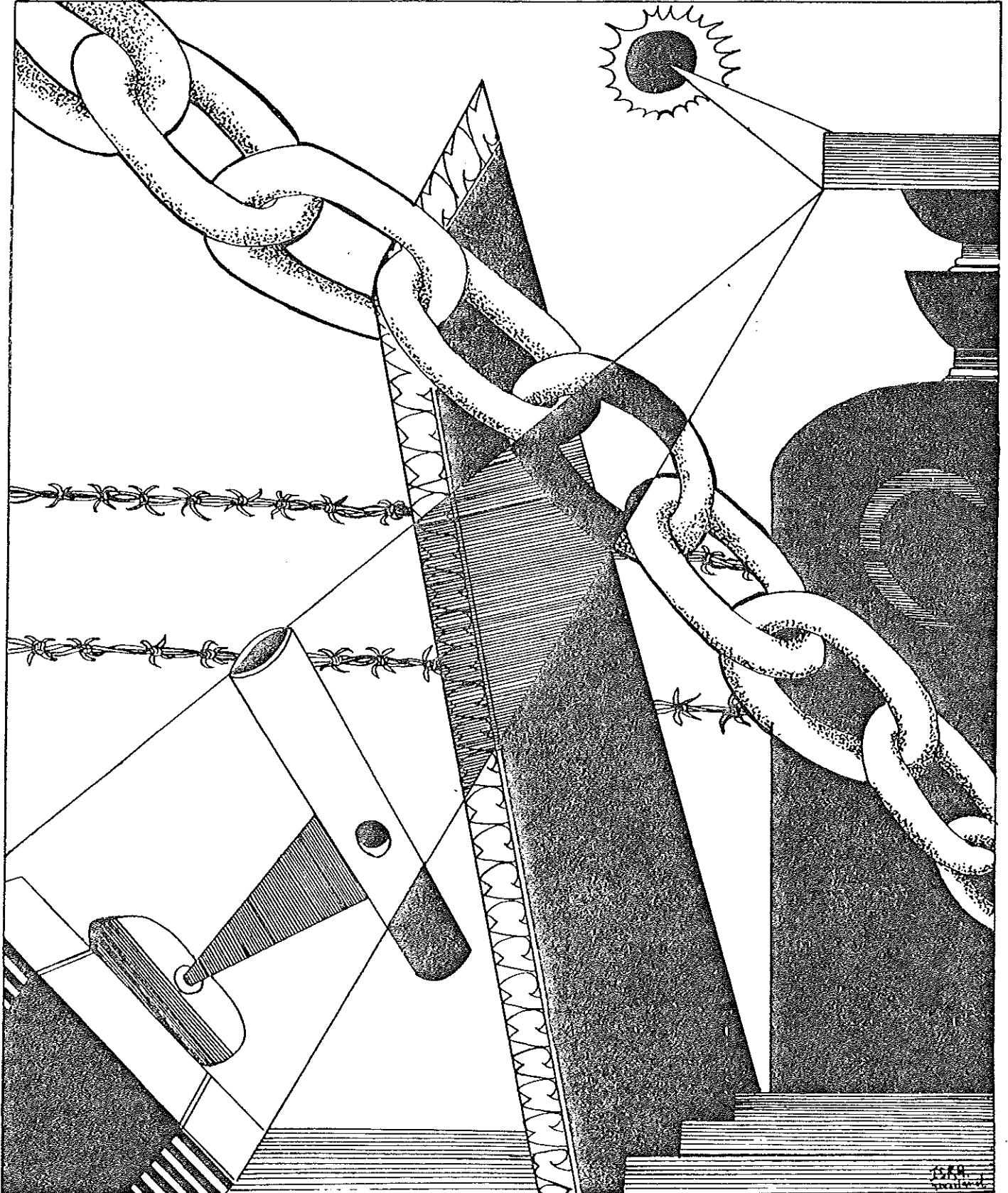


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REPORT

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THAILAND

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THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

The political tide in Thailand has been rising since the beginning of this year following Army Commander-in-Chief Gen. Arthit Kamlang-ek's intention, widely reported in the press, to have some provisions of the Constitution changed, on the grounds that the new voting system - under which each province becomes a single constituency with voters casting their ballots for a slate of candidates from each party - would not favour the election of 'true representatives of the people'. The Army Chief and like-minded politicians proposed in January that transitional provisions in the Constitution, due to expire on April 21, be officially embodied in the Constitution or extended. This would result in maintaining the old multi-constituency individual-candidacy system of voting (used in Thailand's last elections in April 1979), the extensive powers of the appointed Senate (seen as crucial for the maintenance of government stability), the right of government officials - including military officers - to hold cabinet positions. It was generally believed, however, that one of Gen Arthit's ideas behind this constitutional change drive was to pave his way to becoming next premier. Four days after Gen Arthit's interview, the First Army Division Commander Maj-Gen Pichit Kullavanich, during a now-famous TV programme "Talk on the Country's Situation", warned that if the new voting system were to go through, it would imperil national security and thus prompt the army to carry out exercises. This barely veiled threat of a coup d'etat provoked a rapidly mounting opposition from various circles, such as democratic-minded politicians, journalists, intellectuals, university lecturers and students, & even one faction of high-ranking army officers. Such a strong reaction brought the pressure to bear on Gen Arthit so much so that on January 20 he resigned from the Senate and was later followed in his move by 12 more high-ranking army officers. The army-backed drive for constitutional amendments went on unabated, however.

Some groups of politicians, labour leaders and some pressure groups that supported the constitutional change drive called for the convening of a special parliamentary session with a view to amending the Constitution. A special session was finally held in mid-February. An army-inspired constitutional draft bill was immediately submitted to the Parliament and went through its first reading without much ado. Subsequently, a MP of the Democrat Party - which had opposed the amendments from the start - went so far as to declare to the Parliament that he would commit suicide if the amendments went through the third reading. The protest movement against the constitutional changes expanded resulted in a combination of forces among major political parties on the one hand, and in the creation of the Federation for Democracy in Thailand by intellectuals, university lecturers, and students, and various human rights groups. Police Major Anant Senakhant - former leader of "Chanuan" or anti-corruption movement - quit his monkhood to join the protest movement. He went on a hunger strike together with MP Chalard Worachat (who had threatened to commit suicide) and 11 more protestors, just one week before the third reading of the amendments.

The constitutional changes were, however, rejected by the Parliament, the supporters lacked only 10 votes to have the required majority. A general election, scheduled for June 12, would thus be held on the basis of the new voting system, the appointed Senate would see its powers reduced and government officials would be no more entitled to hold cabinet position.

Three days after, in an unexpected move Prime Minister Gen Prem Tinsulanond dissolved the House of Representatives and called a general election on April 18,

3 days before the expiry of transitional clauses of the Constitution. The election was thus to be based on the old electoral system. Gen Prem justified his move within the context of national stability which would be threatened if a new electoral formula were to be used. It was believed that Gen Prem dissolved the House under the pressure of the army faction that had called for the constitutional changes.

While the public attention had been drawn to the controversy over the amendments and to the forthcoming general election, a labour leader - Mr Khampoon Wongkhan-25 years old, deputy secretary of the Iron and Steel Labour Union, was shot dead on March 21, at 8.00 p.m. when he left the office of a workers' cooperative, founded by him and his friends to promote the workers' welfare. The gunman had been at large. It should be noted that he escaped a similar attempt on his life in January this year. The police imputed his death to either an internal conflict among workers themselves or a conflict with the employers whose interests had been affected by the workers' protest led by Mr. Khampoon and friends. He had been adviser to many trade unions of big factories in the Phrapradaeng area, Bangkok's neighbouring province of Smutprakarn. He had been involved in big workers' strikes in that area, for instance, in the longest strike in 1982 at the Thai Pattraporn textile factory.

During the afore-mentioned special parliamentary session, two interesting bills were submitted for discussion - one of which, namely a revised text of the Penal Code Procedures, had not been passed by the Parliament. According to the new bill, the accused was granted the right to receive visitors everyday, to have medical treatment if he so desired, to have private meetings with his lawyer, and to have his lawyer present during his interrogation. The bill which had been approved by the House was technically rejected by the Senate; the special parliamentary session was announced terminated while the bill was being examined by the Senate Commission on Administrative Affairs.

Another bill, approved by both Houses and pending the announcement in the Royal Gazette, authorizes the criminal convicted to appeal for a re-examination of their cases if they believe that they have been wrongly convicted and jailed. (See NEWS FROM THAILAND.)

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THAILAND 1982

Compared to the preceding years for instance 1981, 1982 saw a number of improvements in the human rights situation in Thailand. For instance, cases of human rights violations characterized by misuse of authority by the Rangers were reduced in number. However, news of political killings was reported in the press. The government maintained certain legal restrictions; martial law was still in force, some cases were still brought before the military tribunal and no right of appeal was granted for such cases. The Anti-Communist Activities Act still authorized those responsible for its enforcement to detain communist suspects for period up to 480 days. The National Administrative Reform Council Order No 42 and the 1941 Press Law were still used by the government as Damocles' sword over the press. Moreover, there were still reports last year about a number of assassinations of labour leaders and newsmen.

1) The Anti-Communist Activities Act and the National Administrative Reform Council (NARC) Orders

There still exist a number of unjust laws restricting people's rights and liberties. One of these laws is the Anti-Communist Activities Act, promulgated on February 1, 1979, which empowers government officers to arrest those suspected of communist activities (See HRTR Vol 3 No. 2 MARCH-APRIL 1979) anywhere, without any warrant to arrest, as well as to detain those suspects for investigation for a period up to 480 days, much longer than that authorized by the normal process of law which limits the maximum detention period to 91 days.

At present, the military establishment and the government are considering revoking this Act in conformity with the "political leading military" policy of the much talked-of Prime Minister's Orders 66/Buddhist Era (BE) 2523 and 65/BE 2525. In the meantime, however, the government, through the National Security Council and the Internal Security Operation Command (ISCC), is drafting a new bill on "internal security", the provisions of which reportedly will cover all forms of terrorism and all political ideas without reference to any particular ideology (e.g. communism). This bill will eventually serve as a substitute for the Anti-Communist Activities Act. The new bill is expected to lend itself to an interpretation as broad as the present Act, so as to grant an almost unlimited authority to the responsible officers to make arrests.

The administration, however, continues to arrest, detain and put on trial communist suspects. At times, after investigation those arrested may undergo rehabilitation training at the Karoonyathep (God Mercy) Training Centre for six months before being released. Their release is nevertheless conditional as they have to report to the authorities at regular intervals. Some of them may be brought before the court. At the moment these people are Mr. Damri Reun-sutham, Prakob Thongtheung, Surachai Sae Dan, Mali Sakhorn, Pravit Faencharoen, Charnchai Charnsaichonnathae, Adul Bunreung and Mrs. Wimol Phienthamdee.

Aside from communist cases, there are other cases concerning national security and political cases which are being examined by the criminal court. (See "The Political Cases Today", HRTR, Vol. 6, No 3.)

In 1982 there were no reports about communist suspects who had been arrested and had disappeared as in 1980 and 1981; there were instead many reported political assassinations.

Besides the Anti - Communist Activities Act, there are the National Administrative Reform Council's Orders No 1,8,29,30, which, respectively, authorize the military tribunal to examine such cases as those connected with national security, communist activities, as well as certain crimes, i.e. sabotage, arson, kidnapping. The verdict in these cases will be final, with no right of appeal for the defendant.

2) Suppression by "the Death Squad"

According to some news reports in 1982 a special unit called the "Death Squad" has been set up, composed of a special police force empowered to arrest any suspect without going through any due process of law. The Unit has been in operation since October 1981, and is called by different names according to each locality, such as Death Squad Infernal Unit, Hunter Unit. The existence of this Unit was attested to by an interview given by a certain high - ranking official of the Ministry of Interior in late 1981. There were also some incidents believed to have arisen out of suppression drives by this Unit. (See "Assassinations and Disappearances in Thailand", HRTR, Vol. 6, No 4.)

3) Workers' Rights

On October 1, 1982, the government made an announcement according to which the minimum daily wage was increased from 61 to 64 baht for workers in Bangkok and eight big provinces, that for workers in other regions being maintained at the same rate, namely 61 and 52 baht, respectively. However, a survey conducted by the National Statistic Office shows that since October 1981 only 40% of employees in Bangkok and eight neighbouring provinces had benefited from the official rate of 61 baht, and that 60% of those in other provinces were receiving salaries of 40 - 50 baht, well below the official rate of 52 baht.

The shutting down of (especially, small) factories, arbitrary termination of work contracts and lay - offs continued during the whole period of 1982 due to the deteriorating economic situation. In cases of arbitrary termination of work contracts and lay - offs, a number of employers did not respect the labour law. For instance, the employees concerned had not been notified in advance of such measures or had not been paid due compensation. Sometimes the employers dismissed workers' leaders or trade union members simply because they had led the workers' fight for their legitimate rights. All these arbitrary actions on the part of the employers prompted workers to rally on various occasions throughout 1982, either to press for reintegration of those dismissed, or to demand compensatory funds, or to stage work stoppages to demand improvement in their welfare and working conditions. The labour leaders who had played a leading role in striving for satisfaction of these just demands, were threatened, injured and, in some cases, assassinated. (See "News from Thailand", HRTR, Vol. 6, No 2.)

4) Freedom of the Press

A number of laws which are still in force to restrict people's rights and liberties are the Administrative Reform Council no 42 and the 1941 Press Law - both of which are used by the authorities to control certain publications considered to affect national security, government stability, or law and order, and the morals of the people. In 1982, after having summoned every editor - in - chief to a meeting and having warned them about the way they should report news, the Press Officer, i.e. the Police Chief, served a warning to a number of newspapers, some of which were later ordered closed down. For instance, on April 8, 1982, the Thai language daily Matuphum was ordered to be closed down because of an article entitled "My Heart to My Beloved Wife and Mother" alleged to have caused friction among the soldiers and to have threatened law and order as well as the morals of the people. However, on June 11, 1982, the Upper House approved a draft bill revising

one essential point in the Administrative Reform Council Order No 42: from now on those affected by an order to close down their newspaper could, if they so wish, appeal to the court (and no longer to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior as formerly had been the case) for review of such an order; during this time, the court might make use of its discretionary power to suspend the closing order for a certain period.

In 1982, five journalists were threatened and 13 more were assassinated, reportedly because they had revealed certain misdeeds of some local officials and influential people.

5) Abuse of Power

It is reported that in 1982 the number of cases-compared to 1980-1981 of misuse of power by the Armed Volunteers' Unit, better-known as Rangers, a paramilitary unit used for communist suppression operations, was noticeably reduced in spite of some reported cases in the beginning of the year. (See "Misuse of Government Power", HRTR, Vol. 6, No 1.) On the other hand, news was regularly reported throughout 1982 about abuse of authority by, and misdeeds of, other repressive units, namely policemen, soldiers and village defence volunteers (Or Sor). Punishment was meted out to these elements only in some cases.

6) Assassinations of Rural Leaders

In 1982, many sub-district officers, village headmen, and development workers were assassinated, reportedly because these local leaders were determined to improve the rural people's living conditions and, in so doing, had protested against the local officials' injustice and misdeeds. Their actions affected the interests of some local influential people and officials.

7) Persons Detained by Special Orders and Condemned to Death

On the occasion of the Rattanakosin Bicentennial, a royal amnesty was decreed for prisoners throughout the country, as well as for convicts under the Prime Minister's orders based on Articles 21, 27 and 200 of the 1976, 1977 and 1978 Constitutions of the administrations of Thanin Kraivichien and Kriangsak Chamanand - a speedy exercise of judicial power by passing due process of law. Sixty more persons in the same category had not, however, benefited from this amnesty as they were convicted of threatening national security, or of drug-trafficking.

Thirty-three persons were sentenced to death for various serious crimes, during January-October 1982. From October to the end of last year, this number was increased to 48-most of whom were convicted of murder, robbery and murder, and rape and murder. (See "News from Thailand", HRTR, Vol. 6, No 4 and Vol. 7, No 1) It should be added that on the occasion of the Rattanakosin Bicentennial 49 out of those sentenced to death had their punishment commuted to life imprisonment. (For more details of this article please see "Summary of Information on People Assassinated or Arrested or Who Disappeared", HRTR, Vol. 6 No 4)

THE DRIVE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND THE AFTERMATH OF THE HOUSE DISSOLUTION

The political changes during the first quarter of 1983 have constituted an important turning point in the political situation of present Thailand. The group that strove for constitutional amendments—either by officially embodying transitional provisions in the Constitution or by simply extending them—was led by Army Commander-in-Chief Gen Arthit Kamlang-ek and supported by conservative military officers, conservative political parties, the Democratic Soldiers - or so-called "Progressive Soldiers" - Movement, and the Labour Force Party which has as its chief adviser Mr. Prasert Sabsunthorn (former member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Thailand - CPT). It is noteworthy that it was the first time the conservative group and the military - aligned socialist elements had so actively combined their forces. By maintaining the transitional provisions due to expire soon, this group aimed at maintaining the extensive powers of the appointed Senate, the right of government officials to hold cabinet positions, and the old multi-constituency individual - candidacy system of voting - instead of a new electoral system under which each province becomes a single constituency with voters casting their ballots for a slate of candidates from each party. Had these constitutional changes been successful, they would have culminated in a weak, and thus unstable, civil government (because under the old voting system no single political party conceivably can win an absolute majority and the formation of a coalition government would become as inevitable as it is at present) - leaving room for the military to continue to dominate Thailand's political situation.

The drive for such constitutional amendments had brought about a vast "anti-dictatorial" protest movement composed of major political parties and people of various strata. As the constitutional changes were finally rejected by the Parliament, the House dissolution was resorted to and turned the "defeat" of the proponents of such changes into victory. A general election was scheduled for April 18 (instead of June 12) i.e. three days before the expiry of the controversial transitional provisions in the Constitution, and thus was to be organized under the old electoral system.

Many people, considering past experiences, had predicted that the controversial Constitution of 1978 would not last four years as has now been the case. This prediction almost became true, however, when during April 1-3, 1981 a group of army officers - the so-called "Young Turks" - attempted an abortive coup d'etat. During that near civil-war situation, Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanond and the royal family had fled with a group of loyal army officers to the strategically important province of Nakhorn Si Thammarat where they set up a headquarters to counter the coup. Maj-Gen., and now Gen. - Arthit Kamlang-ek, then Second Region Army Deputy Commander, was chiefly instrumental in successfully crushing the coup and has since then enjoyed an unprecedentedly meteoric rise in power in the Army of which he is now Commander-in-Chief. He has reportedly been backed up by the Palace.

There had also been at least two attempts - respectively by the Prem administration and by the Social Action Party - to have the Constitution amended, especially the provisions on the new voting formula. These amendments were aimed at maintaining the old multi-constituency individual-candidacy system of voting, under which - it has been argued - some small political parties could contest the election. The amendments were, however, rejected by the Parliament, especially by the Senate.

The army faction and like-minded politicians who supported the constitutional amendments last January, that is four months before the expiry of the transitional provisions, justified their move on the grounds that the public was not used to the new voting system under which only rich politicians, and not "true representatives of the people" would be elected. They, therefore, urged for the maintenance of extensive legislative powers of the appointed Senate and of the right of government officials to hold cabinet posts. They asserted that the appointed Senate was useful and that MPs would need to be seconded by senators who in the future should be selected from persons from all walks of life. That government officials could hold cabinet posts was justified by the fact that every Thai citizen should enjoy equal rights. The important groups of people that called for the constitutional changes along the above - mentioned lines were: the army "Traika" faction, namely Army Commander-in-Chief Gen. Arthit Kamlang-ek, Assistant Chief-of-Staff (operations) Lt.-Gen. Chaovalit Yongchaiyuth and the first Division Commander Maj.-Gen. Pichit Kullavanich; such conservative political parties as the Prachakorn Thai (Thai Citizen) Party led by Mr. Samak Sundaravej, the Siam Democracy Party of Col. Phon Roengprasertvit, and the military - leaning faction of the industrially-based Chart Thai (Thai Nation) Party; and the "66/23" group (that urges for the execution of the Prime Minister's Order no 66, issued in B.E. 2523 or 1980, demanding the use of "political leading military" means to combat communism) which is composed of Mr. Prasert Sabsunthorn (former communist leader), an army think-tank group known as the Democratic Soldiers, and the Democratic Labour Party inspired by Mr. Prasert.

This combination of forces could be termed as a new phenomenon. Gen. Arthit has relied upon the "66/23" group to formulate political tactics and strategies with a view to controlling the masses for his political or military interests. As for the Democratic Soldiers, they have clung to the army dominant faction in order to counter the monopolistic-capitalistic group seen as enemy no 1 and, subsequently, the much weaker conservative elements. They have also made use of their political ally - the Democratic Labour Party - to support Gen. Arthit.

At the height of the constitutional controversy, the proponents of the amendments resorted to mass media under their control to support their move and attack their opponents. For instance, the News Focus Programme ("Rabiengkhae"), broadcast over the army radio network, regularly slandered the anti-amendment groups - in blatant violation of the rules and regulations put out by the Radio and Television Control Committee. Two white papers were issued by Gen. Arthit's faction in the name of the Thai Army to support the constitutional changes. Such rightist groups as "Village Scouts" and "Thai National Defence Volunteers" were also mobilized in their favour. The reactivated extreme - right group, "Red Gaurs", who had notoriously been involved in the bloody October 1976 was deployed to disrupt a peaceful anti-amendment rally outside the Parliament. At one point in time, some political parties which were opposed to "the dictatorial clique" were accused of receiving funds from abroad to carry out political schemes detrimental to "national security"

An anti-amendment coalition was composed of two major political parties, namely the Democrat Party and the Social Action Party, and of the newly established Federation for Democracy in Thailand which availed itself of this opportunity to educate the masses on democracy. On the eve of the third and final reading of the proposed constitutional amendments, Prince Kukrit Pramoj - leader of the Social Action Party - accused a certain army faction a clear reference to Gen. Arthit and friends, of scheming for a Russian-style communist regime in Thailand

When the attempt to have the Constitution amended was finally defeated in the Parliament, Prime Minister Gen. Prem Tinsulanond - apparently under the pressure of Gen. Arthit and allies, and in a move to defuse the explosive situation - dissolved the House of Representatives and called a snap general election on April 18. Most of the political parties reacted angrily to this unexpected move, and powerlessly had to prepare themselves for an uncertain election.

Addressing the crowd at the Pramane Ground, Police Major Anant Senakhan, a monk turned political activist, revealed an inside story of the House dissolution. He asserted that even the King was at first unwilling to sign a royal decree to dissolve the House. That was an unprecedentedly audacious assertion. On March 30, he was arrested and charged with lese-majeste, slandering the Queen and the Crown Prince.

Gen. Arthit's control over the three branches of the Thai armed forces has in the meanwhile been considerably strengthened with the coming to power of the new Air Force Commander-in-Chief, known to be one of Gen. Arthit's old classmates. It is believed, therefore, that in time of crisis the Air Force will no longer balance off-as it did under the ex-chief - the army faction led by Gen. Arthit.

The sudden death of the former Air Force Commander-in-Chief has tilted the balance of power towards Gen. Arthit's faction within the armed forces. The former had been expected to succeed Supreme Commander Gen. Saiyud Kerdphon - also a critic of Gen. Arthit and friends - who is due to retire at the end of next September. The next successor in line will thus be none other than Gen. Arthit himself who will retain his post of Army Commander-in-Chief. By that time the latter will become the most powerful military figure in Thailand. Within the Army itself, the opposing faction led by the charismatic fourth Region Army Commander, Lt.-Gen. Han Lilanond, has recently seen its influence much restricted. For instance, a field commander in charge of Area 5, a close aide of Lt.-Gen. Han, was transferred two months ago to an inactive post in Bangkok. Most of the commanders of important divisions both in the capital and in different regions were transferred and replaced by Gen. Arthit's men.

The House dissolution has conditioned several problems, for instance the period the newly-elected MPs will last - only 3 days before the expiry of the transitional provision - or for 4 years, a possible confusion when the newly-elected independent MPs must become members of a political party, according to the Constitution after the expiry of the transitional provision, to maintain their MP status. The mass buying of MPs and their possible transfer from one party to another are most likely to happen. Whether the formation of the electoral government would have enough stability since under the old electoral system political parties cannot win an absolute majority and whether there would be another House dissolution. These problems can hardly be solved and they would be good instrument for the army to take over the power again. Thus, the political trend in the near future is that since the structure of the present Constitution does not provide opportunities for Gen. Arthit and his allies to form government, a new round of calling for constitutional changes would be moved by the army or a coup d'etat would take place and government led by Gen. Arthit would be formed justifying by the chaotic situation to perpetuate its dominant position as there hardly be any forces strong enough to oppose Gen. Arthit to do so. The new government could be more strict in providing rights and freedom to the people and would enjoy the "pure power" as has always been propagandized in the radio for, to Gen. Arthit and his conservative allies, the people are not prepared for a democratic rule and the armed forces should play a prominent role in administering the country.

NEWS FROM THAILAND

Move for Constitutional Amendment ends with House Dissolution

The controversial constitutional amendments to extend the powers of the Senate, retain the rights of government officials to hold political posts and to maintain the voting system of divided constituencies with individual candidacy for the next 4 years, was rejected in the third reading by 10 votes on March 16. The proposed amendments came on the eve of enforcement of the Constitution, which will introduce a voting system based on combined constituencies and on a party basis and drastically reduce certain powers of appointed senators, as of April 22 when the provisional clause is due to expire.

The move to amend the Constitution was backed by the Army Commander-in-Chief Gen Arthit Kamlang-ek and a group of high-ranking soldiers, some political parties, labour unions as well as some other pressure groups. The Commander of the First Army division in a nationally televised discussion programme on Jan 16, nearly a week after Gen Arthit directly stated his desire for a special session of Parliament to amend the Constitution, threatened that the Army would have to "hold exercises" if national security was at stake with the introduction of the new electoral system. On facing strong reaction from the public, Gen Arthit resigned from the Senate on Jan 20 followed by 12 senators from the Army. Two "White Papers" were also issued in the name of the Army to support the amendments.

However, the move was strongly opposed by several groups of people e.g. the newly formed "Federation for Democracy" (consisting of academicians, lecturers, student unions, labour unions, human rights groups etc.), influential political parties and a large number of people. They started their campaign shortly after the extraordinary session of Parliament had been successfully reconvened on Feb 4. They described the move as a silent coup d'etat and the maintenance of military dictatorship. Moreover, the pro-amendment move is controversial since several attempts by political parties and the government itself to amend the Constitution's electoral system were made and rejected by the Parliament during the past year.

Ironically, the army support group claims that they want to prevent the dictatorship of the rich political parties by abolishing the new voting system and to extend individual freedom.

The situation heated up a week before the final reading of the draft amendments when Pol Maj Anant Senakhan, the leader of "Chanaun (Fuse) Group", left the monkhood to join the campaign against the amendments and led a hunger strike with an MP who had declared he would commit suicide if the Parliament passed the amendments. A few days later the right-wing "Red Gaur Movement" and other right-wing groups tried to discourage the hunger strike demonstration which was joined by another 11 people.

Only 3 days after the draft rejection the Prime Minister announced the dissolution of the House of Representatives and the election date of April 18, nearly 2 months earlier than planned reasoning that he wanted to avoid any chaos and violence from the new electoral system and would like the electoral system to be the old one of divided constituencies and individual candidacy which is "the people's wish". It is predicted that this system will prevent any of the major parties from winning enough seats in Parliament to form a government.

Labour Leader Shot Dead

Samut Prakarn

Kampon Wongkhan, 25, deputy secretary general of the powerful Metal and Steel Labour Union, was shot dead at 8.40 p.m. on March 21. Kampon and 4 other union activists who managed to escape uninjured were leaving the newly-built offices of a cooperative of the union after having attended a meeting there. The gunman managed to escape the scene.

Kampon, a former worker at a Volvo assembly plant, had been active in the past few years in supporting workers in their disputes with employers. He was involved in such major strikes as the ones at Thai Pattraporn textile factory, the Aoyama Thai and the Chillington Tool companies recently. The strike at the Thai Pattraporn factory lasted about 3 months and was believed to be the longest in recent years. During the past several months he received repeated threats and in January this year, he was attacked and suffered a serious head wound.

Reporter killed by Policeman

Songkhla

Ratcha Pathan, 32, a journalist of several local papers as well as a stringer for dailies in Bangkok, was shot dead by Pol Sgt Kunakorn Uthephan on his way home from a party marking the opening of a branch office of Mahachai Newspapers in Hat Yai District of Songkhla Province in the South in the night of Feb 24.

Ratcha, who was also secretary general of a Muslim Youth organization, had been writing articles critical of certain influential people in the southern commercial town.

The gunman, who abandoned his motorcycle after it was hit by a tricycle, was traced by the licence of his motorcycle and arrested on Feb 25.

New Bill to Review Criminal Cases Endorsed

Bangkok

The Senate has endorsed a new bill on March 4, to allow review of criminal cases which have already been tried, if the witnesses or other evidence is proved to be false, or new, clear and important evidence is found which could help prove the defendant's innocence. If so, the court will overturn the former sentence and give a new one stating the defendants' innocence and will give all their rights back. Compensation will also be given to them or their heirs.

Death Sentences

Another 19 persons in 14 cases were found guilty of serious crimes and sentenced to death during the clearing of cases before the end of last year. Three cases (No 10, 13, 14) were commuted to life imprisonment and 2 cases (No 2, and 12) were reduced to 60 years and 56 years imprisonment. However, 2 convicts on raping and killing charges, No 4 in the last report, had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment by the Supreme Court. Thus, the number of persons under death sentence in the last 3 months increased to 48.

In the first 3 months of 1983, 14 persons in 7 cases were sentenced to death. Nevertheless, 4 sentences in the second case were commuted to life imprisonment.

No	Name	Charges	Date of Incident	Name of the Provincial Court	Date of Sentencing
1.	Khamsing Somporn (22) Somboon Tonethai (28)	raping & murdering	5/6/1982	Ubon Ratchathani	20/12/1982
2.	Prasarn Jung-Ngi (24)	raping & murdering	26/11/1982	Chachoengsoew	27/12/1982
3.	Pol Sgt Chuchart Meksuthat (32) Fol Pvt Charoon Chaiwong (35)	murdering	-/1/1979	Suphan Buri	29/12/1982
4.	Kiatphong Rojanavipark (20) Phiphat Yassaphan (21)	murdering	5/9/1982	Samut Prakarn	29/12/1982
5.	Sanan Umthong (50)	raping & murdering	27/12/1981	Chumporn	30/12/1982
6.	Saman Khampha (25) Somchit Singkhambun (35)	murdering	6/7/1982	Loei	30/12/1982
7.	Bunlert Phukphan	murdering	19/9/1976	Kanchanaburi	30/12/1982
8.	Mangkorn Tangsucharit Wirote Phongkaew	murdering	14/5/1982	Prachinburi	30/12/1982
9.	Uanchai Sudarak	murdering	27/8/1982	Chonburi	30/12/1982
10.	Loy Phongtheun	raping & murdering	11/11/1981	Bangkok	30/12/1982
11.	Tom Sae-Lai	robbing & murdering	12/1/1979	Kamphangphet	30/12/1982
12.	Je-Useng Mona (23)	murdering	4/4/1982	Yala	30/12/1982
13.	Chuen Wicharn	murdering	-	Chiengmai	30/12/1982
14.	Insorn Saengmuangmal (25)	murdering	21/4/1982	Chiengmai	30/12/1982

1983 cases

1.	Thep Meechai Thinnakorn Khampha	robbing & murdering	9/3/1981	Pattani	24/1/1983
2.	Samarn Wannao Thavee Saengthuam Suthorn Ponthong Mana Poothaweep Manas Poothaweep	robbing & murdering	14/2/1980	Ayudhdhaya	27/1/1983
3.	Saneh Yuthayothin Narong Seniwong Na Ayudhdhaya	raping & murdering	16/11/1982	Prachinburi	31/1/1983
4.	Sornmuang Kaeotip (21)	murdering	18/11/1982	Nan	2/2/1983
5.	Bunlit Pholnag Tim Meesuk	murdering	11/12/1981	Trang	9/2/1983
6.	Somsak Abdullah (25)	robbing & murdering	24/2/1983	Bangkok	17/3/1983
7.	Somsak Sadin Arun Lilang	murdering	26/7/1981	Sathun	28/3/1983

Mass Defection and Communist Suppression Carries on

Mongkol na Nakhon, 71, senior member of the outlawed Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), who defected to the government after 18 years' exile in China, arrived in Bangkok in bad health on Dec 31. He was the former leader of the now inactive Independent Front established in China and a member of the Coordinating Committee for the Patriotic and Democratic Front.

Six leading communist insurgents in several zones and several small groups of insurgents in the Northeast and the South also defected to the Government. Moreover, 5 mass defections, 2 in the Northeast, 2 in the Central Region and 1 in the North were held during the past 3 months. 260 communist insurgents and sympathizers from Nakorn Phanom Province, 466 from Muk Daharn Province, more than 500 mostly from the Karen tribe from Kanchanaburi Province, 300 from Nan Province and another 300 from Suphanburi Province surrendered to government authorities on Jan 18, Jan 23, Feb 17, March 25 and March 26 respectively. Col Sa-ngiam Rattansimakorn, a senior official of the Second Army Region, said more than 3,000 communistinsurgents in the Northeast have surrendered to government authorities over the past several months.

In Nan, a Northern Province, the Third Army has launched 3 military operations codenamed "Suriyapongse II, Suriyapongse III and Suriyapongse IV" since Dec 20 to the beginning of March. The operation aimed to wipe out the last communist strongholds in Fua and Thung Chang District and on the Laotian border.

In the South "Tai Rom Yen 14 and Tai Rom Yen 15" were launched in January by the Fourth Army against the insurgents in Nakorn Si Thammarat and several other provinces in an attempt to root out the remaining communist hideouts.

The Fourth Army also launched a major military offensive in the 5 southern-most provinces on Feb 1 in an attempt to pressure Muslim terrorists and guerillas of the Communist Party of Malaya to lay down their arms and surrender. The operation underway in Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, Satul and Songkhla will last 2 months.

ACTIVITIES OF CGRS

The Coordinating Group for Religion in Society (CGRS) is composed of laymen and young activists from the Buddhists, the Catholic and the Protestant who share a common belief in non-violence, 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 6, 1976 coup d'etat. For over six years CGRS has carried out its activities openly, in spite of repressive government and Martial Law. During this period the activities of CGRS has expanded considerably from merely helping political prisoners and their families and others suffering from conflict in the society, to exposing misuse of government power and campaigning for its victims, for the release of the political prisoners and for abolishment of unjust laws; helping form other groups prepared to struggle for justice and human rights; supporting indigenous rural development groups and coordinating religious organizations.

All the efforts of CGRS are directed at tackling the justice and oppression that exist in society using religious principles and non-violence 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 January-March 1983

I. Human Rights Activities

Providing Legal Aid

CGRS tries to ensure that political prisoners and prisoners facing injustices have legal protection, legal representation 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 has also given assistance to lawyers defending political cases, organized campaigns for the release of prisoners and encouraged the changing of laws, and so on.

On December 30 last year a case of 2 Muslim students for which CGRS has provided legal aid was finished, with one being released and the other being sentenced to 56 years imprisonment.

Je-Useng Mona (22) and Isma-ae Daleng (21), 2 Muslim students of Ram-Khamhaeng University, were arrested on April 8 and 9, 1982, respectively and charged with illegal possession of explosives and the joint killing of a soldier and a villager in a restaurant in the city district of Yala Province in the South, on April 4. They were brought to trial before the military court in Yala. (See more details in "The Political Cases Today" HRTR Vol 6 No 3.)

Je-Useng Mona was sentenced on Dec 30, 1982 to death. His sentence, however, was commuted to 56 years and 8 months due to his useful information during the interrogation. Isma-ae Daleng was found innocent and released.

This case is a politically motivated one connected with Je-Useng's activities with the separatist Barisan Revolutionary National Movement, which was however tried as a criminal case.

The Anti-Constitutional Amendments Campaign

CGRS joined seven other groups to form the Federation for Democracy on Feb 27. CGRS helped organize a public opinion survey in the Federation's campaign against the Army-backed constitutional amendments which would have allowed appointed senators to hold Cabinet portfolios and retain their legislative powers. A large number of people from all walks of life joined the Federation campaign as well as those of other groups. The result of the survey of 25,482 people was 2.3% for the amendment and 97.7% against the amendments.

Other activities, e.g. panel discussions in Bangkok and other big cities, posters, press releases, articles and a 3-day show for democracy held at Thammasart University were organized to inform the public of the reasons for rejection of the amendments-to prevent military dictatorship.

II Rural Development Activities

The Campaign for Job Creation in the Rural Areas Project

At present, the Northeast, Thailand's most drought-and poverty-stricken region, sees an increasing number of farmers confronted with the difficulty of solely earning their living from their farmland. A big number of these people have migrated to other labour-demanding areas, especially Bangkok where prosperity, business and economic opportunities are so much concentrated that it is cynically said that "Bangkok is Thailand". However, Bangkok itself has been facing a high rate of unemployment and will certainly be in no position to cope with the increasing number of rural migrants in the future. It is in this light that CGRS deems it most urgent for all concerned to find some preventive measures, and tries to bring about local coordination of such measures among local government agencies, among individuals or groups concerned, and among the rural people themselves-with a view to creating jobs for these rural people, to increasing their self-reliance with more income earned from non-agricultural activities, and to preventing their migration to other areas so that they will become an active force to develop their native region.

In this campaign, the first target group will be those living in city districts, namely those who have better opportunities and are in a position to support the job creation programme beneficial to the rural poor throughout the country. This campaign will mark the beginning of solutions to a chain of rural problems we are facing today.

The preparatory stage, January-March 1983, was characterized by three types of work.

1) Field Work

The target province was Ubonrajthani, which, of 16 northeastern provinces (the "Isan" region), is known to be mostly composed of poor areas. Three model villages were visited for data collection. Such inquiry visits were necessary to define the causes of rural migration as well as the villagers' reaction to this problem.

Aside from this village survey in the province of Ubonrajthani, inquiry teams were also sent to the Hualamphong Railway Station and the Northeast-bound Bus Terminal in Bangkok, to interview Northeasterners who had just arrived in the capital to seek jobs or were about to make trips to other provinces known to be in need of labour.

Another kind of field work was to survey the living conditions of the Isan people who had been working for quite a while in Bangkok and were concentrated in some slums.

In this survey the priority was given to those migrants from Ubourajthani in with the same survey conducted in the same province as mentioned above.

2) Research

Documents and research papers either directly or indirectly concerned with the problem of labour migration were collected and used as basic data extensively to study this problem and its acuity, as well as the feasibility of the job creation programme.

3) Coordination and Cooperation

Contacts and cooperation were sought with both public and private institutions of which the field work or the network covered the job creation in the rural areas, such as the Department of Rural Development, the Appropriate Technology Association (ATA).

III Child labour activities

CGRS is concerned about the situation of child labour, number of which is growing considerably. In 1978, 44% of children aged 11-14, which is schooling age, were employed in various sectors due to poverty and drought in rural areas. 200,000 of them migrated to Bangkok and worked in factories, many of which were so called "slave" factories because of their bad and inhuman condition that make children suffer severely. In 1978 there was a case that two children died while another three were crippled after working for three months.

On the occasion of the National Children's Day in Thailand on January 8, this year the Centre of Concern for Child Labour (CCCL), and CGRS in collaboration with 3 governmental agencies (the Faculty of Social Welfare Administration, Thammasat University, the National Youth Bureau of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Labour Department, Ministry of Interior) organized a seminar on 'Private Job Placement Firms and Child Labour'.

It was concluded that the governmental agencies should help disseminate information about the private job placement firms widely and the private job placement firms should be registered.

It was the first seminar on child labour ever held in Thailand and involved, among 100 participants, civil servants of concerned governmental agencies, academicians, journalists, lawyers and the owners of private job placement firms.

In order to provide health care for the child workers, CCCL in March organized a medical check-up for 16 young boys in a bag producing factory in Bangkok.

IV Slum activities

The number of squatters in Bangkok is increasing rapidly due to rural poverty. It is estimated that at least 75,000 people live in approximately 400 slums in Bangkok. These people are faced with various problems such as bad living conditions, lack of education, poverty, unemployment, drugs, etc. In addition they also face the constant threat of eviction. In spite of this, however, slums are growing rapidly in size and number, and have become a big social problem.

In the past 3 months CGRS concentrated on the activities of 2 slum communities namely Wat Lard Bua Kao community and Wat Kae community.

In Wat Lard Bua Kao community, although 73 families could get the land with the help of the Army and the National Housing Authority, (NHA), the land, will be developed by NHA in 1984 according to its budget. CGRS tried to help solve the problems the slum families are facing now e. g. the building of water-drainage for their temporary shelters, by organizing a meeting for the slum dwellers and NHA officials to discuss the solution to the problems and get help from NHA.

As for Wat Kae community, CGRS helped provide a teacher to take care of 20 pre-school children in the community child care centre begun by the slum dwellers themselves with the support of CGRS in January. The child care centre is the first activity to help organize people in the community and it is hoped the slum dwellers will realize their own strength in solving community problems together.

V Micro media activities

Micro media activities of CGRS is aimed to spread knowledge, information and understanding in different fields to the people in order to bring about understanding of basic problems and the way to the solutions; to exchange ideas, news, and information of the way of life and culture between cities and rural areas; to improve the standard of living in rural areas while maintaining the good tradition and culture; and to cooperate with concerned organizations and interested groups in designing various forms of mass communications in order that the poor in rural areas are better served.

During January-March micro media activities were carried out as follows:

- conducting itinerant theatre in 4 district schools in Sakon Nakorn Province during 10-14 January and in 6 schools of a district in Chantaburi Province during 18-21 January. Lighter issues for children with emphasis on good behaviour were the themes of the performances.
- collecting information and preparing a script on 'local administration' in order to produce a slide set and a cartoon booklet on the issue.
- cooperating with a teacher group in Nakhon Rajasima to train 80 local teachers to use printed media in Nakhon Rajasima Province during 25-27 March. Basic skills and techniques of using simple media to communicate with local people for development work are provided for participants in the training.