

Fact-Finding Mission Visits Philippines

A three-member delegation, organized by the AAAS, recently traveled to the Philippines to investigate reports of human rights abuses directed against health personnel and others and to look into evidence of torture and the health conditions and medical care facilities for political detainees.

The mission delegates were Jonathan Fine, M.D., president, American Committees for Human Rights; Robert Lawrence, M.D., director, Harvard Medical School, Division of Primary Care; and Eric Stover, staff officer, AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility. Financial support for the visit was provided by the Allen Hilles Fund of Philadelphia and the AAAS.

During their three-week stay in the Philippines (28 November to 17 December 1983), the delegation visited seven detention centers, as well as hospitals, psychiatric wards, and health care centers for the urban and rural poor. They interviewed past and present political detainees and their families and conferred with editors and journalists, psychiatrists and other physicians, politicians, human rights activists, members of the clergy, representatives of the Philippine Medical and Nurses' Association, and health workers engaged in rural and urban projects. Meetings also were held with staff members at the U.S. Embassy, U.S. Agency for International Development, the World Health Organization, and the International Committee for the Red Cross. Repeated requests for interviews with the ministers for defense and justice were denied, though mission delegates did meet with the minister of health and other health officials.

Among the delegation's findings are:

- Despite the lifting of martial law on 17 January 1981 by President Ferdinand Marcos, there has been a continuing pattern of gross violations of human rights carried out by certain elements within the government and the military forces of the Philippines. Such abuses include killings, "disappearances," torture, arrests and searches without proper legal safeguards, and the forced relocation of peasants who are made to live in specified areas, in poor living conditions,

while under constant surveillance by the military.

- In the view of the mission team, the weight of the evidence suggests that President Marcos and those military officials under his authority have not taken adequate steps to put an end to these abuses.

- On the basis of interviews with several past and present detainees who alleged that they were tortured while in the custody of military personnel or paramilitary groups, the delegation is firmly convinced that torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment are real and pervasive problems.

- In certain instances, the delegation found that rural physicians and health workers were fearful that local military authorities viewed their professional activities as suspicious. This was particularly true in remote, militarized areas where residents have limited access to government-supported health facilities.

- The mission team's observations of detention facilities encompassed only a fraction of the over 100 places of detention for political prisoners. But, if the conditions the team observed are, in fact, representative of detention facilities as a whole then such facilities fall short of the standards set forth in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

- The United States has had a long and substantial involvement in the economic and political life of the Philippine nation. The mission team urges the American people, the Reagan Administration, and the U.S. Congress to remember this historical tie and to assure that future U.S. economic and military assistance is contingent upon the Philippine government's performance in the area of human rights.

- Upon its return to the United States, the delegation suggested to the mission's sponsors that they work together with their counterpart associations in the Philippines in an effort to create a greater awareness among the health community of this country of the problems Filipino health professionals face in the provision of health services.

In addition to the AAAS, other spon-

soring organizations for the delegation were the American College of Physicians, the American Nurses' Association, the American Public Health Association, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, and the American Committees for Human Rights.

The official report of the delegation will be completed later this month. Copies will be available through the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, AAAS, 1515 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

ERIC STOVER
*Committee on Scientific
Freedom and Responsibility*

AAAS Delegates in Sri Lanka and India

AAAS was represented at the recent annual meetings of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science (SLAAS) and the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA).

- John Benjamin Leake, a science educator at the University of Missouri-Columbia, was the AAAS delegate at the 39th annual session of the SLAAS, 12 to 16 December 1983 in Colombo. Leake presented both popular and specialized lectures and his wife, Bonnie Bourne, presented a paper. The meeting, which had as its theme "Science Education," was attended by representatives of scientific associations from Australia, India, Japan, and the Soviet Union, as well as the United States.

- Henry R. Bungay, professor of chemical and environmental engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and his wife, Mary Lou Bungay, attended the 71st session of the ISCA near Ranchi, 3 to 8 January 1984. The theme of the meeting, which was attended by more than 3000 scientists from India and abroad, was "Quality Science—Ends and Means." Congress president R. P. Bambah noted that, while India has developed a strong base in science and technology over the past 30 years, some changes should be made to avoid "brain drain" and political factionalization. He proposed an independent "All India University System" and higher salaries for research scholars.