

how the prisoners live

Hospitalisation is possible only in very rare cases, and often comes at a time when the patient is beyond help. Many deaths occur in prison cells without any medical attention. No reliable figures of deaths are available but it is known for instance, that in some periods the death rate at the Salemba Prison in Jakarta, which accommodates about 1,500 political prisoners, has been as high as one prisoner a day. In Padang Military Prison which accommodates a few hundred prisoners, and which is never visited by a doctor, eighteen prisoners are known to have died during the years 1969 and 1970, due mainly to malnutrition and lack of medical attention. In Lampong, South Sumatra, many prisoners are known to have died as a result of extreme malnutrition.

CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Political prisoners are deprived of all forms of cultural and educational activity. There is a rigid ban on the entry of all reading material, with the single exception of sacred books such as the *Ku'ran* and the *Bible*. In some places, even these books are not allowed. No writing material is permitted. Cultural activities are also prohibited except, in some places, in preparation for celebrations of religious festivals,

No form of educational activity is provided for the prisoners, except religious instruction which is compulsory. This is particularly frustrating for the many youngsters under detention who have been unable to complete their schooling and are thus growing up in prison, unfit for any kind of employment requiring training. Handwork is allowed only at certain places, at the discretion of the prison commander, and in many cases this is permitted largely in order to provide the comman-

der or other officers with personal profits. Women prisoners are somewhat more favoured in this respect, but for male persons, handwork is difficult to arrange as they may not be permitted knives or the other sharp implements required for carpentry, woodwork, sculpture and the like.

As a result of the almost total absence of cultural and educational activity, prisoners spend most of their time doing nothing. Inevitably this adds to the frustrations and dissatisfactions that build up after a long period of incarceration.

FORCED LABOUR

Many reports have been received about political prisoners being compelled to work for officers at their place of detention for little or no remuneration. In some cases, they work as domestic servants, mechanics or chauffeurs, and are used in the offices as typists or for menial tasks. In other places, for instance, in East Kalimantan and West Java, they are used as forced labour on major construction works. In one case, prisoners have been used to repair an airstrip, in others they have been used for harbour or road construction, in others they have been used as plantation labour, and in yet others, they have provided the main labour force for the construction of tourist projects. It is not unusual for detainees to be held under continuing detention simply because they provide a valuable source of cheap or unpaid labour for the local commander.

CONTACT WITH FAMILIES

Of all the factors that make life in prison intolerable for political prisoners, perhaps the most irksome is the strict constraints placed upon meetings with families. For the majority of prisoners, there is no communication at all; relatives may be living in far-away places, or may have lost trace of the prisoner altogether. With the exception of prisoners held at the resettlement camps in Buru and Plantungan, no form of written communication is permitted at any time and for any purpose, not even to notify relatives of the whereabouts of the prisoner. There are many

men and women in Indonesian prisons who have had no news of their children for many years, and youngsters who have heard nothing from their parents, sisters or brothers since the time they were arrested many years ago.

Relatives are permitted to bring provisions to the prisons; indeed, without this source of supply, prisoners' health would be far worse than it is today. But relatives coming to the prison for this purpose must have a certificate of residence from the local Government representative confirming their relationship with the prisoners. Some are unwilling to apply for this certificate because of the stigma that attaches to relatives of political prisoners. If their relationship with a political prisoner becomes known, it may jeopardise their chances of permanent residence or employment, or education for children.

In many prisons, political prisoners are permitted to meet relatives only once a year and sometimes even less. Where meetings are regulated more frequently, permits are issued on a discriminatory basis and can be denied to some prisoners though relatives are not told the reasons for this. Husbands and wives who are both in prison have no means of communication, and in the vast majority of cases never meet.

DEGRADING AND INHUMAN CONTROL OVER THE PRISONERS

In all prisons and detention centres, the prisoners are completely at the mercy of the officers and soldiers in charge. They have no contact with civil authorities. Prison rule and discipline is arbitrary and unpredictable, and prisoners have no redress against frequent maltreatment or injustice from prison officials. Punishment is generally collective. The arbitrary nature of individual power leads to gross violations; an example is the case of a prisoner in Salemba Prison who stole some cassava because he was hungry and who was forced to eat cassava until he died of over-eating.

Most officers in charge of political prisoners adopt an attitude of extreme arrogance towards their charges whom they look upon as being guilty merely because they have been arrested. They look down upon the prisoners as 'communists', 'atheists' and 'traitors' and therefore unworthy of humane treatment. Prison officers and guards who may be inclined to treat the political prisoners with a sense of humanity and justice are prevented from doing so openly by the fear that this may cast suspicion on them, leading to a loss of position, or even to a loss of freedom.

indonesian attitudes

"As far as I know from newspapers and other sources, their (the political prisoners') condition is very bad, very poor; there is lack of medical treatment but this is the case with all prisoners in Indonesia... Everything must be done about this, because it is a shame for Indonesia. I will take risks to help them."

Indonesian lawyer Adnan Buyung Nasution, now Chairman of the Indonesian Legal Aid Organisation, in an interview with Dutch television. August 1970.