friend and I were the last males. My clothes were shabby and very dirty. My shirt and pants were streaked with



black and gray marks. The friend was not any better than me. But that girl-student friend had a jacket, and she gave it to my friend to cover up his ragged shirt. The jacket made him look a little better. We left the store of the kind-hearted women and went onto a passenger boat to go across to another dock. When we got there, we met another kind-hearted man. We asked him to look out for those Navapols, Red Guards, policemen, Village Scouts, and soldiers. He returned to tell us that there were many policemen at the Siriraj Hospital. Then the four of us resumed our escape together.

### CLOSE CALLS

1 I was the most wretched, and walked in the middle. I didn't even have shoes until later when I stopped to buy sandals. Soon we spotted a clothing store and I decided to go in and ask for a throw-away shirt. If I continued walking in my present condition, I would have certainly been caught by the police. But there was also a great risk to go into such a store, for if the store owner hated students, he could tell the police and

① Those who escaped were captured / burned hung, one girl - who was sexually abused - burned was a famous singer of the student-band, she sings protest / Revolutionary - songs.

② Those escaped through the front gate were killed by police / Red guards / soldiers & burned & hung.

③ One NSCT Leader was shot down.

④ The wounded were not allowed out.

⑤ The stage, announcer shot dead.

⑥ Students fired at police to clear.

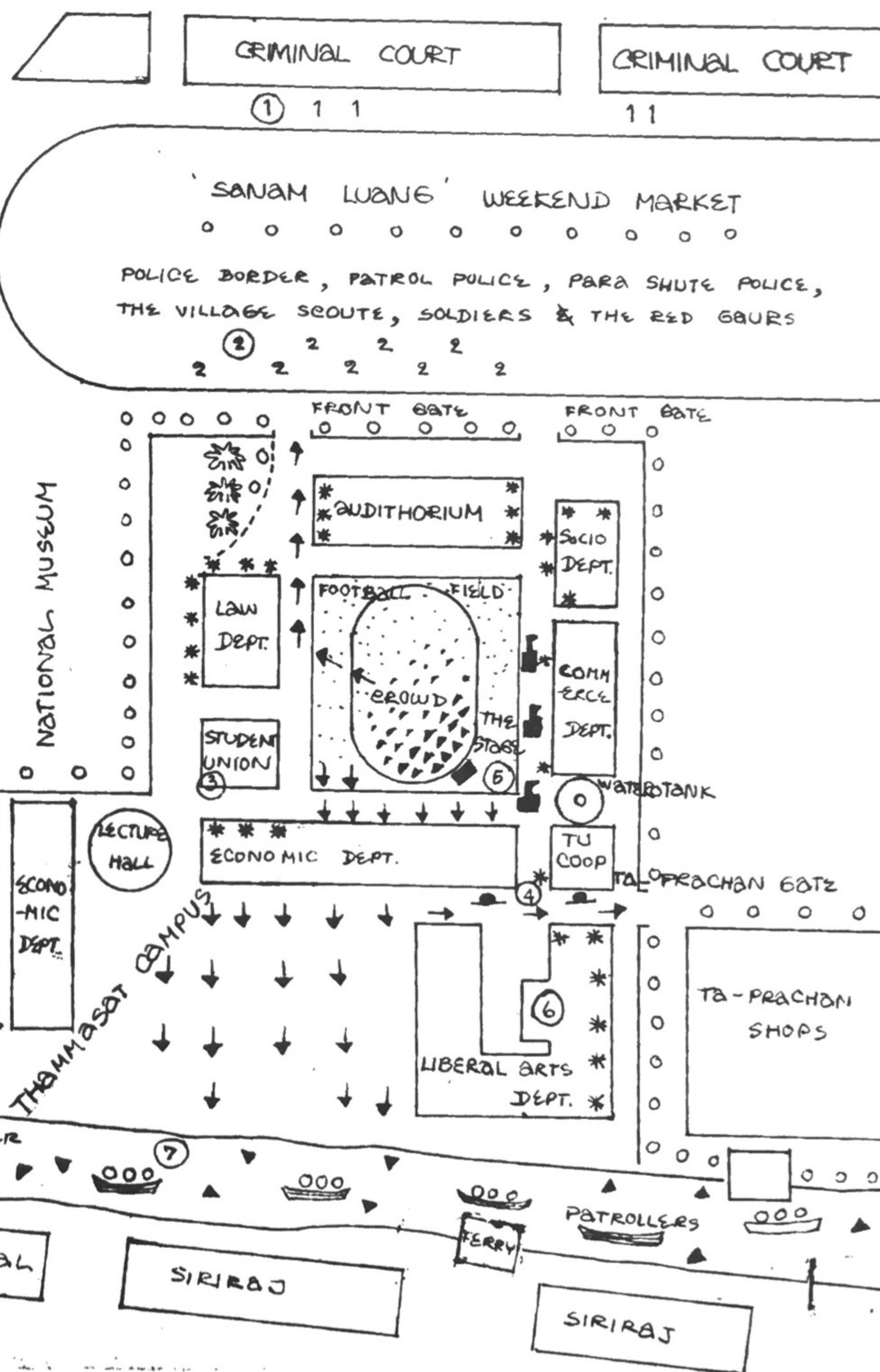
The way for the injured to be taken out

⑦ Those escaped into the river were either shot down, arrested many drowned / killed

⑧ Arrested

thus get us into a lot of trouble. But we were fortunate enough to meet a sympathizer who understood our cause. His sister had also joined the rally and still hadn't come back. I was convinced that most of the people still understand us, the majority know what is right and what is wrong. My friend and I got a shirt each, belonging to the owner's brother. I took off the old, dirty shirt; I didn't mind it at all; we had gone through dangers together. But the store owner insisted, and also that we change our pants. I was too impressed and grate-

- \* STUDENT SECURITY GUARDS
- POLICE, SOLDIERS & OTHER ATTACKERS
- WOUNDED PERSON
- ▲ CROWD (MOST ARE STUDENTS)
- AMBULANCE
- WATER-WAY POLICE



ful to accept further kindness, I felt that I should trouble him only for something extremely necessary. We left the store and spotted 50 Red Guards walking towards us. We slipped sideways into a restaurant and ordered noodles. Clouds gathered in the sky. We consulted one another and agreed that we would leave the restaurant when the rain came. The rain started pouring down and we walked to the bus stop. Walking in the rain disguised other wetness resulting from the escape along the river. After getting on the bus, and on the road, we felt more relaxed... and felt such certain safety...