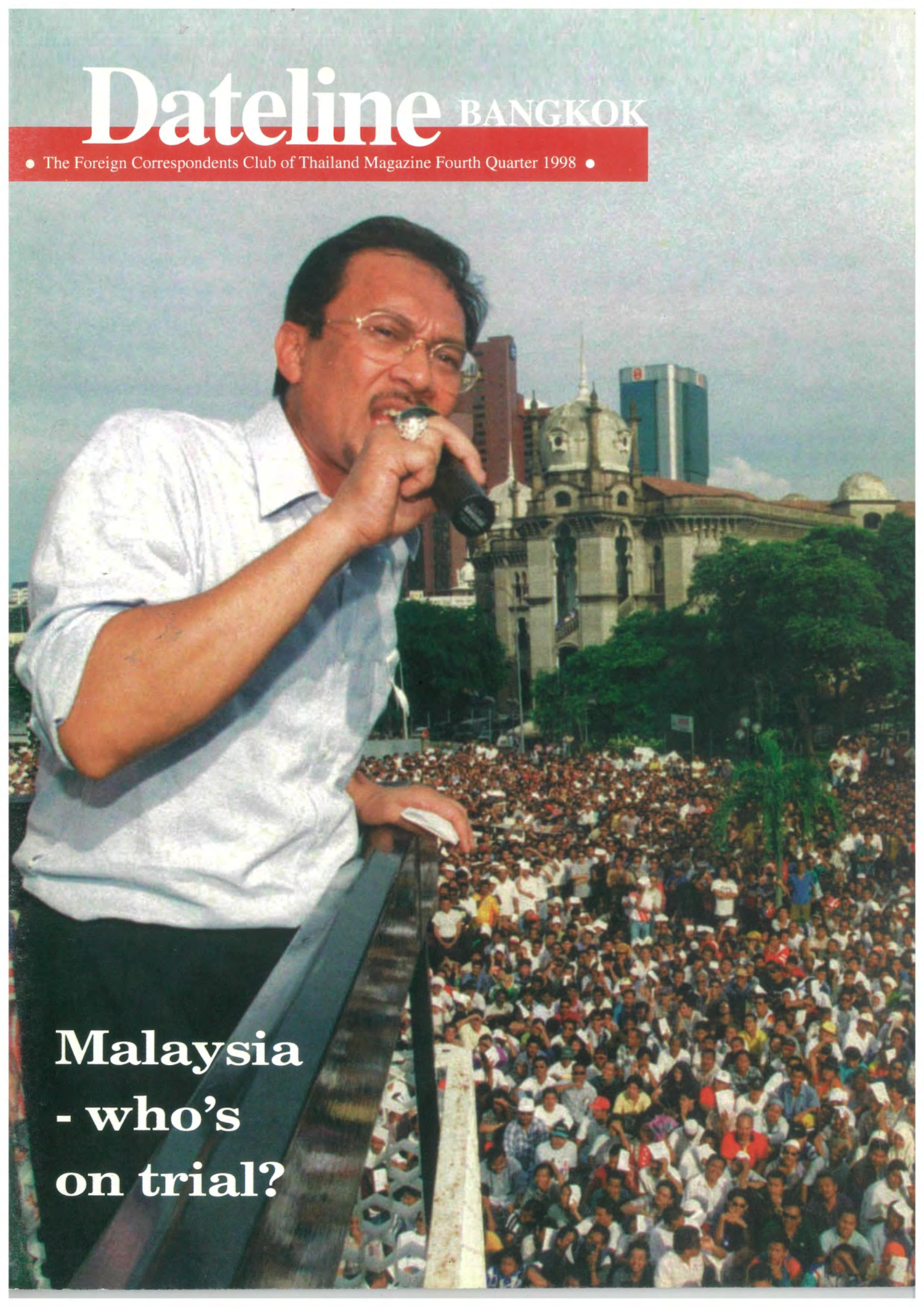


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• The Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand Magazine Fourth Quarter 1998 •

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THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB OF THAILAND

Penthouse, Maneeya Center Building
518/5 Ploenchit Road, Tel.: 652-0580-1
Phatumwan Fax: 652-0582
Bangkok 10330
email: fcct@asiaaccess.net.th

PRESIDENT
Philippe Decaux Tel.: 255-4652
French TV Fax: 255-3040
Mobile: 01- 845-3654
email: foghorn@asiaaccess.net.th

1st VICE PRESIDENT
Dennis Coday Tel.: 583-6047
Catholic News Service Fax: 964-2679
email: jamesc@ksc15.th.com

2nd VICE PRESIDENT
Alok Chopra Tel.: 253-5072
Shilpa Co., Ltd. Fax: 253-0593
email: shilpaco@infonews.co.th

CORRESPONDENT SECRETARY
Heather Kelly Tel.: 255-5915
AsiaWorks Television Ltd Fax: 255-5919
email: asiawork@loxinfo.co.th

CORR. DIRECTOR FOR PUBLICITY
Don Pathan Tel.: 266-0740-2
The Associated Press Fax: 237-6283
email: dpathan@ap.org

CORR. DIRECTOR FOR MEMBERSHIP
Michelle Cheung Tel.: 255-5915-6
CNBC Fax: 255-5919
email: mcheung@loxinfo.co.th

CORR. DIRECTOR FOR PROGRAMS
Nate Thayer Tel.: 251-1139
Far Eastern Economic Review
email: nate.thayer@feer.com Fax: 254-4843

TREASURER
Douglas M. Logan Tel.: 751-4001-5
Burapa Steel Industries Fax: 751-4006
email: suntisuk@mozart.inet.co.th

ASSOC. DIRECTOR OF PUBLICITY
Nilobol Tel.: 254-1409
Phanichkarn Fax: 254-1409
email: nilobolp@bkk.loxinfo.co.th

ASSOC. DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP
Ron Webb Tel.: 637-0270
Bozell Paterson Fax: 637-0280
email: ronwebb@loxinfo.co.th

ASSOC. DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS
Philip Cornwel-Smith Tel.: 679-9130-1
City Media Fax: 677-6383
email: philcs@loxinf.co.th

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Bertil Lintner Tel.: 271-3599
Far Eastern Econ. Rev. Fax: 271-3599
email: lintner@ksc15.th.com

Dateline BANGKOK

EDITORS:
Don Pathan Tel.: 266-0740-2
The Associated Press Fax: 237-6283
email: dpathan@ap.org

Nilobol Tel.: 254-1409
Phanichkarn Fax: 254-1409
email: nilobolp@bkk.loxinfo.co.th

Dennis Coday Tel.: 583-6047
email: jamesc@ksc15.th.com

ADVERTISEMENTS:
Finn Balslev Tel.: 943-7166-8
Scand-Media Corp. Ltd Fax: 943-7169

DESIGN & GRAPHIC PRODUCTION:
Geggers Moller Tel.: 943-7166-8
Scand-Media Corp. Ltd Fax: 943-7169
email: scandm@mozart.inet.co.th

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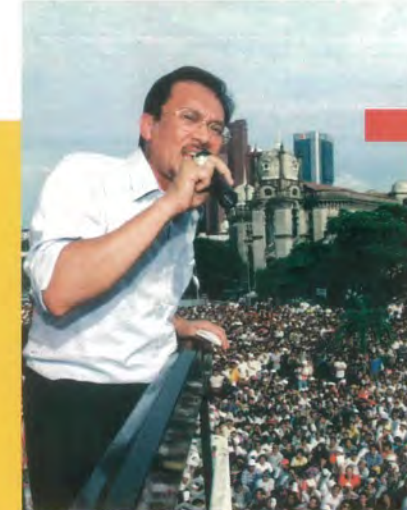
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As the trial in Malaysia of former Minister for Finance, Anwar Ibrahim goes on, Dateline Bangkok goes behind the events to take a look at the man on trial... and his opponent.

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COVER PHOTO BY: BAZUKI MUHAMMAD, REUTERS



Myanmar Train Trip with Camera

'We would like to place a camera on a train in Burma and just film while the train rolls on...' the producer said.

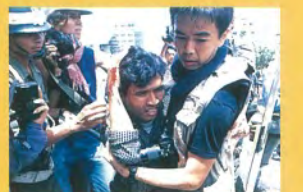
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Based in Bangkok

Photographer Philip Blenkinsop and camerawoman Sophie Barry this autumn scooped a rare report from inside the East Timor resistance movement.

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Dream vs. reality

Reporting on Cambodia, Jerry Harmer of APTN was hit by a rock thrown by a protester. Jean-Claude Pomonti of Le Monde sighs: 'It could have been such a nice place!'

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A night of many records not to be forgotten soon!
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

PHILIPPE DECAUX

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year



Don Felipe to the right in a pensive mood listening to the man groomed (Malaysian style?) to be his successor, Russian correspondent Evguenii Belensky.

In the middle of this month, the 1st Anniversary of the Club at the Maneeya Center will be celebrated by all of us during a party which, thanks to our sponsors and suppliers, will be the talk of the town!

One year on Ploenchit has turned out to be quite a successful one for the F.C.C.T., with a lot of events, parties and - to end the first twelve month - His Excellency Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, whose government will celebrate, like us, its 1st birthday. The Prime Minister will be our Guest of Honor and Speaker at the Oriental, together with all the Ministers who visited the Club during the Year.

Quite an auspicious blessing as we

will enter our second year at the Maneeya with lots of ideas at hand and new blood for the Executive Committee, trips to Luang Prabang, events and parties to keep you mentally fit for the end of the recession....

To keep on with auspicious visits, HE Samdech Norodom Ranariddh, Chairman of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia, will grace our Club with his presence on December 18th... a very special Friday night indeed.

But to keep going on in style, we need your support by introducing new members, associates, diplomats, overseas, journalists etc... new people in town who are willing

to join with a crowd which has interesting things to say, either around the bar, after events, book launches or exhibitions.

So bring one or two friends when you visit the Club... I am sure one of the two will join.

By the way, all the best wishes and congratulations from the Board, to Correspondent Members and friends Sylvia and David McKaige who just got married last month. And to all of you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, it's the last one of the millennium, let it be the best one !

Don Felipe

... all the best wishes and congratulations from the Board, to Correspondent Members and friends Sylvia and David McKaige who just got married last month. And to all of you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.....

BBC'S ASIA BUREAU NOW UP AND RUNNING

The new BBC bureau next to the FCCT in the Maneeya Center Building brings together resources from different parts of the BBC network to cover Asia.

It has taken years of debate and planning, and the job's not finished yet, but the new BBC South East Asia bureau is finally up and running in Bangkok.

The Bureau, located on the penthouse floor of the Maneeya center (thus handily located to the FCCT) represents a major investment for BBC news gathering, bringing together resources from different parts of the corporation's national and international network.

For some years, the BBC

operated a small Indochina Bureau off Pahonyothin Road. The location wasn't ideal and the space too small for the more ambitious project of creating a "hub" bureau to handle coverage across all of South East Asia.

The new BBC South East Asia bureau is headed by South East Asia correspondent Simon Ingram, who was previously based in Singapore. Working alongside him is Senior Producer Patrick Walker, whose previous BBC posting was in Tokyo. Their responsibility is to provide news and feature material for television and radio programmes across the BBC empire, co-ordinating coverage with other BBC regional offices in Hong Kong, Singapore and Jakarta.

Ingram and Walker are be-

ing joined by reporters from three of BBC World Service's vernacular language services (Thai, Burmese and Vietnamese) who will be appointed directly from their Bush House headquarters in London. The Thai service reporter, Supaporn Kanwerayotin, is already in post. Freelance Charlotte Bevan, who does extensive work for the World Service's East Asia Today programme, makes up the in-house reporting team. Local support staff are being hired.

The bureau is equipped with two broadcasting studios each with dedicated ISDN lines. Video and post-production services for the bureau are being provided by Asiaworks, another neighbour in the Maneeya Center.



China's 'People's Daily' - 3 million copies daily - is it ready to become a commercial newspaper?

CHINA TO FREE PEOPLE'S DAILY

The paper to be cut off from subsidies and become financially independent.

People's Daily, the Chinese Communist Party's mouthpiece, will be weaned off state subsidies and be financially independent, in line with the country's reform policies, according to the editorial head of China's most influential newspaper.

"The direction is already set," said Mr. Xu Zhongtian, editor-in-chief of the newspaper.

"We have to enter the market place sooner or later."

Mr. Xu Zhongtian stressed however that the daily still placed its role as the proper guide of public opinion as top priority, ahead of commercial activities.

"There should be no contradiction between these two aims, which must be integrated," he said.

People's Daily is China's biggest newspaper and among the 10 largest in the world with a daily circulation of three million copies.

The group runs other publications as well and has about 40 companies in its holding whose profits could be used to subsidize the flagship newspaper, should it be needed.

JOURNALISTS DEMAND MORE TRANSPARENCY

Thai and other ASEAN journalists have issued a statement, calling on governments of ASEAN countries for more good governance and transparency.

The ASEAN journalists' statement was issued at the conclusion of the 14th Board of Directors Meeting of the Confederation of ASEAN Journalists and a seminar on "Asian Crisis: Media's Role and Responsibility", held in Bangkok in late October.

The statement also calls on the business and corporate sectors for more accountability. It reminds ASEAN journalists and the media industry as a whole to undertake more pro-active, constructive and value-driven reporting.

Also, the peoples of ASEAN were called upon to be equally vigilant and participatory in the collective efforts to make sure that this crisis underscores the need for more transparency, accountability as well as more interpretative reporting, better analysis by the media of events and developments.

Members of the Confederation of ASEAN Journalists attending the meeting and seminar included the Indonesian Journalists Association, National Union of Journalists Malaysia, the National Press Club of the Philippines, Singapore National Journalists Association.

The next Board of Directors Meeting of the Confederation of ASEAN Journalists will be held in March 2000 in Singapore.

NO FOREIGN OWNERS OF MALAYSIAN TV STATIONS

There are enough channels today to suit Malaysia's needs, says the government.

Malaysia's Information Minister, Datuk Seri Mohamad Rahmat has announced that foreigners will be 'totally barred' from equity participation in the country's television channels.

Speaking in the wake of a furore over the new channel ntv7's failure to comply with the requirement that prime time broadcasting must be locally produced, Mohamad also announced that ntv7 would be the last channel to be awarded a license for the foreseeable future.

The statement reverses the Malaysian governments earlier stated goal to become a broadcasting hub of Asia.

The Malaysian government is in the process of privatizing its huge domestic television company

RTM, although this company is used by the government to disseminate its policy. It has been suggested, that not issuing new licenses is an attempt to allow RTM to continue this role.

The ban on foreign ownership is seen also as a sop to political forces. The Malaysian government has long fostered the idea amongst its people, that many of the country's woes are the result of external forces bent on destroying the nation. Giving these 'external forces' access to domestic television would abet them in their mission.

Malaysia has four national terrestrial channels, one regional terrestrial channel and two pay-TV providers. A fifth domestic channel, IMT-GT, broadcasts from Langkawi Island but is mainly aimed at the northern states, the Indonesian island of Sumatra and Southern Thailand.

Club Highlights

BY ROONG PUKRABPETCH



BHICHAIRATTAKUL played a game of snooker at the FCCT after speaking to Club members about the progress of the Asian Games on November 4th. Below, the Deputy Prime Minister is seen chatting with FCCT members Don Pathan, Alok Chopra and Philippe Decaux.



ON JAPANESE NIGHT, the FCCT abandoned spoons, forks and knives and went for chopsticks and kimonos instead. The excellent night provided plenty of cultural entertainment. Below, FCCT President Philippe Decaux thanks His Excellency Hiroshi Ota, Ambassador of Japan for his contribution to a truly memorable night.



Only hours before taking off on his roadshow to promote his candidacy as next WTO Secretary General, deputy minister for finance, DR. SUPACHAI PANITCHPAKDI found time to be a guest speaker at the FCCT. The evening had attracted several members from the business community, but the hurry of the minister left them no time to answer any question.

PLANNING TO DRAFT NEW PRESS ACT FOR THAILAND

The Advisory Board on Legal Affairs to the interior Minister will consider drafting a new press act which would guarantee more rights and freedom of expression to replace the old one in use since 1941.

Assistant Secretary to the Minister of Interior, Thaworn Senniam, says the repeal of the existing Press Act was approved

recently by the Advisory Board on Legal Affairs since it is considered obsolete, ineffective in the control of the mass media under the new era of advanced technology. Furthermore, several other laws such as the 1997 Information Act can be used as a substitute.

Mr. Thaworn adds that after the abolition of the old Press Act,

a new press law is needed to control print media and information on the internet. The new press act will be more positive, with no restrictions on the right and freedom of expression so as to support and promote useful opinions for the general public.

AP & WTN NOW 'APTN'

APTN will be the world's largest special services broadcast operation.

The Associated Press announced in September that it has completed the acquisition of WTN - World-Wide Television News from ABC News. The move combines AP's 4-year-old video news service with WTN, a leading supplier of inter-

national video news since 1963.

APTN, or Associated Press Television News, will have the largest broadcast special services operation in the world and will provide a selection of specialized television news and an extensive video archive.

WTN, a leading supplier of international video news since 1963, had offices in 102 cities

through out the world. It was 80 percent owned by ABC News. The new service, APTN, will have news-gathering resources in 83 bureaus operating in 67 countries, which will be supported by news gathering in 154 other AP bureaus.



Based in Bangkok

Into the Indonesian gauntlet

Story & Photos:
BY PHILIP BLENKINSOP

For 23 years, guerillas from East Timor's resistance have fought a David-and-Goliath war against the Indonesian army, which invaded the former Portuguese colony in December 1975.

In July of this year, two Australians, photographer **Philip Blenkinsop** and camerawoman **Sophie Barry**, became two of only a handful of journalists to succeed in penetrating the Indonesian gauntlet since 1975 to meet with FALINTIL guerillas in the East Timorese mountains.

In their three weeks with Commandant Ruak and his men, Blenkinsop and Barry walked over 200 kilometres, bringing out the first story and photographs in over one and a half years.



"My brother was killed by the Indonesian in 1979. We were fighting alongside Commandant Ruak. After the battle we have time to bury him before leaving with our wounded. When we returned, one month later, I saw him cut into pieces and hanging in the trees. His hands, his feet, his legs, his body, his head. He was very strong and his body had not rotted away. Sometimes it takes months for fresh to rot away in the Mountains"

At behind James Nachtway first class on a Merpati flight into Dili, are two dirty backpackers. Red dirt, bush and mountain peaks lost in smoky grey rain clouds out our window. Three open-top truckloads of soldiers on a winding coast road Dili-bound and we touch down 30 seconds later.

Baggage collection. Screaming-shirted East Timorese band members and eyes-down westerners avoiding return gazes.

Our taxi doubles as a gas chamber. Carbon Monoxide swirls as our driver plots an erratic course through town, circumnavigating military roadblocks and crowds of demonstrators.

Nachtway (known, and later confirmed) is immediately in the crowds, snapping away, assistants at side.

By contrast, our first taste of Dili is an eight by twelve foot damp-blue room. The sort where The Itch sets in after a few hours; a fluoro light, that needs turning on at source,

stood on a chair stood on the bed, dry fingers stretching, just bright enough to render the umbra gloom.

The tube has a mind of its own, knocking off early then snapping on brighter than ever with that death-chair buzz to chastise us hours after our conceding to Bintang Gold-pink-pill induced sleep.

Outside, day time crowds demonstrate, students ride bus-rooves, banners high and voices strained.

We remain frustratingly hidden from "Intel" operatives in our 4-walled-world, waiting on calls to my cellular from our Mountain friends.

Sophie stays sane by doing her hour-long sweat-it-out-to-Madonna routines, keeping fit for the march that would, we hoped, eventually get us out of here. I stay sane by watching Sophie workout.

After nine days and several dead-end liaisons we're resembling some bad labora-

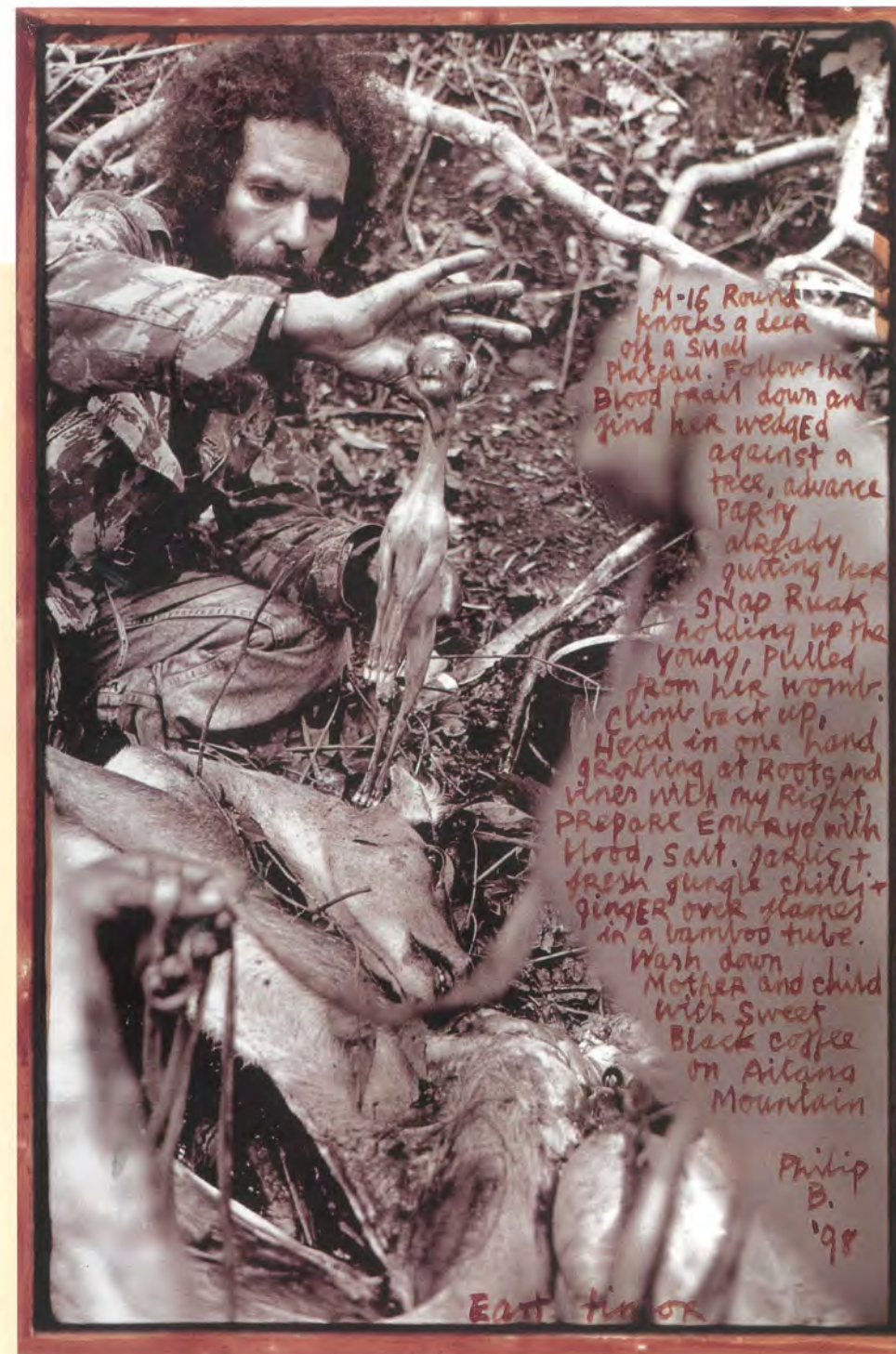
tory experiment, tempers fraying and desperation sat in.

We don't hear our wheeled saviour for the storm riding in and we are whisked away. Mountain switchbacks curve through grey ocean-squall-tails and mud-churning rains, barren-brown-grey vistas spectacular, all the more so after our concrete diet.

A last rise, windswept beyond. Bid farewell and wait hid 'til dark.

Wild-eyed, guns-slung guerillas emerge from black bush. Zipped up and laden down we leave the road and up.

Rock-strewn, crevice-laced, mountain-mud paths; Sucking mud. Laughing mud. Merciless and vindictive mud, slippery like ice, ground only partially visible, tall Aifunan grass, sharp in your face, hands working overtime clutching at foliage to slow down our out-of-control descent or hauling ourselves wearily up en-route to our first encounter with FALINTIL field-commandant, Xanana



M-16 Round knocks a deer off a small plateau. Follow the Blood trail down and find her wedged against a tree, advance party already cutting her Snap Ruak holding up the young, pulled from her womb. Climb back up, head in one hand groling at root and vines with my right. Prepare embryo with blood, salt, garlic + fresh jungle chilli + ginger over flame in a bamboo tube. Wash down mother and child with sweet black coffee on Aitana Mountain.

out to meet our twenty-strong clandestine escort.

Entering Debo camp over a last rise, sixty or so troops of all ages stand at attention on the muddy parade ground-cum-volleyball court, assorted weapons at their sides, to welcome us.

FALINTIL video cameras roll on us as we descend into the camp, soaked and muddied from the last river crossing and Commandant Ruak greets us with a huge grin and a hug. We are a source of great excitement.

He grips a camera in both hands, his Smith and Wesson .38 Midnight Special holstered above his left hip. He looks more like a 60's Cat Stevens, than a rebel commander, but his authority is immediately obvious.

I ask him the origins of his revolver. "Before, I used to have an AK-47 but it was the only one in East Timor. When the Indonesians would hear the BRRRR of the AK they would know it was Commandant Ruak! So I sent it to someone else in another region. Then I have a Herstal, but after a while they know it is me! So now I have this! When they know about this I will send it to a friend in another division and he will send me a new gun."

"You must both have Tetum names," Ruak insists enthusiastically.....Philip, you will be Lokedalan, 'Open Wings'. Sophie, you shall be Muky, the name of the first woman to give her life for our revolution," and with this he turns and introduces us as such to his merry band.

Our ensuing weeks with Ruak and his men and women were, in my mind, the highlight of my ten years in Asia.

The hot-black-sweet-short-wave-jungle-coffee-mornings with Ruak at seven, with sago pancakes and cream biscuits from a huge tin, (that I am sure was delivered specially for our consumption) were what we went to our bamboo bed each night looking forward to on the morn.

It was a regimen that I was most happy to settle into, along with our smoked-venison days and sporadic monkey meals, however the occasional culinary surprises were well received. Scorpions, says Ruak, who is quite a connoisseur, are especially delicious.....like prawns.

My greatest fear during my three weeks with Ruak and his men was to be hearing the crunch on a mountain ridge, looking down and seeing jagged tibia poking through flesh.

When it comes to medical assistance, the men have to rely on their own ingenuity,

Gusmao's right hand man, Taur Matan Ruak.

The terrain is a constant reminder of the previous field-commander, Konis Santana, who on 11 March 1998, at the age of forty-two slipped and fell to his death.

Ghostwhite moonlit moor warm-sweat, cool-rain and mud stepping blind to 22.30 bog over down-up rocky stream. Make camp. Wet poncho on wet leaves in ankle deep mud slope. Poncho roof tied tight. Toss wet clothes and crawl into damp sleep-sack.

Rain. Sleep in fits. Rain run off spilling over shallow hand-made irrigation ruts. Wake to torrential rain. Poncho down and flapping, sideways water.

Poke Sophe in the ribs: "Sorry to wake you but I'd like some

help.."

"What!"

"I'd like some help"

"What?"

Sophe finally rolls over, sees me sat up, holding flapping poncho over us, dripping wet, rain driving in sideways.

Nothing like waking up to a good laugh at midnight.

6.30 ayam break camp. Exchange cold wet sack for cold wet mud clothes. Mist grey dawn rain walk. Up again.

11.30 stop, limbs aching, for lunch. Turns into almost a two hour rest. Rice, noodles, coffee.

Off again.

3.30 peeyem. An advance party is sent

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Dropping down from the mountains – headed for our night time rendezvous – waiting for an all-clear.



a stock of internationally donated medicines, and occasional brute force.....I asked Ruak what they did for toothache? "We take a small piece of bamboo, put it against the bad tooth, then hit it hard with a large piece of bamboo."

I learnt to curse the rain when it fell and look forward to the cold dry nights. The terrain should make for a logistical nightmare, but FALINTIL's network of helpers reads like the roots of some huge centurion tree.

Food supplies, tobacco and essential items such as rice, noodles, salt, coffee, sugar, washing powder, torch bulbs and batteries are brought up into the mountains by 'clandestines', villagers whom the Indonesians refer to as 'Kepala Dua', 'Two Heads', because they fly the Indonesian flag but their hearts are with FALINTIL.

It was an honour to be invited to share the lives of these men and women, whose dedication, humbleness and genuine joie de vivre in the shadow of all they have suffered, I found to be quite overwhelming.

We knew and dreaded the day when we would have to bid our own farewells to these brave men and women who had accepted us unconditionally as family.

As it happened, getting out was to prove more difficult than we had been led to believe.

Towards the end of our stay, we learn that Indonesian troops have found the beginning of our trail into the mountains and had moved extra troops into the area.

In Bangkok, a colleague gets a call from a Portuguese magazine investigating reports that two Australians have been shot and killed by Indonesian military.

The day before we are due to leave, we get radio word that Indonesian troops have moved into the village we plan to leave via. It looks disturbingly as though a gauntlet is closing.

In a dawn jungle clearing on day 21, our friends turn out under the command of Commandant Ulah, weapons at their sides just as we had first seen them. We are each approached by a man carrying a traditional scarf

and a letter of thanks with which we are presented after a short speech.

Sophie and I had agreed to speak together if presented with the opportunity, but seeing the tears running down her face, I realised that the honour rested with me. Commandant Ruak translates for the last time.

"....and we will always use our Tetum names with great pride. Wherever Muky and Lokedalan may be in the world, you will all have family there."

In turn, every person in the camp files past and hugs us, tears welling up all round. Always smiling, Manu Bela has walked away, a scarf pressed into his red face to soak up his sorrow. I hug him again and we leave them there in the clearing, the bush swallowing us and our escort.

Down and up and down, five, ten, fifteen, twenty kilometres, until mountains give way to more feminine contours and we drop down finally to our nighttime rendezvous.

Sit in the light of a crescent moon back from the bank of a river bed 100 metres wide if it's one. Soldiers sat quietly waiting for car headlights to signal from the trees on the opposite bank. Muky and I are already giving thoughts, quite unashamedly to our first beer in three weeks.

The whole thing reeks of a B-grade movie plot with a Richard Burton lead. Headlights. At last! Then uncertainty. Now commotion. Something is seriously wrong. Our escort motion us to head for the bush.

We all take off, as fast as the mud will allow us. Muky and I stay close together. Indonesian soldiers on this side of the river is dangerous, but it is unlikely that they will

track us into the bush at night.

Saplings, black in a shrouded moon smack our faces, feet slip from under us and a huge Dickensian Christmas tree festooned with thousands of lights, hovers to our right, power supply only adequate to render each a ghostly glow.

Darkness is all consuming. Sit waiting on muddied ponchos by a creek bed. Information is shortcoming, language now a formidable barrier for the first time.

We have been on the go for 12 hours. Clandestine villagers chew the situation, rapid-fire with our escort. We glean just enough of the situation to be seriously concerned. Concerned for our film more than anything else.

Indonesian intelligence is aware of our rendezvous and, according to the villagers, agents are waiting with roadblocks on the other side of the river. Our car never even managed to set out to meet us.

Muky and I discuss our options and agree that if asked, we will head back into the mountains immediately, far enough to make camp safely and then try to catch up with Ruak in the morning.

If needed we will walk South, over the ranges and down to the coast. Try to make it West by boat. The situation never eventuates. Villagers have brought rice and water for us. We all wolf down huge portions and rise to leave.

Our decision has been made for us. North. Walking down the river, past the Indonesian roadblocks and a lone military post on the West bank.

Uneasy smiles flicker across our guerilla friends. It is obvious they are concerned for us all. Cool water soothes and river-pebbles embed 'selves-in-souls with each ford. Sandrises sport ferns, rocks and saplings that compete for neck and shin in the starlight; a panorama, as sublime as our fear is real.

Hour on hour. The grey river shows no sign of tiring. Single-file silence through dark. Lights now to our left and then behind us as we leave behind Indo-troops sat watching bitumen.

We offer to go on alone, knowing that our escort will have to turn around and walk back after delivering us. We are worried about their safety. They have not a bar of it. Their orders are to deliver us safely and see we get out.

More water then cut into the bush stepping blind, and down wading through a high-walled ditch, mud sucks our feet, water around our thighs and leeches in our wake. Faded, crumbling black-top-exit, unseen yet falling nearer with each step. Distant lights and contingency plans, sat on paddy-dyke-walls before a final long wet ford and climb.

Quelled midnight howls announce our arrival. Hugs and whispered "Xananas" welcome us.

Hurried, awkward farewells before some final trepidation. A nauseating, foot-to-the-floor death-ride to put some distance between us and Indonesian Military Police at the mercy of any checkpoint that might be manned at four ayem.

Two days later we are out of East Timor. Day three, Indonesian 'Intel' operatives raid every hotel and guesthouse in town looking for two Australian tourists.

VIVA O GUERRILHEIROS FALINTIL!!!VIVA COMMANDANTE RUAK!!.....VIVA INDEPENDENTE TIMOR L'ESTE!!!

I would like to thank Muky, for being a tough professional, and to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of East Timor specialist, friend and colleague, Jill Jolliffe, with out whose dedication, expertise and reputation, this trip could not have been realised.



Mahathir's Malaysia

- A nation in the wakening

The issue is not whether Anwar is right or wrong but how one man can have such a total grip on a country, writes freelance reporter **Kim Gooi** in this compilation of examples of Dr. Mahathir's power grip on the nation.



By KIM GOOI
Freelance Reporter

Photo:
COURTESY OF AP PHOTOS

*I*f Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad could have his way he would go down in Malaysian history as the "Father of Development." Malaysia would be an industrialized country on par with the West by the year 2020. Touted in the local press as a dynamic leader with a vision, Mahathir has been able to convince Malaysians for a good part of his 17 years in power that Malaysia will stand tall and equal to the Western world.

But like another Southeast Asian despot who tried to make the "Father of Development" tag stick - Indonesia's Suharto - something has gone drastically wrong for Mahathir's game plan. The joke going around in Malaysia today is that Mahathir is more the "Father of Mirzan," a reference to the much-criticized bail-out of his son Mirzan's bankrupt shipping company. Another says Mahathir's "Vision 2020" will become "Year 0202."

Kuala Lumpur is awash with demonstrations calling for reforms and for Mahathir's resignation. His one-time heir apparent, Anwar Ibrahim, has suddenly become the most evil man in the country, beaten and locked up under the Internal Security Act (ISA), which allows indefinite detention, and charged under five counts of sodomy and five counts of corruption.

Prior to this, the economy was teetering on the verge of collapse, for which the prime minister has blamed neo-colonialist, money hungry speculators and a Jewish conspiracy. In September he shocked the world and pulled the country backwards by introducing capital controls and turning his back on the free market.

Malaysians are divided. Is Mahathir the father of development or the father of Mizzen? Is he a visionary or a tyrant with an absolute grip of the government machinery like Hitler?

Innuendoes, lies and poison pen letters have always been part of the political landscape in Malaysia. When politicians fight they never do it openly. The poison pen letter against Anwar was known to Mahathir more than a year ago and so are the other charges. And yet up until the last minute when Anwar was sacked on September 2, the two leaders had told the public that nothing was amiss and insisted that business was as usual.

In July Malaysian columnist Rusdi Mustapha wrote prophetically: "As followers of national politics would have realized by now, the use of poison pen letters to discredit any leader is as old as Malay civilization itself ... I know that we Malaysians are bound by strong norms and constraints when discussing certain subjects. But, as I have said many times in the past, certain issues are beyond good manners and need to be brought out into the open as it might be therapeutic ... My only advice to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is to fight back. For if you don't, they will kill you ... It will be a dark day for this country when I will have to renounce my roots on the grounds of being ashamed to be associated with this group of people. Meanwhile it has to stop."

In 1994, Mahathir dropped a bombshell when he charged that the al-Arqam Islamic group was training a secret suicide army in southern Thailand to overthrow the government. It was a blatant lie, of course. It turned out that the Islamic group's only crime was to ridicule UMNO as a party of thieves and robbers.

Sad but true, Anwar came to Bangkok and lied. At a press conference he charged that al-Arqam abused their children by not allowing them to study secular subjects like mathematics and science. Prior to being appointed deputy PM he was the education minister. So it was a shock as he should know better than anyone else that it was not true. Arqam operates clinics, maternity homes, computer programming centers, supermarkets, a publishing house, recording studios, restaurants, factories and a host of other businesses. They send their students overseas to universities in U.S., England, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Iraq.

I spent a week in al-Arqam HQ in Sungei Penchala on the outskirts of KL, and their supermarket in Penang. A Chinese egg supplier in Penang told me: "Arqam are the best people to do business with. When they say come tomorrow or a week's time for the check, sure there will be a check. They never default on any payment!"

Contrary to being militant, al-Arqam advocates peace and non-violence. Their only crime is the success of their 'economic empire.' From scratch, without any hand-outs from the government, they could build an international economic enterprise with assets of over 150 million dollars. This was the greatest threat to UMNO. For they have demonstrated to the Malays that through hard work discipline and without corruption, they could succeed like any other ethnic group, if not better.

UMNO leadership of the Malays was under threat. So al-Arqam had to be destroyed. The local shackled press went to war with all-out attacks and lies against Arqam. There was a total blackout of news from al-Arqam and they were given no chance to reply or defend themselves against accusations ranging from child abuse, sex slavery, religious deviation to sorcery. After months of this campaign, Ashaari, the leader, was kidnapped in Chiang Mai with the help of Thai special Branch and bundled off to KL to languish under the ISA together with a dozen top leaders. Mahathir got away with it under the very nose of its most educated citizens, in a nation which is supposedly soon to join the ranks of the developed countries.

In 1995 general election campaign I attended a PAS (Islamic Party of Malaysia) rally in Kota Bharu sport stadium. All the local press were barred from attending because PAS was so incensed by the blackout of news from the opposition. Anwar was ridiculed as the "Imam of UMNO" and the "Imam of Money" by PAS members and supporters.

In an interview in his humble mosque beside his wooden house outside of Kota

Bahru, the chief minister Tok Guru Nik Aziz said: "In order to implement Islamic law and cut off a thief's hand, there must be no injustice or exploitation, no hunger so that there is no reason to steal. Even that, three eye witnesses must be produced."

"I have banned all Karaoke bars, video parlors, billiard halls because I believe they are bad for our youth and breeding grounds for delinquencies. I have built youth clubs, sports facilities, libraries for the young people instead. Please ask the parents, are they happy with me? Kelantan is the state with the lowest crime rate in the country! Please ask the Chinese businessmen, are they happy doing business here because there is no corruption? When PAS came into power, we reduced the license fee of hawkers and trishaw riders from 20 ringgit a month to 2 ringgit a year! We are pro business and we help the small traders and poor first. We cannot stand corruption. You never get to read this in the local press!" said the chief minister.

Today the Number One and Number Two who collaborated to destroy al-Arqam, are at each other's throats. As they say, "Allah Akbar," God is Great! The same tactics and the shackled press are being used to destroy any challenges to Mahathir.

It was the year 1988. Tun Salleh Abas then was the Lord President, namely the head of the judiciary which was fiercely independent and free from government control. They brook no interference from the executive. The judges then interpreted the law as it was even if the decision went against the government. The rule of law and the rule of natural justice were fiercely maintained and upheld. Mahathir didn't like this and openly criticized the judiciary.

The year before, in 1987, a big fight had erupted in UMNO for the presidency between Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh. Mahathir won narrowly. He managed to garner only 51 percent of the votes. Soon after the election, there were allegations of the results being rigged and ineligible UMNO members taking part in the election. A few members went to court to have the result declared null and void. The case was heard at the High Court before Harun Hashim.

But the PM had a different strategy; his lawyers went to court and argued that UMNO was an illegal party by virtue of the fact that some branches were found to be illegal. UMNO was then declared an illegal party, much to the chagrin of the UMNO members who wanted the judge to rule only on the legality of the UMNO election. Mahathir formed "New Umno" and prevented many former members from joining and claiming the assets of the party.

The UMNO members who lost at the High Court filed an appeal to the Supreme Court. Tun Salleh Abas, the lord president, found the issue before him of paramount importance. He empanelled a nine-judge bench to hear the appeal. Mahathir was not confident of winning the case before nine judges, some of whom were fiercely inde-

pendent and included the most prominent names in the judiciary. A series of charges were then leveled against the lord president. He was in the same situation as Anwar is in today except for the fact that the charges related to judicial misconduct which would lead only to his dismissal. Tun Salleh was unceremoniously dismissed and the judiciary has never been the same since.

Around 1994, the chief minister of Melaka, Tambi Chik, was accused of having sex with an under-age Malay girl, which constitutes statutory rape under the law. Instead of being punished, he was acquitted on the grounds that the girl was of loose morals and had sex with others before. The victim was sent to a remand home instead Lim Guan Eng, MP and son of opposition leader Lim Kit Siang, started a campaign to criticize the verdict and fight for justice. He is languishing in jail now for contempt of court.

Malaysians have woken up with a shock that all this had been happening under their noses. Another shock is that many educated people believe and still support him. Like Hitler, Mao, Marcos and their like, Mahathir, through sheer strength of his personality and charisma, has been able to convince the brightest to follow him blindly, after controlling all the machinery of government.

He has convinced many Chinese that he has brought peace and prosperity for them by sowing the fear of Muslim fundamentalism and Indonesian-style riots. It is cheap propaganda and blackmail. The Chinese, traders and businessmen who had long associated with the Malays, know better. The true Muslims are not corruptible and are easy people with whom to do business.

"The Muslim party is OK because they will not cheat and take money. It is the officials in power that are corrupt," said a Chinese taxi driver in Penang. Racial pogroms and riots can never happen in Malaysia with the Chinese 30 percent strong and the Malays slightly over 50 percent. Nobody will win this time and nobody wants it to happen. In Indonesia, the dirty hands of the military in the bloody riot are obvious.

There are two groups agitating for reforms and removal of Mahathir, with overlapping membership. One led by PAS and the other by a Chinese NGO member. The issue is not whether Anwar is right or wrong but whether it is right for one man to have such a total grip of a country.

Anwar, whether he wins or loses, has paid heavily with his humiliation and suffering. The reform movement would not be there without his sacrifice. The good news is that the Malays and the Chinese are looking forward to a more open and liberal society where for centuries they have intermingled peacefully in cultural pursuits and trade. Many of my Malay friends in Penang have told me: "The Prophet Mohammad has said, all Muslims must pursue and seek knowledge, even if they have to go to China!"



BY MICHAEL VATIKIOTIS
Bureau Chief,
Far Eastern Economic Review

Photo:
COURTESY OF AP PHOTOS

Anwar Ibrahim - A Critical Appreciation

"I still believe that Anwar has managed, better than anyone else, to frame this new kind of political thinking. Even if there were moral transgressions, I believe he was a victim of classic Malay power-play"

I first met Anwar Ibrahim at one of those regional mega-conferences they held in Bali when Southeast Asia was a magnet for the corporate great and good. It was 1991, the height of the boom. Investment bankers schmoozed in Armani suits, speakers oozed with optimism, and I seem to remember that several of them predicted Asia would soon be taking over the world. Of course, Henry Kissinger was there. And there was Anwar in an Armani suit with his arm in a plaster cast.

"Come meet the future Prime Minister of Malaysia," said a handler, "he's just fallen from a horse."

Those were the days when Anwar rode horses in a well-manicured country club on the fringes of KL with his mentor Mahathir Mohamad in a bid to show the world that Malaysians can be chic; just as they were later to vie for front row seats to listen to Pavarotti in Singapore, and invite Naisbitt to preach naive futurism over Chinese banquets in five star hotels.

Here was an enchanting partnership: Mahathir with his brass-tacks vision of a Malaysia that can and will graduate from a colonial rubber-producing backwater with an unhealthy racial balance, to a car-producing, hi-tech nation of mountain-climbers and new-world thinkers; Anwar with his soothing vision of moderate Muslims harking back to the effete Arab scholars of the Alhambra, absorbing ancient Greek scholarship and reading poetry in the shade of pomegranate trees beside tinkling tiled fountains. It was also something of a lie: Mahathir, the country doctor with a huge complex about his identity and ruthless political instincts; Anwar, the student rabble rouser who rode to power on the back of dogmatic Islamic fervour. Neither man was much as he seemed. They both wore masks, but no one seemed to care as the ball was in full swing.

Soon after that meeting in Bali, I moved to Malaysia for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. Not long into my stint, the rise of Anwar Ibrahim became the bread and butter political story. Like many resident correspondents, I got to know (or thought I was getting to know) the man who would soon become Southeast Asia's youngest leader.

In the course of long, lavishly catered lunches for the media, and generous one-on-one interviews, we were taken on a journey into the heart of Anwar's thinking. What he talked about sounded enchanting in an era of stifling one man rule and flagrant human rights abuse. Anwar talked about tolerance, multiculturalism and building a new harmony in SE Asia based on a common cultural heritage. He sponsored seminars on the Filipino nationalist Jose Rizal, and the great Bengali poet Tagore. His message was that the new politics of South East Asia would be coloured by more complex social concerns, liberal values and a deep commitment to human rights. This was his 'Asian Renaissance', a humanist Asia with modern bells on. Worries about Anwar's Islamic activist background melted before his conviction that the modern Muslim was a tolerant, technically proficient aesthete who drove a BMW—not a Koran-thumping, limb slashing, cleric in flowing robes with a yen for throwing stones at adulterers.

Although skeptical at first, I was eventually quite taken. In 1994, I wrote, with Anwar, and his friend Surin Pitsuwan, in mind: "What these younger generation leaders seem to be searching for is a new vocabulary of political thinking. Their need is two-fold. On the one hand they must justify the powerful state mechanisms they will shortly inherit from the older generation. On the other, they must also address a new set of

problems facing society. Of course, whether they are assuming the moral high ground in the search for solutions, or simply coopting the social and political forces mobilized by these problems remains to be seen."

I still believe that Anwar has managed, better than anyone else, to frame this new kind of political thinking. Even if there were moral transgressions, I believe he was a victim of classic Malay power-play, where the man who thrusts the dagger furthest and fastest draws blood. Anwar's political mistake was not challenging Mahathir when he had the opportunity in June.

Anwar is articulate, convincing, and organized. It's not just his fluency in English; he is a stirring speaker in Malay and has a knowledge of the Koran that impresses Malay audiences. He was one of the first Malay politicians not to shy away from addressing a Chinese audience with a few words of Hokkien. As Deputy Prime Minister after 1993, he put together a team of young intellectuals, business executives and political activists who set about creating more than an image. They believed in Anwar as a vehicle for change—for the most part they still do, despite the torrent of moral abuse Mahathir has hurled at him. Whatever the motives for preaching what he does, the hopes of many younger generation politicians have been given intellectual substance, some flesh to put on the frail skeleton of political reform.

The Anwar effect was not confined to Malaysia. In Indonesia, he inspired a group of young Muslim thinkers to look beyond their parochial ethnic and religious concerns. They became sufficiently fired up to mount a daring challenge to Suharto by backing their own, rather different vehicle, B.J.Habibie. Now he's trying hard to reap the fruits of his own intellectual sowing, by encouraging Malaysians to think they can emulate the Indonesian *reformasi*. This political cross-fertilization across the Straits of Malacca has been one of the healthiest developments in regional affairs since the formation of Asean and is far more meaningful than AFTA. It is not something a politician in Thailand could ever achieve, given the cultural and historical differences it has with its neighbors.

But for all the impact Anwar has had on liberal political thinking in Southeast Asia, he remains personally something of a mystery. Many of my Malaysian media colleagues would ask: "Who is the real Anwar?" He seemed to be everyone's friend, yet he inspired great hatred in his political opponents. One of them, a chief minister in one of the Northern States told a friend of mine after Anwar's sacking: "Now I can die a happy man."

Personally, I liked Anwar's engaging, almost hypnotic charm, offset by melodramatic image-making and wild mood-swings. But often, there was something not quite right. Once, after leaving his well-appointed house in the Damansara Heights neighbourhood, complete-with silk cushions in pastel

shades, he pointed to a domestic servant and said in a needlessly hushed tone: "he's blind you know, someone has to take them in...."

Anwar always cited the latest titles reviewed in the *New York Time Review of Books*, but aides admitted they read many of them and gave him précis; "You know, he's so busy...." they would plead.

"Boss" as his aides called him affectionately, may have had his character faults, but he played politics like nobody the younger generation of Malaysians had seen, or almost no one. Anwar's slick presentation, spin control and the ruthless hounding of opponents using the media wasn't so revolutionary. His methods were not too far removed, some might say, from those used by Anwar's 'boss' and former mentor, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

What are Anwar's prospects? My own view is that it will be hard to imagine the kind of populist reform movement we saw in Indonesia taking off in Malaysia. The Malaysian population is scared of mass protest which stirs memories of the 1969 racial riots. As well as their reluctance to protest, Malaysians are prevented from doing so more effectively than almost anywhere else in Southeast Asia. Repression in Malaysia is as insidious as it is invisible. Malaysians live in a false civil society with its own elaborate legal and legislative carapace that is hard for the foreign media to penetrate. That's because Malaysia, along with Singapore, seemingly plays by the rules of liberal democracy. Your rights can be defended in court; and every five years you can vote in a free and fair election to change your government. Yet for more than five people to hold a public gathering, you need a police permit. To publish a newspaper, you need a permit which can be withdrawn; and if the government decides, you can be locked up without trial for up to two years.

Sometimes I think the reason western journalists are so blind to the system, is because it is a western creation. The Internal Security Act Anwar Ibrahim has been a victim of when he was a student was a product of British colonial ingenuity. Traces of its basic working principle; legal detention without trial, survive in Britain today as counter terrorism legislation the British parliament recently voted without so much as the bat of a public eyelid to reinforce.

Under these circumstances, it is quite remarkable that Anwar has been able to sustain large crowds outside his house and at the rallies he has begun holding across the country. Notice how he keeps saying he faces arrest. Technically, he is breaking the law when he speaks at these rallies without a police permit. Realistically, it can't be very long before Anwar is invited to be a guest at a Malaysian government guest house.

Many of my friends in Malaysia are still asking: "When will the real Anwar stand up?"



The Anwar Episode

- An Analysis

At the root, it is a question of power. Because Mahathir is absolutely certain that Anwar betrayed him he has marshalled all his resources to annihilate him.

A lot of people are still wondering what was the real reason behind Anwar Ibrahim's expulsion from the government and the ruling party. Is Anwar's "low morals", his indulgence in homosexual activities, as alleged by the Prime Minister and UMNO President, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the real reason? Or, is the former Deputy Prime Minister and UMNO Deputy President, the victim of "a high-level conspiracy", as Anwar and his supporters maintain?

The relationship

To understand Anwar's dismissal one has to understand the relationship between Dr. Mahathir and Anwar. It was Mahathir who brought Anwar into government, in 1982. It was Mahathir who groomed Anwar, accelerated his ascendancy within UMNO, and exposed him to a variety of governmental roles until he assumed the mantle of Deputy UMNO President and Deputy Prime Minister. Anwar was indisputably Mahathir's heir-apparent. Though the older man was instrumental in the younger man's meteoric rise, Anwar himself, there was no doubt, was an astute politician with a knack for mass mobilisation and for the intrigues of intra-party manoeuvres. Besides, he was also a gifted orator with tremendous rapport with his followers.

Resentment

Anwar reciprocated Mahathir's patronage by giving unstinted support to the latter whenever he was confronted by a political crisis. From the 1983 Constitutional crisis through the 1987 UMNO split to the 1988 Judicial calamity to the 1991 curbing of the powers of the Sultans, Anwar was Mahathir's loyal lieutenant garnering support for his boss. This relationship between the two men created a bit of resentment within UMNO especially among party stalwarts who had joined the organisation long before Anwar was co-opted into government. In fact, from 1982 itself, there were groups who sought to drive a wedge between Mahathir and Anwar through poison-pen letters and whispering campaigns. To his credit, Mahathir ignored these sinister moves and stood by his Deputy.

Then in May 1997, Mahathir sent the clearest signal yet to UMNO, the government and the people that Anwar would be his successor by appointing him Acting UMNO President and Acting Prime Minister when he went off on two months' leave. Anwar's adversaries in the party, some corporate figures who regarded his ascendancy as a threat to their interests and a few individuals in certain public institutions viewed his appointment as a danger sign.

They were more determined than ever to stop him at all costs.

In June 1997, they circulated a signed document alleging that Anwar had an adulterous relationship with the wife of his Confidential Secretary, on the one hand, and a homosexual relationship with his wife's former driver, on the other. Close aides of the prime minister brought both the document and the individuals who had made the allegations to his attention as soon as he returned from leave. The prime minister, according to the local media, got the police to investigate the allegations and in early August 1997, he announced publicly that investigations had revealed that there was no basis to the allegations. Subsequently, a member of the government, in response to a question in the Malaysian Parliament, reiterated that the allegations were baseless and that the two individuals who had levelled the accusations against Anwar had, through sworn statements, repudiated their earlier allegations and were completely penitent.

Developments

The sex allegations would have ended there — except for a series of developments since August 1997 which brought those allegations into the lime-light again and which impacted adversely upon the Mahathir-Anwar relationship. These developments provide the key to understanding the present crisis.

As the ringgit and the stock market declined and businesses collapsed and people lost their jobs, in the wake of the East Asian financial crisis, the general public became more and more critical of the leadership of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Though the crisis was largely due to an external factor — volatile equity capital suddenly exiting East Asian markets — the popular perception was that Dr. Mahathir had not managed the economy well.

His frequent, and often justifiable, attacks on currency speculators as the main culprits behind capital volatility were distorted by the foreign media as the insane rantings of a leader who did not want to come to terms with the weaknesses in his own economy.

The foreign media, on the other hand, portrayed Anwar who was also Finance Minister as a sober and sensible chap who understood global financial markets. Their lavish praise for him created the impression that he was "their man". Some of them even suggested that Anwar and not Mahathir should be running the country. In fact, in June 1998 a number of regional and international newspapers and magazines openly called for Mahathir's resignation. Their stance created a serious schism between the two men.

Different approach

The foreign media, in a sense, brought to the surface certain differences in approach between Mahathir and Anwar in their handling of the economic crisis. Right from the outset, Mahathir preferred a credit expansionary policy aimed at stimulating the economy and preventing it from sinking into recession. Anwar took the more conventional route and sought to cut back on expenditure and impose a credit squeeze. For Mahathir lowering interest rates was important so that businesses could get back on their feet; for Anwar maintain-

Reporters - Traitors or lackeys

The Anwar case is not only the biggest political upheaval for a whole new generation of Malaysians, but also for a whole new generation of Malaysian journalists. The majority of us running around at demonstrations, staking out Anwar's house, crowding the corridors of the courts are in our 20s and 30s. We've grown up with Dr. Mahathir as Prime Minister for almost as long as we can remember. For most of us, the events unfolding before our very eyes are completely unprecedented — certainly in the last 10 years, there has been peace, stability and prosperity. Scandals and big news might break, but nothing nowhere near the scale of what has been happening since September 2, the day Anwar was sacked.

As journalists and Malaysians, we are doubly affected by what is going on. As someone who has grown up in Kuala Lumpur, it is exciting, exhilarating, fascinating to see thousands of people gather peacefully to cheer for reform. As journalists reporting the event, we have to try to put aside our emotions and be objective and balanced and to try to figure out what is really going on.

This is extremely difficult given the circumstances we work in and Malaysian journalists working for both local and foreign media have come under fire for doing their jobs.

On the one hand, those who work for the local media must suffer flak for being the so-called "lackeys" of Dr. Mahathir. Imagine however, the frustration of going out to cover an event, say a public mass rally in Kuala Lumpur, and then having your story either quashed or rewritten according to in-house rules and "directives" from the Information Ministry. The official state broadcaster RTM was present at every news conference that Anwar gave. Yet no footage of those events ever went on air. What they do with all those tapes is anyone's guess. Then there is TV3, one of the private TV channels which was singled out particularly for criticism by Anwar himself, for presenting pro-government-biased reports. The TV3 cameramen have now removed all identifying logos when out on assignment for fear of being targeted by Anwar supporters.

The local media are controlled. That has never been a secret. The main political parties own a large part of some of the main newspapers, therein lies the means of control. Another avenue open to the authorities is the usage of the licencing laws — any station that goes against the authorities may very well find itself pulled off air. This does not mean that the journalists themselves are cowed or cowards as generally assumed by foreign reporters and members of the public. Their hands are after all tied. They may want to file a story a certain way and find themselves coming up against editorial policy.

Then there are the Malaysians who work for the foreign media. Now, they face another problem — they are branded traitors and mercenaries by the government and told not to 'sell out' our country. And yet they are only doing our jobs, reporting what they see and hear, without any thought of betraying our country.

As Malaysian journalists, it is also painful to see the way some foreign correspondents have parachuted into the country complete with a whole set of pre-conceived notions, seemingly determined to see Malaysia as another Indonesia. And nothing seems to convince them otherwise. And it only takes some irresponsible sensationalism by certain foreign correspondents to make the rest of us automatically suspect by the authorities.

To have our professionalism and our loyalties questioned at the same time seems to be particularly unfair. Most of us are doing the best we can within the restrictions surrounding our profession in Malaysia. Try writing with the threat of something like the Internal Security Act hanging over one's head — yet we do our jobs and will continue to do so. If anyone would like to turn around and jeer at the local journo for being cowed and biased, they better make sure that they themselves are beyond reproach and they follow the ethics of journalism — to report objectively without fear or favour.

By MAGGIE LEE

- A pseudonym unfortunately needed under the circumstances.

By DR. CHANDRA MUZAFFAR

- President of the International Movement for a Just World
- Director of the Center for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya, Malaysia

Photo:

COURTESY OF AP PHOTOS

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ing a reasonably high interest rate was one way of checking capital flight.

These differences generated some uneasiness in the market, but did not cause the split between the prime minister and his deputy-cum-finance minister. What exacerbated their relationship was Anwar's initial reluctance to endorse some of the rescue operations of big local corporations hit by the financial crisis. One of these corporations which had accumulated huge debts was Konsortium Perkapalan — a shipping firm associated with Mirzan Mahathir, the Prime Minister's son. There were a couple of other bail-outs too, allegedly linked to corporate figures close to the Prime Minister which Anwar was not enthusiastic about.

Demonstrations

As the rift between Mahathir and Anwar widened, yet another factor began to impact upon their relationship. This was the explosive situation in Indonesia which came to a head in May 1998. Suharto was becoming the principal target of massive street demonstrations that zeroed in upon his long tenure — 32 years in power — and the enormous wealth that his family had accumulated during his rule. In the end, popular fury over his "nepotism, crony collusion" forced Suharto to quit. Opposition political parties, non-governmental organisations and youth and student groups in Malaysia, already critical of the growing involvement of Mahathir's sons in big business, and somewhat unhappy about the prime minister's own long stay in power (17 years by July 1998) began to draw parallels between Suharto and Mahathir. Some of them felt that the time had come for Mahathir to retire. This explains why Mahathir became paranoid about the Indonesian situation.

It should be emphasised at this point however that there are significant differences between the Suharto and Mahathir leaderships and between Indonesia and Malaysia which some of Mahathir's critics fail to appreciate.

Unlike Suharto, Mahathir is a popularly elected leader who derives his mandate from a democratically constituted electoral process. Unlike the Suharto family, Mahathir's children have not established monopolies over entire sectors of the economy. Neither

corruption, nor poverty nor authoritarianism in Malaysia today bears any semblance to the situation in Indonesia under Suharto.

Be that as it may, the question of corruption, cronyism and nepotism was raised by some UMNO Youth leaders close to Anwar at the party's annual assembly in June 1998. Dr. Mahathir saw it as a naked attack upon his leadership. Though he managed to blunt the attack by revealing that others, including Anwar's family and friends, also benefited from the allocation of shares and the government's privatisation programme, the raising of the "corruption, cronyism and nepotism" issue at the assembly, worsened the deteriorating ties between Mahathir and his heir-apparent.

Protege

Mahathir was now convinced that the UMNO Youth criticism, seen against the backdrop of attempts to draw parallels between him and Suharto; Anwar's lukewarm attitude to certain bail-outs; differences in approach towards the economic crisis between him and Anwar; the foreign media's antagonism towards him in contrast to the accolades showered upon Anwar; and the general erosion of support for his leadership, were clear indications that there was an organised, systematic endeavour to force him out of office.

The man behind this endeavour, Mahathir reasoned, was Anwar Ibrahim. He therefore decided to move against his protege.

It is revealing that it was around this time, in June 1998, that the sex allegations that Mahathir had dismissed in August 1997, re-surfaced in a thick book entitled "50 Reasons Why Anwar Cannot Become Prime Minister" which included a whole host of other slanderous charges against the deputy prime minister. The book, inter alia, alleged that Anwar was not only a womaniser and sodomist but also a murderer, who was corrupt, had abused power and was, at the same time, a CIA agent and a traitor to the nation.

At the UMNO General Assembly, the book was distributed free to party delegates. In spite of a court injunction restraining the distributor from circulating the book or its contents, 50 Reasons is easily available and has appeared in different forms. Incidentally, the high court judge in granting the injunc-

tion described the book as "one long poison-pen letter."

That this poison-pen book designed to smear and vilify Anwar should appear at about the same time as when Mahathir had lost confidence in his Deputy is no coincidence. The book, obviously, was written at the behest of Anwar's adversaries (some of whom were responsible for the earlier document) to assassinate his character. It appears that Mahathir who was angered and incensed by what he regarded as his heir-apparent's betrayal and disloyalty, was not averse to the production and distribution of the poison-pen book. He knew it would serve his purpose of slandering and shaming someone who had the audacity to go against him. Thus, Anwar's enemies succeeded finally in merging their goal with Mahathir's motive.

Loyalty

Mahathir's insistence on loyalty to him is not in itself an unusual feature of politics. In most political systems, ancient or modern, a deputy or the number two man is expected to be loyal to his chief. Within UMNO - given its feudal history and culture - unquestioning loyalty to the paramount leader is one of the most cherished traits of membership. It is because Mahathir was absolutely certain that Anwar had betrayed him that he has marshalled all his resources to annihilate him. The virulence and viciousness of the annihilation can perhaps be best explained by the fact that Anwar was, after all, Mahathir's protege.

Perhaps another explanation for the harsh and cruel treatment of Anwar is that Mahathir may be personally convinced that Anwar is a sodomist. One detects in Mahathir a strong revulsion for what is legally and morally described as "unnatural sex".

Camouflage

Anwar and his supporters would argue that the bit about sodomy is nothing more than a cheap camouflage. The real reason Mahathir has gone all out to destroy and denigrate Anwar is because he fears that the latter will not protect his family's business interests after his time. By questioning the bail-out for Mahathir's son, Anwar was telling his boss that he was not prepared to salvage the Mahathir family. For an ageing leader who has witnessed what had happened in South Korea and what is now happening in Indonesia, Anwar's attitude was the antithesis of the iron-clad guarantee he was looking for in a post-Mahathir era.

Conclusion

At the root of the expulsion of Anwar from the government and the party is the question of power. Mahathir responded to a perceived challenge to his power with vigour and without scruples. Anwar, feeling that Mahathir's power base was weakening, sought to send a message — and was repulsed. How this power struggle camouflaged by issues of morality and justice will play itself out in the next few weeks is anybody's guess.

Burma - waiting for an explosion?



Story & Photos:
BY "IRENE"
Freelance photo journalist

... It's almost impossible to work as a journalist under these conditions. My main concern was the safety of the people I contacted. A bit less worrying one was my own safety...

RANGOON - It's ten o'clock at night and the streets are dark and quiet. Only the luxury hotels form bright beacons of light in the darkness, desperately hiding the fact they are as good as empty. In a city with a population of over 5 million, it feels almost like a curfew.

On a road beside the compound housing the Ministry of War - a huge expanse covering several hectares at the foot of the Shwedagon Pagoda (Burma's holiest Buddhist shrine) - road blocks force us to slow down. Heavily armed soldiers huddle under the orange glow of street lights, which do work here. In the dark red wall behind them, holes for snipers to shoot through are carved out. It's anybody's guess how many soldiers lurk behind them. Since 1996, most senior army officers and their families have moved into the compound.

"They are too afraid to live among the people", said my driver and grinned as if their fear gives him some satisfaction. Then he added philosophically, "Maybe they are even more afraid than we are."

The city was awash with rumours. Word had spread quickly that the students were protesting again and people had heard voices in the night calling: "We want education! We want democracy! Help us!"

We were on the way to the university campus where hundreds of students, including my driver's son and his friends, had been protesting for several days. But the university was surrounded by soldiers and riot police and it was impossible to get close. We tried to listen for songs and protest slogans but the night remained silent but for the chirping of the crickets. It was not a place to linger. The police were on the lookout for curious passers-by, especially foreigners with cameras. My driver was worried about his son. But at the same time he was proud.

"Students are the ones who have to show courage, it's their moral role," he said.

During generations of military dictatorship fear has crept into every level of Burmese society. As a visiting foreign journalist it's not easy to stay unaffected by it at this moment. The junta keeps careful track of visitors, especially since the arrest of a group of 18 activists who handed out "solidarity leaflets" on Aug 9. Activists - and also journalists - are not welcome in Burma. Its embassies have a growing blacklist of people who "have broken Burmese law" and are consequently persona non-grata. They seem to work on a "white-



Sick but still laughing



Looking for left peanuts after the harvest



Still electronics in stock but no money to buy



Few visitors left at the Shwedagon Pagoda.

list" - basis to accredit journalists. Only a carefully selected few are sometimes given journalists' visas when the junta thinks it's the right time. Most recently a group of Chinese journalists was guided around the country.

It's almost impossible to work as a journalist under these conditions. My main concern was the safety of the people I contacted. A bit less worrying one was my own safety. Trying to make contact with the opposition is at the moment an almost certain way to get deported. Only a few journalists managed to meet NLD members and the party's secretary general Aung San Suu Kyi in the past two months at secret locations and got tape and films out of the country.

When I saw Suu Kyi, she was just recovering from a trip to meet party members in Bassein. The junta had stopped her for days and deprived her of food and drink. She looked remarkably well and cheerful, knowing that she has the initiative in a prolonged game of chess with the junta. The political chess game started more or less when Suu Kyi was "released" from house arrest in 1995. Until May this year she was playing a defensive game, but at a party congress that month the NLD changed its strategy. Suu Kyi launched a counter-attack. What her next moves will be she won't reveal. But on the junta's way of playing the game she said (in 1996), "They are like a chess player who only thinks one or two moves ahead." But she added that the junta is the sort of player who, when outwitted, "kicks over the table."

One such tantrum came soon after the NLD announced its intention to convene the parliament elected in 1990 (which was never allowed to meet). The junta has detained more than 900 party members and supporters (since May) among them 200 MPs. The detentions didn't come as a surprise to Suu Kyi. She said she had the mandate of a majority of parliamentarians for her formation on Sept. 16 of a 10-member committee representing the parliament and to

perform its duties. The first resolutions it passed included that the new constitution must be approved by the parliament and that laws without its approval are not legal. They also called on the armed forces to support the parliament and stated that "it must uphold and respect the wish of the people."

The junta's mouthpieces have threatened to expel Suu Kyi from Burma, arrest vice-chairman Tin Oo and outlaw the NLD party. But Suu Kyi makes her calculated moves around scheduled meetings of ASEAN and the UN forcing the junta to watch its step.

Some accuse her of being stubborn in her stand-off with the junta but the people I spoke to in Burma don't see it that way. "Without her we'll have to live for the rest of our lives under a military dictatorship," said one Rangoon resident. "She is our only hope." How long will it be until their patience runs out?

Many are waiting for her to give a signal. Although people are very afraid - Suu Kyi acknowledged fear as "one of the big problems in Burma," they are also growing more and more angry.

People, from all walks of life - including middle class business people - who are still brave enough to talk to foreigners, were saying that they are angry that there is not enough to eat in a country known for its abundance. Angry that there is only a few hours electricity a day. Angry that they are lied to by a regime that's filling its own pockets and doesn't care for the people. Both sides still claim they want no repeat of the bloodbath that surrounded the junta's hold on to power in 1988. But can any of them control the anger which is fermenting?

"Fear and anger form a potent mixture," said a Burmese religious leader.

"The explosion to come, could be ignited by any spark, and when it comes we don't know who can control the anger."



Don Felipe on production duties with his GARMIN GPS, checks the train maximum speed: 63 kils per hour.

Breakfast on board our 'ministerial carriage'. Axel Sommerfeld ARD cameraman takes a break between 2 stations.



The carriage can be rented for a whole group (8 berths) and hooked up to any passengers train within the Myanmar rail network.

Inserted picture: Camera is ready, lights are being fixed on top of the engine for eventual night or tunnel sequences.

Boogie Track Filming in Myanmar

BY PHILIPPE DECAUX
FCCT's President

.. 'with the cook and steward watching over the gears we toured the city and shopped for more booze and Mandalay Beer..'



"Three Legs Cooling water" imported from Malaysia, goes well with the Scotch especially when no air-con is available. Also recommended these days for Dr. Mahatir but without the booze!

IN OUR LIFE of television network nuts we are sometimes faced with a strange request for a certain type of production...

And this one came from my German colleagues at ARD... asking if we would be able to position a camera in the front of a Myanmar Railways engine and let it eat up tape as the train swallows its scheduled diet of tracks from Yangon to Mandalay and exotic routes. I was a bit surprised but then I remembered that NHK after hours feeds its transmitter with shots from a single camera, lens stuck in front of an aquarium with tropical fishes replacing sometimes advantageously your usual commentator or MC.

So my initial question was: Is it for a night programme, one of those where one does not shut the transmitter to avoid damages when the juice goes in again? "Exactly", replied my friend Axel and this show turns out to be extremely successful as lots of people like watchmen, night workers, train fans and insomniacs are glued to their tubes every night, preferably with a beer mug in hand and about 35 cms away from

their mouths... watching trains of the world going through landscapes that only the conductors are able to enjoy...

So one month later and taking the advantage of a lull in the news we set off Axel, Dieter the technical magician and myself to Myanmar with the assignment to cover some ten hours of train ride, from dawn til dusk, including the stops and tunnels...

As soon as we landed in Yangon, we went to the Ministry of Rail Transportation and met with the Deputy Minister Thura U Thaung Lwin to expose our project. The minister understood immediately the promotion advantages of the show and started to describe what would be the best routes, what engines would be used and how we could install the camera, where there would be zig-zags, a rarity according to train experts, the best schedules for day-time light... all this without consulting aides nor papers. We were very impressed by his knowledge and even more impressed, when taken to the train depot, an engineer greeted us... in German. He had been trained in

Germany on diesel engines and was very proud of it. Seeing our case, he designed a small platform to hold our camera, a 3CCD digital model, and we left the depot knowing that the next day, as we would start our journey, the camera platform would be there, at a perfect angle, behind the front window of the engine. And it happened! At 5pm sharp, we left Yangon Central station, camera rolling on the way to Pegu and Mandalay. But the big surprise was that, right behind the engine our quarters on boogies were rolling and swinging for the whole route and more... the Minister carriage, with a state-room and eight other berths, a dining room and kitchen complete with cook and waiter... So, when sunset forced the filming to a stop, one hour and 23 minutes after our departure, we all rejoined our carriage for aperitifs, dinner, after hours drinking and joking on swinging boogies, with our interpreter and the Ministry's employees assigned to ensure that everything would go smoothly. The next morning saw us starting the shoot at sunrise until our arrival in Mandalay around 9

am. There, our carriage was set aside with the cook and steward watching over the gears, and we toured the city, the Royal Palace, shopped for more booze and Mandalay Beer for the next segment of the trip and dined in a shan restaurant before returning to our carriage around 9 pm, but this time at the end of the train as we were to be dropped off, sleeping in our carriage, at Thazi station by one am. to wait for the next route. The rarity, the ZIG-ZAGS. We left Thazi at 6,30 am. for some 160 kilometers of track leading to Kalaw, a lovely and breezy mountain resort in Shan State.... A very heavy mountain climb which took us more than 6 hours... at some stage, I regularly checked the speed with my GPS, going at 6 kilometers per hour uphill through fantastic landscapes. And the Zig-zags, at least ten of them, the whole train coming to a dead-end track at a hill station, then moving into reverse to another higher track-end in a distance of less than one click, and then up and forward onto the next zig-zag.

Just imagine our german viewers, suddenly seeing the

whole landscape going backwards... then forward... where is my beer gone!!! But for us, as soon as we finished our shoot, a curtain of rain started to cover the whole landscape as we were driving to another location and another story.... We were lucky... right in the middle of the monsoon...

And for those who like trains, we found a lovely possibility of a holiday. Put eight people together, get your visas and rent a whole train carriage with cook and steward, select your train routes Mandalay, Taunggy, Lashio, visit the cities, the carriage will always be waiting for you, fully protected, select what you want to eat, the cook will always purchase the freshest stuff from the markets the train is passing through, see the most incredible landscapes, bring your own stereo and CDs if you want to dance with the boogies.(the carriage is fully powered) and the price for this very different holiday is more than decent. But one bit of advice: do not fight over the State room !

Media Watch

BY SARA FIELDING, ADARCO

AGENCY COMMISSION UNDER PRESSURE

Agencies are being squeezed to reduce their commission structures. The traditional 4A's agreement of 1,765% is being attacked from all sides: increased pressure from hungry competitors, media owners discounting by as much as 50%, direct sales to advertisers and clients citing budget cuts from reduced sales leaves little room for manoeuvre.

In an effort to halt a price war, the Advertising Association of Thailand is already talking to media-owners to suggest fixed discount standards on media buys, rather than every man for himself.

An area that has yet to be addressed as an alternative to media commissions is fee compensation. It is a system that is used increasingly in Western markets and has been introduced on a limited basis in Asia.

Multinational companies such as Coca-Cola insist that it is estimated that 5 -10% of agency compensation is on a fee basis. With the advent of media specialists, the 'unbundling' of media and creative services will make fee arrangements a reality.

MORE MEDIA BUREAUS

Carat Media Services was recently launched in Thailand as a joint venture with Japanese agency Chuo Senko. As the largest independent media specialist in the world, its presence indicates that media specialists will be a future force in the Thai market.

Once feared by full service agencies as a threat to media revenue, the concept has been fully embraced by major agency players. The serious contenders have already announced their own brands of media shops.

This year, WPP launched Mindshare, taking responsibility for media services for both J. Walter Thompson and Ogilvy & Mather, Zenith Media covers media tasks for Saatchi & Saatchi & Bates, while Leo Burnett has opened Starcom and Grey Thailand offers Mediacom. Omnicom, the parent company for Damask BBDO, TWBA Next & Triplet and Spaulding Hawi DDB Needham has announced that it will launch Optimedia in Thailand in the first quarter of 1999, Thailand's first media specialist, Total Media Thailand (Dentsu, Young & Rubicam) will be changing its name to The Media Edge, in keeping with a recent announcement by its global network.

TACT AWARDS SHOWED REDUCED BUDGETS

November 20th, the annual TacT advertising awards were announced at a grand ceremony at Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre. Organised this year by Silpakorn University, the number of entries had increased over last year's.

In spite of the additional entries, it was clear for everyone the effect of slashed production budgets on the winning solutions. Obviously, the days of the 2 minute ad spectacular were long gone. It was, however a thrill to see, how much creativity could in fact make up for the reduced funds.

OF ROCKS AND ROCKETS



By JERRY HARMER
APTN senior producer

All Photos:
COURTESY OF AP PHOTOS



Phom Penh — from the very start this assignment was destined to be different. I hadn't even unloaded my cases from the hotel car when automatic rifle fire burst into the night air. There was pandemonium among the thousands gathered in "Democracy Square". Instead of taking my equipment to my room, I left it lying in the road, and found myself running through the crowd, recording the panic around me. A woman was carried to a first aid post, apparently overcome with fear. Beside her two people attempted heart massage on an unconscious man. I was taken to see a monk whose shaven head was bleeding from a flurry of truncheon blows. Later I filmed a group grieving at a make-shift shrine where a *motodop* had been shot dead earlier that night. It was a dramatic start to the assignment. By its end I would understand something of how these people felt.

The experience of a previous generation of journalists should have taught us something. Instead, I suspect many of us go into lethal situations with an innate belief that we are invulnerable. It was a feeling that was bolstered that first night, and the following afternoon when a force of Cambodian policemen swept through the tent city in "Democracy Square", driving its inhabitants before them.

I arrived in the square just as they deployed. They formed up in a dog-leg, adjusting the chin-straps of their helmets, and gripping tightly whatever weapon they carried. It was clear we were about to witness a scene of extreme aggression. And yet I could stand, as I did, no more than a metre away from their line, and record every last

second of their action, untouched. When they smashed down the banners on the fringe of the camp, I was with them. When a soldier slammed the butt of his AK47 into the face of a young woman, I was at his shoulder, and I was there again when he chased another woman and twice swung his gun like an axe into her back. When I was in front of them, the police line parted around me. No one even looked in my direction. It was as if I wasn't there.

So the next morning, when demonstrators gathered near the US Embassy, and rumours flew that the police were coming, I wasn't worried. In fact, the opposite was true. I was in the right place, and anticipated more privileged access. And for 34 seconds that's what I got. The police charged round the corner, hesitated briefly, then warmed to the task of beating a pocket of trapped demonstrators with their batons. Just like the previous day I was in among them.

Then something struck me with incredible force on the crown of the head. I fell heavily, rolled over, and lay staring upwards. I thought I'd been batoned by a policeman. In fact, as video pictures later showed, a demonstrator standing outside Prince Ranariddh's house had thrown a rock into the melee.

There followed one of the worst half hours of my life. I fought against feintness, dehydration, nausea and pain, and worst of all the fear of not knowing how badly I'd been hurt. Thanks to the help of colleagues, and the work of the SOS clinic, I recovered quickly enough. In another part of the clinic a young man was led in by



nurses, bleeding, like me, from a head wound. Looking at him was like an awakening. A few minutes earlier he would have been a picture to record. Now I knew what it felt like.

And I don't regret it happening. It reminded me forcefully of a fact we all too often forget; that we are not reporting costume drama, but real events, and when we film people bleeding or in pain, it's not just an image in a viewfinder.

Two weeks later I was in Siem Reap when a young boy, a by-stander, was killed in a botched rocket attack. This time I saw things differently. What struck me most wasn't the strong picture but the grief of the family. That, and the fact that the boy too probably thought that it wouldn't ever happen to him.

CAMBODIA'S DREAM DEFERRED

By JEAN-CLAUDE POMONTI

Election Day, July 26. Traveling through Kompong Cham province on the left bank of the Mekong River with Don Felipe, an able and lively chauffeur, I could feel a deep quietness in the countryside, similar to a quietness I felt 30 years ago when I first discovered Cambodia.

The dirt road was good except for one short section. Restored pagodas and newly built ones showed that peasants had saved a little money — and could spend it as they wished. New and rather clean schools, albeit without electricity, stood here and there, deserted on a Sunday except for a couple of classrooms opened to voters.

About the only sound was the voices of people crossing the large river on tiny boats. By midday, rural Cambodia had relaxed into an attractive drowsiness that induces dreaming, dreaming of what could be in Cambodia after a quarter century of wars and massacres.

The majestic Mekong invites one to watch the sun rise and set. Its banks are fertile, and people here at Cambodia's heart (or at least its most populated region) could live relatively comfortably growing rubber, rice and vegetables. They could be content with the modest but very real ambition of raising their children and feeding their monks.



Angkor Wat could find again the glory of its past and, through an amiable kind of tourism befitting its majesty, add a bit of extra cash to state coffers.

On a drowsy midday in rural Cambodia, one can almost see it: not a paradise, but a respect for life. No AIDS, no fighting, no bickering. One can almost see it, but like any vivid dream, it can be recalled but not touched and not kept. That is the real sadness in Cambodia today. The dreams are vivid but dissipate with waking.

For the first time since 1970, Cambodia is nearly at peace. The last fighting cliques of the Khmer Rouge have collapsed. Normalization is at hand — but just out of reach. For 30 years, Cambodia's story has been like this,

a novel without chapters written by a novelist who doesn't know how to conclude and so he goes on and on until the addition of words is meaningless.

Cambodians from all walks of life want to strengthen their ties with the rest of the world. Recent isolation meant genocide. But their experience with the United Nations provisional authority that tried to run the show in 1992-1993 left the Khmer wary of foreign assistance. The legacy of the UN days is a culture of NGOs, local and foreign, mostly welcomed but without much impact on the evolution of the country.

Pol Pot is gone, and survivors can be wise. Two-thirds of Phom Penh voted against be Hun Sen and his CPP-State. In addition, except for a small outspoken minority, phnompehnois disapproved of the vitriolic anti-Vietnamese speeches at Democracy Square in August. They also reacted strongly against the beating of monks in September.

Khmers remember the misery of the 1970s began with Lon-nol's massacres of Vietnamese civilians. They remember how society began to collapse a few years later when the Khmer Rouge banned Buddhism in their so-called liberated zones.

So if people can be wise, why can't they

settle quarrels and move on with compromise? The reasons are complex. Part of the reason is the brutalization of a whole society for more than 20 years. Another aspect is that society lacks a culture of dialogue.

But this doesn't explain why Cambodia's ruling class cannot sit down and find some rules to a common game in the interest of their people and the country. Instead they have no rule of law and no democracy, only certain factions' determination to reign supreme and not to share. The electoral campaign was clear on at least one point: candidates exchanges of insults could not hide the obvious lack of ideologies and programs.

And so the novelist writes on and on, page after page.

Maybe rural folk know better. Maybe the future of Cambodia starts building on the banks of the Mekong, far from the crisis of Phom Penh. On a drowsy afternoon driving along a country road, it almost seems possible, and one wonders how long Cambodia will be a dream deferred.

Jean-Claude Pomonti was S.E. Asia Correspondent for *Le Monde* from 1968 until 1974 and returned to Bangkok in 1991 to resume this position.

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Although the FCCT is a Press Club, its membership is not exclusive to members of the Press. In the interest of intellectual and social diversity, The Club is also open to accredited press representatives of official and semi-official information services, diplomatic missions and international organizations as well as members of the general public who enjoy active debates and maintain an avid interest in news gathering and presentation efforts of the FCCT and are deemed by the Executive Committee of the FCCT to be contributing to the journalistic profession by their interest and support.

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For further details on the Club, please contact Khun Panjavilai at the FCCT on 652-0580 - 1 or fax 652-0582.

Remembering the Dead by Helping the Living

Radio journalist honing interviewing skills during a field visit in Chiang Mai IMM Radio Journalism Training Course.



BY PETER ENG
- IMM's Executive Board
- Former news editor of the AP's Bangkok Bureau

Some 350 journalists were killed while covering the wars in Indochina. Today, the Indochina Media Memorial Foundation honors their sacrifice by training a new generation of journalists now covering the complex issues of national development.

Trainer Eddie Bissell with photojournalists IMM Photojournalism Training Course.

From Oct. 18 to Nov. 8, the IMM conducted its eighth major course in Thailand - this one on business reporting. In classroom instruction and field visits including one to an Eastern Seaboard industrial estate, 16 working journalists from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma and Thailand learned the basics of banking, the stock market, and companies as well as the complexities of the Asian economic crisis. They received their course certificates from Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan in a ceremony at the FCCT.

"The course was very, very useful for me," said Dinh Pham Tran, 22, of the Vietnam Economic Times in Hanoi.

"I graduated in economics, but I knew nothing about journalism. In particular, I had no idea about where to get sources of information."

Thailand aside, resources and opportunities remain scarce as these countries struggle out of decades of poverty, war and isolation. All the media are strictly controlled in Burma, by the military government, and in Vietnam and Laos, by the ruling Communist parties. In Cambodia, violence and threats haunt journalists as political factions drag them into their battle for power. But the IMM does not take political sides, and instead focuses on raising professional standards. It has taught journalists of both the pro- and anti-government press in Cambodia and in Burma.

The IMM was founded in 1991 by British photojournalist Tim Page to commemorate the journalists of Indochina, where he himself was wounded several times. It is a bare-bones operation that nevertheless strives to keep professional standards high. Its office is in the home of its project director Sarah McLean. The executive board includes four Western journalists who give their time voluntarily. Funders for IMM courses have included the governments of Denmark and Sweden, the Japan Foundation, the Ford Foundation and Freedom Forum of the United States, and the Thomson Foundation of the United Kingdom. Course trainers have been provided by journalism groups such as the Thomson Foundation and the Knight Foundation in the United States.

The intensive, three-week IMM courses are held in Thailand. The recent business course was taught by Graham Watts, deputy foreign editor of the Financial Times of London. IMM trainers also have done shorter workshops in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and along the Thai-Burmese border. IMM courses also have focused on basic journalism, environmental reporting, radio journalism and photojournalism.

These courses teach not only technical skills - the five W's, the inverted pyramid, etc. - but also the equally important concerns of fairness, balance, and ethics in dealing with sources and stories. Guest lectures (including many by Bangkok-based journalists) and

field visits (including many to Bangkok-based news organizations) expose the students to new situations and ideas. Another main goal is to promote understanding and friendship among journalists of countries that often been in conflict with each other over the years.

"No other organization focuses solely on improving the standards of journalism in Indochina," says Denis Gray, the AP's Bangkok bureau chief who is co-president of the IMM and a former FCCT president.

Says Dominic Faulder of Bureau Bangkok, who is the other IMM co-president and also a former FCCT president: "There is an important trickle-down effect in many directions. The students benefit directly from being exposed on neutral ground to fresh experiences in their profession. Inevitably, they will share many of these ideas with their colleagues when they go home."

IMM courses often bring vivid reminders of the conditions in which these journalists work. Chhoy Pisei from Cambodia Soir, a French-language daily in Phnom Penh, arrived for last year's photojournalism course suffering from a shrapnel wound in his foot. Ms. McLean helped dress up the wound. Chhoy Pisei limped on his first few classroom assignments. But actually he was one of the lucky ones. He was among dozens of people wounded when grenades were tossed at an anti-corruption rally in Phnom Penh. At least 19 people were killed.



Ian Crawshaw with a firm grip of his .. situation.. flanked by his buddy Dick Bradsell (AKA Buffy) and Pink Man.



Oh, What A Night!

Metro Magazine's 4th Anniversary party set records for years to come.

If the FCCT carpets look a little patchy lately, blame it on METRO's 4th Anniversary party, Aug 19. At least we can now say the new club premises have well and truly been 'broken in' with a night of riotous drinking, dancing and, er, more drinking. Around 700 guests packed the club, the party receiving coverage on national television and national newspapers (Andrew Hiransomboon, we have incriminating pictures of you, you bastard!).

Thanks a bunch to the management for allowing METRO to use the area outside the elevators for the divinely decadent Absolut Cocktail Lounge.

Was this the first time in the FCCT's history that the bar has ever been drunk dry? The paying bar had no more beer, wine, whiskey, vodka, port, Coke, ice, glasses... party goers were stumbling insanely into McDonald's to bring back paper cups of Coke for their whiskeys!

The mess took nearly two days and several health endangering experiences to clear up.

For the record (on the early evening free drinks front) in the first 2 1/2 hours of the party, guests managed to finish 60 litres of vodka, 10 bottles of rum, 84 bottles of wine, 12 bottles of tequila, 7 barrels of Carlsberg and 4 small plates of sausage rolls and vegetable samosas and three packets of sandalwood joss sticks. Guest then continued drinking, buying Bt100,000 of drinks coupons. Quite a good night for the Club and for METRO, but not one to be repeated too soon!

High Points

Sponsorship of free drinks by Absolut Vodka, Carlsberg, Sauza Tequila, Captain Morgan Rum, PTK Wine, Siam Havana Cigars.

Pink Man bringing his own Pink Cocktail Glass.

Ian Crawshaw's transvestite buddy from London, celebrity Television barman Dick Bradsell. His napalm inspired vodka cocktails Screaming Kittens and Mind Fucks set fire to three people's hair.

Free Tarot Readings from MARISA's Collection in the Absolut Bar.

Whole club action dancing to YMCA.

Low Points

Two young men throwing up simultaneously behind the President's Podium.

All the Pink Man's Postcards were stolen (Philistine guests didn't realise it was an "installation").

Every single drop of alcohol in club bar drunk.

10 seconds (just about how long the food lasted when put out on the tables)

Vodka bar running out of mixers and ice, so guests drinking straight vodka with creme de menthe.

Carpet cleaning bill for METRO Magazine.

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