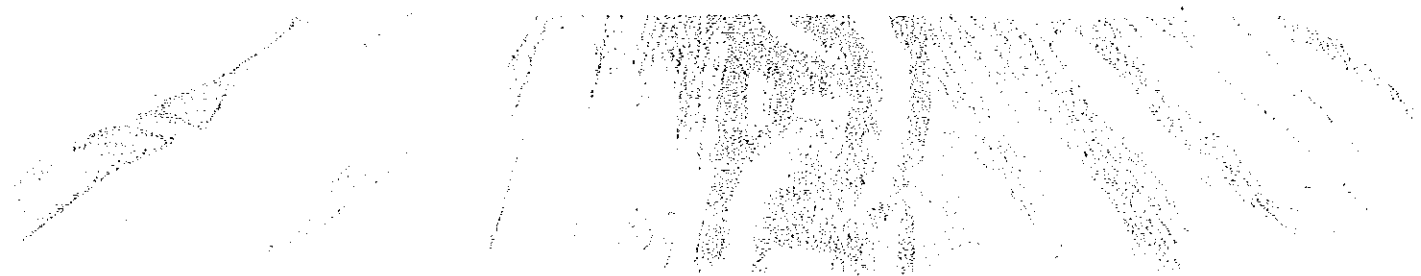


HUMAN RIGHTS IN THAILAND REPORT

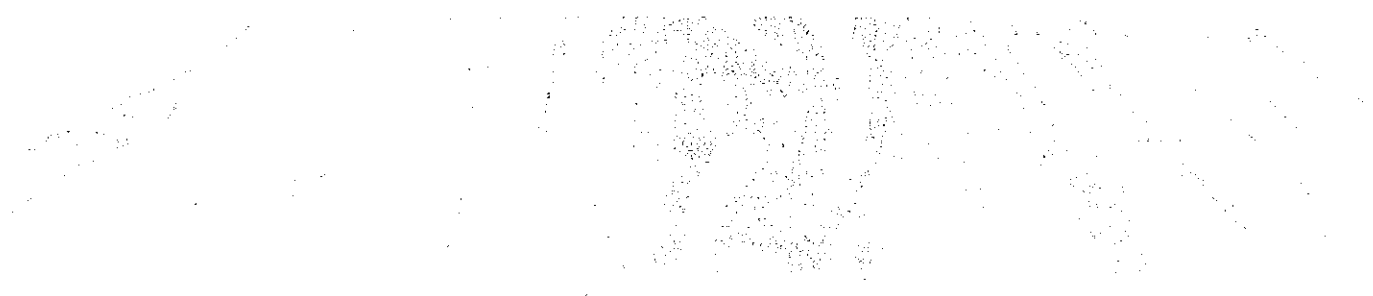
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To Our Readers

We are sad to tell you of the death of Arom Pongpa-ngan, an ex-detainee from the Bangkok 18 case and an important leader of the Thai Labour movement. Arom passed away peacefully in early morning of June 21, 1980, of cancer in his liver. Until the very end of his life, Arom dedicated his energy to the struggle for justice and rights of the workers. Obviously, only death could bring an end to his struggle.

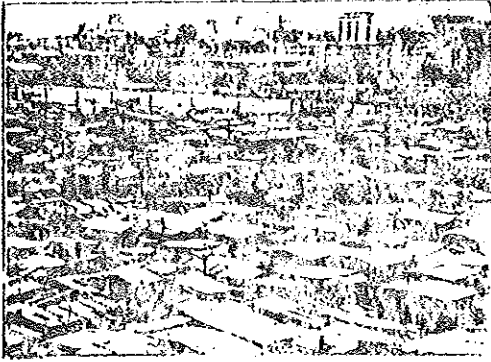
In memorial of his commitment, his courage and his love for the oppressed, and in order to continue his uncompleted work, his family, friends and fellow workers have pulled their efforts to establish the "Arom Pongpa-ngan Foundation" - a foundation which aims at helping in the education of workers and giving advice and help to the workers in various aspects. Among the thirteen founding committee members of the foundation were his wife and representatives from the Labour Congress of Thailand and various other labour unions.

In order to be registered as a foundation, a total of Baht 200,000 (US\$10,000) is needed. The foundation is now seeking for contribution from those who realize Arom's aspiration and those who want to support the just struggle of the Thai workers. One fifth of the donations, but not exceeding Baht 50,000 (US\$2,500), will go to the educational fund for Arom's daughter.

We would very much appreciate if any of you could help in the establishment of the foundation. Your donations could be sent through CGRS, or to the Metropolitan Water Works Authority Labour Union, 372 Bumrungruang Rd. Bangkok 1. Thailand.

We thank you in anticipation for your solidarity with our struggle and your support for our work.

THE RAMA IV SLUM CRISIS



The Rama IV Slum is located between Rama Fourth Street and Klong-Toey Tobacco plant. There are more than 600 families, with a total of approximately 4,000 people, living in this 102,500 square meter area. At present the slum residents are facing big problem as they were going to be evicted from their home and land on which they have lived for 20-80 years, by a private construction company named Saha Krugthep Pattana Company Limited.

In order to understand the situation, we need to know what happened earlier.

Historical Aspects: The original Rama IV community took 80 years to develop itself to be a self-contained community. Originally, most of this area was full of small orchard-canal, and residents were mostly vegetable growers, orchard owners, or fishermen. They rented the land from the Royal Crown Property Bureau*.

Later the Tobacco plant was built, followed by the Rama Fourth Street which cuts this area and join with Sukumvit road. Many kinds of development have accompanied the people who migrated into this area. They filled up the small orchard-canal in order to build a village. Eventually, the village expanded into a complex community. People changed their careers from agriculture into industry and commerce. Along the Rama Fourth Street commercial-buildings were established. Behind these commercial buildings are wooden houses, markets, cinemas, 2 schools and some light industrial plants. There were sidewalks and drainage canals, with pipe water and electricity in nearly every home in every lane. The side-walks were much cleaner and there weren't any garbage mountains as now. People were living peacefully.

Arson Turns Community to Slum: In 1965-1966 6 fires occurred in the community. They were suspected of being arson. Later on February 9, 1966 3 big fires took place at the same time right in the middle of the community. After the fires the Royal Crown Property Bureau still collected the rent from those whose houses weren't burnt and those houses which were only partly burnt down. Those whose houses were burnt down made a request to build new houses, but their requests were turned down by the Royal Crown Bureau. This included those who had signed a

contract before the fire or had paid some deposits to build a new home. Their requests were turned down with the explanation that The Royal Crown Property Bureau wanted the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority, to make a land renewal in this community.

On January 3, 1967, the Royal Crown Property Bureau signed a contract to allow the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority to rent this property in order to develop the land. On that same day January 3, 1967, the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority immediately subleased the property without any bids to the Saha Krungthep Pattana Co, Ltd. (Bangkok Union Development Co, Ltd.) even though the company had just been legally established only four months earlier (on August 29, 1966) and the former leases were still valid to the people living in the community.

This incidence showed the dishonest tendency of the Royal Crown Bureau officers as well as the private company. The two contracts on the same day means that there had been some kind of set-up. Besides, most of the community dwellers had a contract drawn for another 11 years to come.

In May 1968 the Crown Bureau did not accept any rent from the people, giving the reason that the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority will develop this area. 66 families were called in and asked to leave, with an offer of some financial compensation, but only a few have moved out. However, there were still many other families which had never heard that the Saha Company had subleased the contract from the Crown Bureau at all. In 1969 some families received eviction orders from the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) claimed that their houses were falling apart and gave an unpleasant look to the environment. These people appealed to the BMA saying that they would certainly have renovated the condition of their houses if the Crown Bureau had allowed them to do so. But there was no word from the BMA.

On September 1969, the Crown Bureau had extended the land renewal period, indicated in the contract, from 4 years to 8 years. On that same day the BMA had extended 4 more years to the subleasing contract to the Saha Krungthep Pattana Co. Ltd. This incident shows the close relationship between the Crown Bureau, the BMA and the Saha Krungthep Pattana Co. Ltd.; they planned together to enjoy the same benefits.

On January 24, 1974, the Crown Bureau and the BMA together signed a contract to allow the Saha Krungthep Pattana Co. Ltd. to be the sole agent who receives all the rent from this property and will be solely responsible to implement any plans mentioned in the original contract.

Later on January 29, 1974, the Crown Bureau stopped using the BMA and directly cosigned a contract with Saha Krungthep Pattana Co. Ltd. Saha Krungthep Pattana Co. Ltd. now directly rents the property from the Crown Bureau in order to renew the land. And on April 22, 1974, the contract had been extended for another 4 years.

A school teacher, Miss Somsri Suthapakti, was an owner of Axsorn Vidya School which had burned down. Fearing that more than 1,000 children would be out of school, she sent a letter to the Crown Bureau asking for permission to construct a new building. The Crown Bureau told her to contact the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority. The BMA officers delayed responding to Miss Somsri for half a year until a new sublease was created for Saha Krungthep Pattana Company Limited. Then they told Miss Somsri that they no longer had authority to grant permission and that she should ask permission from the Saha Company. The Saha Company insisted on Baht 1,600,000 (\$80,000). The school had to close permanently since it was not possible to pay that amount. "Redevelopment" for the residents has meant the loss of houses and loss of education for the children.

At the moment, the contract signed between the Saha Company and the Crown Bureau has expired on January 2, 1979. But the Crown Bureau insisted that the Saha Company still pay the rent and automatically extended the contract.

Is the Crown Property Bureau making more money?.....
Strangely enough, it will make less money from rent after development than it makes from renting to the slum residents. During the long construction period the Saha Company has been paying only 1 US cent per square meter a month, while the slum residents had been paying more than seven times this amount. Even after the development is completed, the company will pay only US\$ 1,750 per month rent for at least 300 new commercial units, or less than US\$ 6 per store or business office. The fact that the Saha Company will make profits at the expense not only of the slum residents but also the Crown Bureau itself, the fact that the Crown Bureau has ignored many violations of the lease made by the Saha Company (such as not meeting deadlines set by the contract and not paying compensation for the removal of houses to the renters who used to pay rent to the Crown Bureau)-these facts have led the residents to ask for an investigation of corruption among the Crown Bureau officers.

The Struggle of the People

At first, each of the families living in the community had struggled by themselves, without unity or organization as they do in the present time. However, the dedication in their struggle shone brightly, as we can see from the memorandum on the struggle made by the people themselves:

"What have we done to stop the Saha Krungthep Pattana Co.Ltd. from destroying our community?"

- Of the 66 families offered compensation by BMA during 1968 and 1969 only a few have left our community.
- Of the families having received eviction notices by Saha Krungthep Pattana Company only a few have moved out.

- Of those taken to court and having lost their individual cases only a few have given up and have left us.
- Only in early 1978, we started joining our forces and fighting together for our homes.
- We have sent letters to high officials like the Minister of Interior, the Official Corruption Supervision Committee, to the Prime Minister and many others. On 27 March, 1978 even a large group of people went to the Government House to present a petition personally.
- On 13 December, 1979 we have sent our story to the Prime Minister and to two newspapers.
- On 14 December, 1979 400 residents of our community went to the Prime Minister's residence.
- Most important we have formed the Kong Toey Community Development Credit Union Cooperative Ltd. as a legal body representing our community. The new lease to our land can only be registered in the name of this credit union which then will sublease the land to the individual members. The responsibility for the entire development project of our community will also be with the credit union. So all families who want to stay with our community should become members of the Klong Toey Community Development Credit Union Cooperative Ltd.*(1)

The setting up of the Credit Union and the Community Committee have added a new page in the history of the Rama IV Community's struggle. Through these organizations, the people have learnt that their problems were not merely individual problems, but the problems of the whole community; and only through unity would there be a chance of winning the struggle.

Today, the major problems in the community, as well as the strategies and tactics in their struggle, are brought up and solved among the community committee, or the community assembly, depending on the importance of the issue. Everyone in the community is welcome to join in the community assembly, which takes place about once a month.

"What we want is to get back the lease to our land and have it registered in the name of the Credit Union. Without the right to the land we cannot rebuild our homes and our community will deteriorate endlessly", said Mrs. Sompon Surarit, a medical doctor living in the community and president of the Credit Union.

*Klong Toey Community Development Credit Union Co., Ltd., The Struggle for Our Home, Bangkok, March 1980

- (1) In addition to this, the people had made appeals 4 times to the King, through the Royal Secretarial office, but unfortunately they received no reply. The 5th appeal was handed to the HRH Princess. In May, the people made a press conference at the _____ and a week later, held a direct action in front of the national parliament, urging the MPs and senators to give justice to them and investigate corruption in the sublease of the land.



"The Credit Union, an indigenous organization of the Community, could develop this land and this community, without having to depend on a private company, whose aim is its own interest, not the people's interest. According to our plan, the community does not have to be torn down. We think that only the poorest part, the part that the old houses were burnt down by the fire, will have to be developed".

"We will also make some development on the areas near the street, to build commercial buildings, car parking place, and a market. Interest and income from this will be for the development and the benefit of the whole community".

"Various organizations and individuals have given and will give full support for our project. An outline of the development plan for our community has been made. The costs have been calculated. The financial plan has been prepared which shows that within 15 years, we will have paid all the loans. Besides, an institution has pledged to seek a low-interest loan for the implementation of the project," said Mrs Somporn, and added that "This is a large project. But if it is successfully carried out, the community will be self-sufficient. And we are sure we can make it, if only we have the rights to the land".

The Company's Stand

Meanwhile, an advocate of the company explained that the company has full rights to use the land following the court's decision. "The company has paid rentals for more than 10 years already," he said. "And we also have a project to build a block of flats for them. But they have turned down our offer. In fact, we have tried all kinds of compromise, but because they did not accept any, we have no choice but to turn to the court of law."

Commenting on the company's flats' construction, Mrs. Somporn said the slum people simply could not accept the offer because the company intended to set aside only 3 rai* (out of the total area of 53 rai land) for this purpose. "This area is not enough in view of the fact that roads, a public park and other public utilities must be provided."

The company denied the demands of the people. "We have the rule of law to turn to. So more talks are useless if they do not abide by law. The company is not mean-hearted at all. We are ready to pay

* 1 rai = 0, 16 ha./0.4 acre

them compensation. But what shall we do if they have refused our proposals persistently. We simply cannot leave the slum to exist in its present state".

The Saha Krungthep Pattana Company is a huge company. Its shareholders include Mongkol Kanjanapas, Direk Mahadamrongkul and Chuan Ratanarak. These three persons are big shareholders or have important influence in at least 39 other companies and banks in Thailand, which include bussiness on finance and issurance, TV. and radio production, agriculture, warehouse, construction, mine, entertainment, etc. In addition, Mongkol owns a watch empire in Hong Kong. He and Direk are also major shareholders of the Four Seas Investment, a firm which owned the controversial International Hotel in San Francisco, which was the scene of bitter struggle between owners and long-time residents who put up a stiff fight for over ten years.

DEAD LINE

The fight between 4,000 slum dwellers and a huge company has lasted for over 10 years and is reaching its peak. In early July, the court's eviction order was handed to the people. But the people refused to accept it. The officials came again and stuck the orders on the wall or the door of the people's houses. "By this, we are legally obligated to accept the orders. We must leave our homes and land within one month, according to the order. If we don't, they can use force to make us leave. We sense that this will be a very serious order, because though the orders were written and reached us at different dates, the dead line is fixed at the same day - on August 8th", said one of the community leaders.

The community assembly was called twice after the eviction order came (until July 25). In the dim light of the school, which earlier was a gambling house, over 300 people made a firm vow to stay on the land, to resist the crack down, and to continue with their struggle unitedly. Violence against the people is becoming more likely. Shortly after the first assembly, while the treasurer of the Credit Union was collecting money from its members in front of a chinese temple, a bullet shot from the darkness passed her neck and rightly hit a lamp.

But the incident did not terrify her or make her shy away from the struggle.

"We wholeheartedly realize that our opponent is so big and powerful, yet they are not as big and powerful as the will of the people to struggle. These are our home and our land, and no matter what will happen, we will continue with our justified struggle".

IN MEMORIAL OF AROM PONGPA-NGAN

Early morning of June 21, Arom Pongpa-ngan (34) ended his life-long struggle for the labour movement in a hospital in Bangkok, leaving behind his wife and his eight year old daughter. Only death bring an end to his struggle.

Arom had been widely accepted as a genuine leader of the Thai labour movement. In 1972 he was employed by the Metropolitan Water Works Authority (MWWA) as an engineer of the Water Supply Division. His effort to set up a labour union of the MWWA workers culminated in 1975. Now, the MWWA labour union has become one of the strongest labour unions in Thailand. In 1975 Arom was elected vice president of the Labour Congress of Thailand, and president of the MWWA labour union.

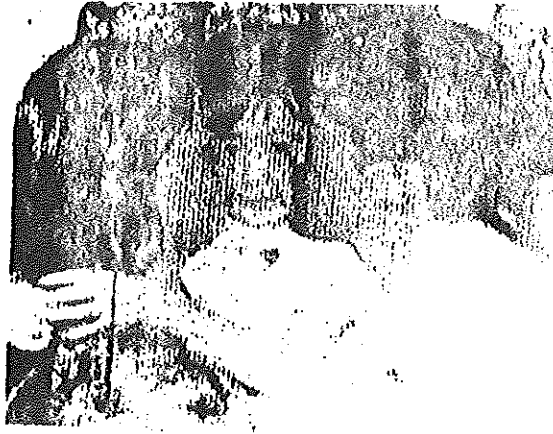
Arom was among the Bangkok 18 held after the October 1976 Coup d'etat. After the coup he was arrested from his home on charges of endangering society. After he had been acquitted from the charge, he was remanded on charges of communism, rebellion, riot, trying to kill government officials, etc, which were all false accusations.

During the detention, Arom worked very hard. He has written many stories and poems. His health had become much weakened in jail. After he had been released, his health did not improve. He was hospitalized for 4 times after the release. Yet he continued to work hard, particularly with the MWWA labour union, where he was again elected president. He also worked on the workers' magazine Kao Kon-ngan (Workers' News) and wrote articles and stories.

The 4th time he was hospitalized, the doctors finally found out that he had cancer in the liver. In spite of great pain, Arom still had an incredibly strong mind and courage. Rarely did he speak of his sufferings. He dedicated his last energy to the workers and remained active until the very end.

On June 21, Arom left his wife, his daughter and his friends in the labour movement. And yet he does not die from our memory. His courage his committment, and his love will always live in our hearts.

And a hundred thousand people like Arom will be born.



"Are you thinking of your father, my child?
 If you want to hug your father,
 To be loved by your father,
 You must be able to endure.
 Because this is the idea
 Of Love,
 That I am so proud of,
 When you have these things
 The hugs of your father
 Will be real
 And you will feel close to me.

What is the point of me letting you have dreams
 That are not based on reality?
 The jail will certainly not keep all of your father
 Since my body might be detained
 But my spirit is free.
 My warm embrace
 Is floating over the whole area of the country.
 If you, my child, can endure,
 You will feel me touching you.

The kisses of a weak father
 Has what value to you, my child?
 To be tied to love
 Might be deceptive.
 Only a father who is brave enough
 To create a good society
 Is a real father.

If you think of me,
 You should also think of the poor and deprived people,
 Because they are the life of your father.
 If you want to hug your father,
 Open your arms,
 And hug those who are poor and oppressed.
 Such people who are being tortured in such a way
 Are your father." *

*This poem was written by Arom for his little daughter during the time he was in jail in 1977.

MISUSE OF GOVERNMENT POWER

The People Were Harassed By Marine

A group of marines raped three girls, villagers in Sri Sokorn District, and then detained the girls in marine camps. Two girls were kept in the camp at Sri Sokorn District and the other was kept in the camp at Ruo Soa District. The girls' husbands were beaten with gun butts. And many other villagers were harassed by the marines.

On April 6, 1980 the people in the village protested to Kamnam and District Official. They wanted the girls released and the marine unit moved away. But there was no response.

Mr. Sane Madakakul, Narathivat representative of Social Action Party, sent notices to the commander of 4th Army, Juan Wanarat, and Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda. He asked for improving the policy of marine units. (Matichon, 20/4/80)

Two Men Murdered By Border Polices

Nakornsrithanmarat On May 1, 1980, Mrs. Jiam Kaewkuo, a villager of Toongsong District, complained to the local police Colonel Somchok Wetprukpitak that his son, Jank, was killed and burnt by border polices.

The incident took place in the evening on April 25, 1980, while Mr. Jank and twenty of his relatives were waiting for a bus to go back home on Toongsong road. He saw Mr. Charam Parnkong, a villager in Toongsong, carrying an illegal gun. He was being chased by border police, led by Pol. Staff. Sergeant Paisarn Tengsang. Mr. Charam was trying to run away because he feared being caught with his illegal gun. But the police thought that Mr. Charam was a communist insurgent. When the police could not overtake him, they shot Charam to death with M.16 automatic guns and threw the body into their police-jeep.

When Mr. Jank saw that awful incident he trembled with fear. When the police saw that, they suspected that Jank was Charam's friend. They caught him and put him in their car. After the police drove 500 metres away their relatives heard the report of a gun and they believed Jank would be killed. Mrs. Jiam went to the border police station and heard that her son had been shot to death and his body already burnt. She complained to the local police. (Daily News, 3/5/80) So far there is yet no reply.

Rangers 'Turned Robbers'

Prachinburi A group of villagers of Nadee Sub-district, Prachinburi Province, has lodged a complaint with the Internal Security Operations Command, accusing a band of rangers of committing robberies, a kidnap-murder and harassment.

Two cases of alleged excess by a "hunter-killer" ranger-unit stationed in Bu Phram, Nadee Sub-district have been reported.

First, on 19 May 1980, three hunter-killer squad rangers armed with Hk 33 automatic rifles threatened to kill two villagers, struck one of them with a gun-butt, and subjected them to intimidating interrogation. The pair was questioned about logging activities.

Second, in April 1980, four rangers armed with automatic rifles raided the house of Mr. Daeng (last name unknown) in the village of Ban Noenkh. They dragged Daeng out of his house and threatened his family not to tell anyone about the incident. The next morning, Daeng's body was found in the bush off the road-side, riddled with bullets from automatic weapons. The victim's relatives reported to the local police that Daeng was killed by local communist insurgent. (Bangkok Post, 30/5/80)

Villager Searched And Embezzled Assets By A Captain

Aranyaprathet On May 14, Mrs. Pao Kunhan, a villager of Ban Non Makmoon, complained to Colonel Sunthorn Chaimuenwong that on May 12, captain Piraporn Sripunwong and a group of soldiers searched her house and took 100,000 baht-cash (\$US 50,000) and jade and gold costing 50,000 baht. They also arrested her husband, detained him for one night, and then sent him back with the confiscated-assets, of which there were only 7,800 baht left. Colonel Sunthorn insisted that he would investigate Captain Piraporn. (Matichon 19/5/80)

Drunken District Officer Harmed Woman

Bangkok On April 18, Mrs. Tipaporn Pakosantang, 30, an official of Metropolitan Electric reported to a patrol police of Pratoomwan Police Station that while she had birthday dinner with her friends at Downtown Restaurant, a drunken man threw a glass at her head. Her friends requested him to apologize her but he did not. A fight started and she called for the police. When she saw that the drunken man was trying to escape, she held his hands tightly. The man punched and kicked her heavily as the patrol police arrived and they arrested him immediately.

After the investigation, it was discovered that the drunken man is Mr. Pot Chaiman, the District Officer of Flapak District in Nakornpanom. He was arrested and charged with bodily injury. (Matichon, 19/9/80)

BEHIND PRISON'S WALL

Testimonies of Former Convict

In April 1980, 5 organizations concerned with human rights conducted a comprehensive study on the condition in major prisons in Thailand and launched a movement calling for improvement of prison conditions on the grounds that prisons should not breed hatred against the society.

The five organizations are the Coordinating Group for Religion in Society, the Lawyers' Association of Thailand, Reporters' Association of Thailand, Union for Civil Liberty and Universal Center for Human Rights. A detailed report was filed to the Interior Ministry and the Press.

During the study, the groups, in addition to other means of investigation, have conducted interviews with ex-prisoners from various prisons. The following is a summary from an interview with a former woman convict who had been detained for 8 months in Ladyao Women's Prison in Bangkok, during 1979.

.....

"When the gate to the prison was closed, the first thing I was subjected to was a body search. It was terrible. I was told to undress in front of other convicts and warders. A warder was holding a cane. And I didn't know when she would use it on me... And that was only the first gate. At the last gate, they checked my private parts. It was very unsanitary when one person checks more than 20 to 30 new arrivals at the prison. One can easily contract V.D. and other diseases from this checking".

She said that her cell was about four by eight metres, in which 20 prisoners were crammed. Each prisoner has a space of 3 planks or 1 ft. to sleep. Quarrels often broke out when one person inadvertently put her arms over the others. When asked about food, she said:

"We got only 2 meals a day. Recently when prisoner told a reporter who went into the prison that only two meals were served, the prison authorities blew their tops. There is a small grocery shop at the detention center which could cater to at most 100 people. But there were about 1,500 prisoners using the services. It was jammed and sometimes the warders used canes to chase prisoners. Water was sometime used to disperse them. Abusive language was a common thing. Prices of goods there were exorbitant....."

She told us that newspapers are banned from all prisons and even singing is prohibited. Officially, a library is available for prisoners.

"But the library is a subject for display only when senior officials pay a visit. We didn't get to use it!".

"No senior officials will have a chance to understand the real condition in the prison. Recently a deputy chief of Interior Ministry and 15-16 officials came to the prison. Before their arrival, prisoners had to work all day and night to clean the prison. In the morning we were not allowed to use the toilets so as to keep them clean. They treat us as if we were not human beings, and the prisoners dared not say anything for fear of the punishment. When the senior officials came, everything was tidy and clean. Our prison got a prize, how ridiculous! Then the officials ate the lunch prepared by us, drank beer, laughed, and enjoyed themselves".

"Punishment has become a fasion of the warders. The well praised warders are those who can use the cane to hit the prisoners with 'beautiful' rythm and gesture, to hit at the important nerve, so that with the first blow, the prisoners will fall on the knees. They like to hit at the back bones. A hard hit can paralyze a person. Once the prisoners made a rally, asking that they be allowed to smoke cigarettes. It turned out that all the protes-tors were put into "doy cages", a small cage, so small that you cannot stand up. You eat, sleep, shit etc. in there. Another time, a 60 year old woman was forced to stand in the hot sun for a whole day. In the evening blood ran from her vagina. This woman used to be a school teacher and she usually helped other prisoners writing letters. That time it happened that a prisoner asked her to write on thepaper which was stolen from the warders. And she did not know. I think this was very cruel".

"When a prisoner refused to confess to an action in violation of the rules, all prisoners in the same cell could be punished. The most common punishment is for everybody to hit on the floor with their "kruckles 40 to 50 times.

A special category of prisoners known in prison jargon as the "zebras" is well known for their close connections with the warders. They are young drug addicts who walk in and out of prison often - and are not intimidated by life behind bars. Some of these young addicts are in and out seven or eight times. They consider prison as their home. Their hearts have been

hardened. When they came in for one week, they say .. it's like buying a tour ticket to Chiangmai. If it's over a month, the jargon is to buy a ticket to Malaysia. The longer the jail terms, the more proud some of them feel, or so it seems to me....."

"Prisoners are no-wage labourers. Instead of wages, they receive about 500 baht at the end of six months that comes from the business profits. The prison warders make us work very hard and claim that we want profit-sharing. In fact, we do not want it. On the average we will get only 100 baht per month, which is not enough to cover our expense for medicine to cure ourselves from hard work. Very often we have to work in the night as well. The Correction Department and the warders earn a lot from our labour".

"I do not want to see the prison as a hell that terrifies people, but rather as a place that will give a chance for criminals to become good citizens. I would like to see prisoners being treated like human beings, not animals. And I would like to see the prison's officials and warders have good intention to help the prisoners and our society. But I am not sure whether the Correction Department has the same desire as me".

ACTIVITIES OF CGRS

The Coordinating Group for Religion in Society (CGRS) is composed of priests, laymen and young activists from the Buddhists, the Catholic and the Protestant Religions, who share a common belief in nonviolence, and feel that religion and spiritual value have a central role to play in development of Thai society. CGRS was founded early in 1976 but has become actively involved in Human Rights since the October 6th, 1976 Coup d'etat. For over three years CGRS has carried out its activities openly, inspite of repressive governments and Martial Law. During this period the activities of CGRS have expanded considerably from merely helping political prisoners and their families and others suffering from conflicts in the society, to exposing misuse of government power and campaigning for its victims, for therelease of all political prisoners and for abolishmentof unjust laws; helping frm other groups prepared to struggle for justice and human rights; supporting indigenou rural development groups and coordinating religious organizations.

All the efforts of CGRS are directed at tackling theinjustices and oppression that exist in society using religious principles and nonviolence as the basic method. In all these activities CGRS hopes to play a catalytic and coordination function rather than doing everything directly itself.

Activities of CGRS During April-June 1980

I. Human Rights Activities

1. Visiting, Helping Prisoners and their Families

During the past three months CGRS continued with its regular work of visiting and helping political prisoners and prisoners facing injustices both in Bangkok andup-country. On its visits CGRS provided these prisoners with necessary assistanceand also with moral support and encouragement. It also gave regular assistance to poor families of some prisoners, and from time-to-time arranged for the families to visit the prisoners or attend thetrial hearings.

2. Providing Legal Aid

CGRS tries to ensure that political prisoners and prisoners facing injustices have legal protection, legal representatives and hopefully a fair trial in just courts. CGRS has not only given direct assistance such as finding experienced defence lawyers for the prisoners, helping raise and arrange bail, etc, but also has given assistance to lawyers defending political cases, organized campaigns for the release of prisoners and changingunjust laws, and so on.

16.

as a place "to change the behaviour and promote the chances of reform among convicts".

On July 7, representatives of 5 groups which had participated in the meeting were allowed to meet and talk with the Minister of Interior.

The Minister agreed during the conversation that the problems like torture; overcrowdedness, lack of water, food, medical care, and lavatories and hard physical labor, really exist in prisons. He promises to take the suggestions from the meeting under his consideration.

In addition, CGRS and UCL have published a small booklet on prisons.

Various newspapers have shown interest in this campaign and have reprinted or written articles on the issue (both pro. and con.)

However, we realize that further steps and activities still needed to be done from both our and the authorities' parts, before 'promises' turn to 'practices'.

5. Campaign Against Repression in South Korea (Kwangju incident)

Feeling deeply concerned about the May incident in Kwangju, South Korea, CGRS submitted a letter to the President Choi Kyu-Hah, through the Embassy of the Republic of Korea on May 30. The embassy, however, locked the door, refusing to receive the letter, which was later on sent by post to the President at the Blue House in Seoul.

In the letter, CGRS urged the South Korean government to "make utmost efforts towards solving the country's conflicts through peaceful means; that all those who suffer in connection with this unfortunate event will be treated fairly and humanely, and that the Korean people's rights to choose their own destiny will be upheld".

On the same day, CGRS staged a street theatre about the violent repression in Kwangju at Thammasat University, and asked for donations from the audience. A total of 5002.50 Baht was collected, and sent to help the Koreans injured during the incident through the International Committee of the Red Cross and a group of Koreans in Japan.

II. Rural Development Activities

Through the country there are dedicated people and groups struggling to improve their quality of life, particularly in rural areas. Most of these groups are working entirely on their own, have no idea how other people are dealing with the same problems, and feel that they are alone with no one to help them.

Since 1979 CGRS has been trying to support these indigenous groups

3. Campaign for Prisoners Awaiting Deportation

CCRS has been extremely concerned with the 214 Chinese and Vietnamese detained at Bangkok Temporary Prison in Bangkok. These people are mostly old (aged 50 - over 70) and have been detained for 5-16 years. They were illegal immigrants who after having committed a crime (however small it was) and been punished, were remanded and again put into custody, waiting to be deported. But because of the complication in the deportation of these people to the two socialist countries, these people seem to have been forgotten.

The long years in prison, lack of food and exercise and the critical state of hopelessness have driven some of them to commit suicide and others to mental breakdowns.

CCRS has tried to raise public awareness interest on the case, as well as to seek participation from various other organizations in the campaign. On June 10, CCRS together with representatives from the Lawyers' Association of Thailand, the Justice and Peace Commission of Thailand, Thammasat University's Law Knowledge Dissemination Project, and journalists of various Bangkok newspapers went as a fact-finding team to the prison. The group was allowed to talk with the prisoners, but could not get inside the cells. However, much information was gained from the interviews and press and public interest been raised. In addition, more organizations were inspired to join in the campaign and the prisoners have regained hope and life, after realizing that they have not been completely forgotten.

CCRS and other organizations and individuals that take part in this campaign are now trying to find ways that would enable us to get into the cells. We are also trying to get concrete information on the prisoners and the condition of the prison, as well as preparing for an exhibition/campaign on National Law's Day on August 7th this year.

CCRS hopes to give an in-depth article on the case to HCTR readers in the next issue.

4. Campaign for the Development of Prison's Condition

On 28 April, CCRS and the Union for Civil Liberties held a meeting at the Reporter's Association of Thailand. Participating in the meeting were representatives from CCRS, UCL, Lawyers' Association of Thailand, Universal Center for Human Rights and Reporter's Association of Thailand, as well as MPs, lawyers, students and ex-prisoners, who have long been concerned about prison's problems. Some of them have conducted studies on the issue, made inspection trips to various major prisons of the country, etc.

One result of the meeting was a 4 page letter addressed to the Minister of Interior, Mr. Prataung Airdabutra, with 8 major points that urgently needed to be cured, if the authorities would like to see prison

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The participants of the seminar have seen the importance of dialogue and cooperation between different religions in their social activities, and have decided that CGRS is the most suitable organization to take this initiative.

2. Assisting in the Training of Monk Bare-foot Doctors

During May 6-20, the Religious Commission for Development, a newly-established ecumenical commission, held a training for 60 monks bare-foot doctors who came from various parts of the country. The training was held at Mahachula Buddhist Monk University, and has gained much support and cooperation from various organizations and institutions, such as the Mahidol Medical University, Komol Keamthong Foundation, Justice and Peace Commission of Thailand and CGRS.

Representatives of CGRS were also invited to speak on the topic "Young People and Religious Mission" and to lead the seminar that followed.

IV. Micro Media Activities

Throughout the many years of its work with the people, CGRS has realized that one crucial factor for the success or failure of our work is the media. We have also realized that all the big and influential medias such as radio, newspapers and television, do not serve the people, but serve the exploitative system. Moreover, they are controlled by capitalist monopolies which makes it even more difficult for us or for the people to break through it.

Therefore, CGRS has tried to seriously think about the alternative micro media, a media that is really under our control and will serve our work for the people.

Since April, two people have worked full time for CGRS on micro media activities. We have produced a slide set on Indochinese Refugees. On May 30, we staged a street theatre to protest the repression in South Korea (Kwangju incident), and on June 13, helped the Rama IV slum residents to stage a direct action in front of the Parliament Building to protest the eviction.

In addition, in order to strengthen the base for micro media work, the two CGRS staff have given basic theatre knowledge and theatre training to students at Thammasart and Kasetsart universities in Bangkok, and given training on slide production to students of Chiangmai university.

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in various ways, for example, to build up a network system for them so that they could share experience and help. Along with activities done in rural areas, CGRS tries to make the urban people more conscious of the problems that the rural people are facing, and encourage them to help both directly and indirectly.

CGRS has taken the malnutrition problem as a main emphasis of its rural development work. Malnutrition is currently one of the most serious problems Thailand is facing, with 60% of children under 5 years old being undernourished, and 55,000 children dying each year from malnutrition.

At the village level, CGRS has tried to identify villages facing serious malnutrition problems and seek village leaders who will organize the people to carry out the anti-malnutrition project such as the lunch for children program, self-reliance agriculture, rice bank and cow bank, etc. It has also arranged for a network system for groups involved in the anti-malnutrition activities through meetings and exchange visits, so that they could share their experience.

While tackling malnutrition problems at the village level, CGRS at the same time has a study project - "Where has the food gone?" to study on the malnutrition problem in Thailand, its rootcauses and effects. CGRS also tries to conscientize the public about the problem through campaigns, direct actions, publications and slide shows.

III. Religious Relations Activities

Though the vast majority of Thais actively profess adherence to one or other of the major world religions, in general, they and their religious leaders adhere more to the form of their religions, rather than the content and the real meaning. If the conflicts in society are to be reduced, and a widescale and violent civil war avoided, it is absolutely essential that religious groups and leaders become involved in really practising their principles, take on a socially responsible role, and really become involved in tackling non-violently the evils of society.

During a three month period, CGRS carried out the following activities:-

1. Ecumenical Seminar on Religion and Social Responsible Role

was held during May 3-5 at a northeastern province of Korat. Participating in the seminar were committee members and staffs of CGRS, religious leaders, writers, community workers and students.

During the seminar, the 40 participants who are from different religions, namely Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, enthusiastically exchanged their views on religious roles in solving social ills, as well as tried to understand and appreciate other religions.