

AAAS News

Forensic Experts Aid Philippine Search for Disappeared

AN international delegation of forensic experts traveled to the Philippines in December 1986 to conduct a 2-week workshop on the application of the forensic sciences in human rights investigations. This represents a continuation of the work begun when the Argentine government asked the AAAS to assemble a team of forensic scientists to help in the identification of "disappeared" persons in that country. (See *Science* 3 October 1986, p. 87; 4 October 1985, pp. 56-57; and 27 July 1984, p. 397.)

The Presidential Committee on Human Rights of the Philippines, the Medical Action Group, FIND (Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearances), and the University of the Philippines College of Medicine Department of Pathology invited the delegation to share its expertise in identifying skeletal remains of "disappeared" persons and in determining traumatic injuries, torture, and violent causes of death.

Thirty-four Filipino scientific and medical professionals from the Philippine Ministry of Health, the National Bureau of Investigations, the Philippine Constabulary, cause-oriented medical groups, and local hospitals in troubled areas of the country participated in the workshop which was held 1 to 13 December 1986.

Clyde Snow, a forensic anthropologist who has been assisting the Argentine government, since the first AAAS-

sponsored trip there in 1984, in its efforts to locate and identify the skeletal remains of the "desaparecidos" or disappeared persons, led the delegation. Two forensic pathologists, Fred Jordan, chief medical examiner for Oklahoma, and Jørgen Thomsen, a professor at the University Institute of Forensic Medicine, Copenhagen, Denmark, also lent their expertise on forensic medico-legal investigative procedures and examinations.

Other members of the delegation were three Argentines who have worked extensively with Snow over the past 2 years in the identification of the "desaparecidos." Morris Tidball, a fifth-year medical student, and Mercedes Doretti, an anthropology graduate student, both members of the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team which has performed over 60 court-ordered exhumations in Argentina, instructed the participants in the proper techniques for conducting exhumations and analyzing and recording the data recovered. Maria Julia Bihurriet, a former member of the National Commission on "Disappeared" Persons, described the types of data collected in Argentina which helped to determine the location of grave sites and identities of the "disappeared." Kari Hannibal, program associate, Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility (CSFR), represented the AAAS, and Victor Mata, a Costa Rican lawyer specializing in human rights and international law,

participated as an observer. In addition to the Philippine hosts, other sponsors of the trip were the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, the Committee of Concerned Forensic Scientists, and the Argentine Institute of Human Rights. The Ford Foundation, which is currently providing grant support to the forensic human rights work done by the CSFR in Argentina, provided funding for the trip.

The occurrence of disappearances in the Philippines is not near the scale of the 9,000 to 30,000 disappearances which reportedly occurred in Argentina during the years of the "dirty war." Philippines human rights groups estimate that there have been 640 disappearances from 1974, 2 years after President Marcos imposed martial law in the Philippines, to September 1986, 7 months after the election of Corazon Aquino. The number of disappearances peaked in 1984 and 1985 at 131 and 174, respectively. While some disappearances are still reported under the Aquino administration, human rights abuses in general have declined significantly. Under Executive Order #8 of President Aquino, the Presidential Committee on Human Rights was established to investigate both past and present human rights abuses committed by agents of the national government or persons acting under their orders. Their first

priorities are investigations into "salvagings," or extrajudicial killings, and "disappearances."

The successful identification of the skeletal remains of disappeared persons in the Philippines is hindered by a number of problems. The medical and dental records of these victims, which greatly facilitates identification, often do not exist either because the doctors do not keep the records or because the person has not visited doctors or dentists. This contrasts with the situation in Argentina where the disappearances were often from the urban middle class who visited doctors regularly and where records of all kind on each citizen were assiduously kept.

Further complicating the search in the Philippines, there has not yet been a comprehensive effort like that of the National Commission on Disappeared Persons in Argentina to gather affidavits or testimony from relatives and witnesses on circumstances surrounding the disappearances, to collect existing medical records of the disappeared by the relatives, or to record oral testimony from the relatives on medical problems or medical histories of the victims. Moreover, relatives who have tried to search for their loved ones have been intimidated and families are afraid to file complaints with the police or other investigating authorities for fear of recriminations. Relatives also fear that investigations will not



Philippine workshop participants exhume grave in area known locally as "killing field" near Bacoor, south of Manila.

proceed fairly because those responsible for the disappearances are still in positions of authority.

The international team and the workshop participants conducted several exhumations of suspected victims of disappearances in the area of Bacoor, in the province of Cavite, south of Manila. This area, locally called the "killing fields," is known as a dumping ground for those who have met a violent death. The team also reexhumed the skeletal remains of five unidentified persons who had been exhumed from this area in early 1986 by human rights groups and who were later reburied in a local cemetery. All the remains were taken to the University of the Philippines College of Medicine where they were studied for clues as to their identity and cause of death. While no positive identifications of these remains were made, the training offered in the workshop was soon put to use.

On 23 December 1986, the Presidential Committee on Human Rights (PCHR) called upon Tidball, who had stayed in the Philippines to travel before returning home, and three Filipino participants trained in the workshop to perform an exhumation of a grave on the island of Mindoro. The family of land reform activist Rey Robles, who disappeared 10 years ago, had requested that the PCHR investigate the case and determine if Robles was buried at a site they believed to contain his body. The team was able to successful-

ly identify the body of Robles by comparing dental charts and antemortem medical records with the skeletal remains.

Upon completion of the 2-week training course, the 34 participants drafted a resolution which they presented to the Presidential Committee on Human Rights calling for the creation of a subcommittee on disappeared persons which would investigate and document cases of involuntary disappearances, authorize exhumations of graves of unidentified persons with the intention of creating a repository for the remains and a databank of all relevant information regarding the missing in order to obtain identification, provide official support for the dissemination of the knowledge and skills acquired from the workshop, and provide expert witnesses and facilitate legal proceedings to prosecute the perpetrators and bring justice to the victims and their families.

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Volume Describing Technology Transfer in China Available

Science and technology (S&T) in China have become inextricably linked to economic development priorities. In the past few years numerous reforms have been instituted in

order to create an S&T system capable of meeting the demands placed on it by the country's "Four Modernizations"—industry, agriculture, defense, and science and technology. China's leaders know that their goal of quadrupling the country's gross annual value of industrial and agricultural production by the year 2000 will be impossible without S&T innovations.

Some of the management reforms include instituting a contract research system, establishing science funds and peer review, enhancing the authority and mobility of scientists and technical personnel as well as improving their working conditions, and opening China's door to the outside world. In March 1985, following the Third National Science Congress, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee issued its "Decision on the Reform of the S&T Management System," which gave the official imprimatur to these changes.

As part of its exchange program with the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST), the AAAS Board of Directors cosponsored a symposium on international approaches to technology transfer at the 1986 AAAS Annual Meeting. Among the topics of discussion were the newly instituted management reforms described above.

A proceedings volume, based on the China-related papers of the symposium, focuses on the effect these innovations will

have on technology transfer in China. Papers included are: "Three approaches to science policy (China, Japan, and the United States)" by Richard P. Suttmeier; "The organization of science and technology in China" by Wang Huijiong; "Domestic technology transfer mechanisms in China" by Chen Shenyi; and "Training technology managers in China" by Jordan Baruch.

Also included is an appendix on China's first S&T white paper. This 323-page document, which was released to the public in September 1986, presents a detailed picture of China's S&T development policies and priorities.

A copy of the proceedings volume is available, free, by writing Lisbeth A. Levey, China Exchange Program, at the AAAS address.

Pacific Division to Meet in San Diego in June

The Pacific Division of AAAS will meet on the campus of San Diego State University 14 to 18 June 1986. Symposia are scheduled on the lie detector controversy, fringe medicine and health practices, modeling physiological systems, biodiversity and extinction, desert plant resources, and endangered plants of the Californias.

A 3-day session on international cooperation in developing and managing shared resources

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