

REPORT ON CONDITIONS IN BUKIT DURI WOMEN'S PRISON, DJAKARTA - NOVEMBER 1971

Before commencing this report on conditions at the Bukit Duri Women's Prison, I should like to make some preliminary remarks:

Firstly: It should be borne in mind that this prison compares favourably with virtually every other military prison or detention camp in Indonesia, with perhaps the single exception of Nirbaja, the detention centre near Djakarta used for arrested ex-Ministers and other 'elite' prisoners. I make this remark on the basis of comments or comparisons I have heard from persons who have had experience of other prisons.

Secondly: The standard of administration of prisons being used for the detention of political prisoners depends to a considerable extent on the attitudes and energies of the officer who happens to be in command. The conditions I will describe are those experienced during the command of a relatively well-intentioned officer who brought about a number of improvements during his term of office. One may ask: Were these improvements merely of his own doing? Did they not reflect some change of heart in those responsible for prison conditions as a whole? In reply, I should like to point out that both he and his two predecessors were working under the command of the same person, namely Major Sami Gondjo, who has, for the past five years, been Commander of the Salemba Men's Prison, of which Bukit Duri is only a branch. As far as I know, conditions at Salemba underwent no change during the same period with the exception of an increase in the daily ration of rice. I therefore conclude that the improved conditions I experienced at Bukit Duri were due, in large part, to the efforts and initiative of the man in command, whose name was Lieut. Rompis.

I should add that a new commander of the prison was recently appointed, Second-Lieut. Abu Prajitno. He appears to be a kind-hearted man, a more-than-usually polite Javanese who will, I think, keep conditions at their present standard, and may even, with luck, bring about further improvements, though he seems to lack the drive and initiative of his less polite but more forceful predecessor.

General Remarks

The Bukit Duri Women's Prison actually consists of two separate prisons, one being the prison under civilian administration, and the other, the military Sub-Rumah Tahanan Khusus Wanita or the Special Sub-Prison for Women. The 'Sub' signifies that the prison is subordinated to the Salemba Special Prison (for men), and places it on a level with the Sub Rumah Tahanan Khusus (for men) at Tangerang. Thus, the Commander of the Salemba Prison is also commander of the two prisons at Bukit Duri and Tangerang, each of which have a commander who is immediately responsible to the Salemba Prison Commander. The general administration of prisoners' cases, the registration of new prisoners and the release of prisoners are all matters that go through Salemba.

My report is concerned only with the army-run Women's Prison at Bukit Duri, and not with the Bukit Duri Prison which is under civilian administration. The two occupy the same building but are rigidly separated and isolated from each other.

The prison with which we are here concerned occupies the area shaded in the accompanying diagram. The double-shaded area represents the blocks of cells, and the single shaded area represents the outdoor region. The front court, marked A, is a small yard for exercise and miscellaneous use, with only one tree. The rear part of the court is occupied by a bathroom, latrines, an outdoor bathing trough

and clothes' lines. The hall marked B is available for use by the political prisoners when necessary but is not part of the area on loan to the army for continuous use. This hall is used for religious services, religious lectures, festival-day gatherings and also for the interrogation of prisoners. In the latter capacity, it has been the scene of much torturing and beating-up particularly during the first year or so after the October 1st, 1965, Affair.

With the exception of a handful of selected prisoners detailed for kitchen duties and the heads of blocks who have duties to perform at the commander's office, no prisoner is permitted to go beyond the barbed wire fence marked C.

The prison is a well-built construction, showing little wear or tear, and is generally free of rain leakages except when roof-tiles fall out of place or break. However, as the windows have no glass panes (only iron bars), rain often beats in during a heavy storm. I was told the prison was originally built for Dutch convicts which probably explains why the construction is good.

Bukit Duri is the only prison being used by the army in Djakarta for the detention of women political prisoners. Some women are also being held at army units subordinate to the Djakarta Military Command (Kodam V Djaja). These women have a chance of being released, but if the unit in question decides against release, the detainee is sooner or later sent to Bukit Duri where the case passes into the hands of the Tim Pemeriksa Daerah (Teperda).

(For a more detailed description of the various arresting and detaining units, see separate report.)

Accommodation and Hygiene

The cells are of two sizes. The small cells, intended for one prisoner, are approximately 6 feet wide and $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet long. There is a stone platform in each cell, built with a slight incline, and the floor space extends under this platform for the full area of the cell. For the best part of the past six years, these small cells were used to accommodate three prisoners, one sleeping on the stone platform and the other two sleeping on the floor at right angles. My height being what it is, I was always given the 'upper floor' because I would never have been able to fit in elsewhere. In the last few months, following the dispatch of more than 80 women prisoners to the detention camp in Plantungan, Central Java, which reduced the prison population from about 160 to 72, these cells have been used to accommodate only one prisoner. It should be pointed out that prison regulations strictly prohibit the use of any cell for an even number of prisoners. This is mainly, I believe, to prevent homosexual excesses, though in Indonesia the prohibition applies to even numbers above three as well as below.

The large cells vary slightly in size but are generally about 12 feet long and 9 feet wide. These too have raised stone platforms, one of which is large and the other small. The large one extends to the floor. Most of these cells are used to accommodate five prisoners, four huddled together on the large platform with little more than two feet of space breadth-wise each, and the lucky fifth occupant on the single-sized platform. I was several times accommodated in one of these large cells, on one occasion with five other women and a baby, and on another occasion with four other women, one of whom was seriously ill with asthma. (She subsequently died during an attack in another, smaller, cell. See below.)

Sharing cells under such crowded conditions makes privacy an unattainable dream. However much I treasured the company of my prison colleagues, I was frequently driven by an intense yearning to be alone.

No form of bedding, including even straw mats, has ever been provided to any prisoner, either at Bukit Duri or, to my knowledge, elsewhere. Thus, as far as the army are concerned, the prisoners sleep on stone floors or stone platforms (which amounts to the same thing) without any kind of matting, let alone blankets or pillows.

For Christmas, 1969, all prisoners at Bukit Duri, and I believe at the other two main prisons in Djakarta (Salemba and Tangerang), received a single-sized mat and a pillow from the Indonesian Council of Churches. These mats and pillows have become part of prison inventory and thus may not be taken away when prisoners move or are released; they are available for supply to new prisoners.

All other bedding used is supplied by prisoners' families: additional mats, sacking, pillow cases (though these are not often seen) and an occasional blanket. Since the stone floors and platforms are extremely cold, several thicknesses of mats plus sacking are required to keep the prisoner reasonably warm. As a result of the lack of bedding, rheumatism and aching bones are fairly prevalent, and prisoners easily succumb to chills, flu and various respiratory ailments which would otherwise be preventable.

There is no protection whatsoever against mosquitoes which plague the sleepers in hot season and rainy season alike. No prisoner owns a mosquito netting and windows are not protected by mosquito gauze. (A few nights spent in an outer apartment in the Salemba Prison just prior to my departure from Indonesia showed me that the mosquito problem is far worse at Salemba than at Bukit Duri.) Another source of discomfort during sleeping hours, and also incidentally during the day, are bed bugs which thrive in the rafters and, believe it or not, even in cracks and holes in the walls and floors. Mats are a favourite hunting ground for these insects, and some cells are seriously infested. Bugs can, however, be brought under control, provided the occupants are careful about cleanliness; but nothing can be done about the mosquitos who breed outside and descend mercilessly on their prey at night.

The water supply is extremely good. There is one, long communal bathroom; the outdoor water trough which, I imagine, is actually intended for washing-up, is also used for bathing as the bathroom is frequently over-crowded. The trough stands behind a wall shielding it from the courtyard. There are two latrines, but during almost the entire 15 months I was there, only one was usable. This is totally inadequate, and prisoners are compelled to urinate in the bathroom or near the outdoor trough. A drain running along the back of the yard is also frequently used as a latrine.

The general standard of cleanliness in the prison is excellent. Regular daily and weekly clean-ups are organised by the prisoners themselves.

Cooking facilities are far from satisfactory. A shack built on the far side of the prison, beside the section used by the prison for criminals, is used as a kitchen. The roof leaks badly, and members of the cooking team are frequently ill during the rainy season. There are two paraffin cooking stoves which seem to take turns breaking down. Little attention is paid by the officers to the repair of these stoves and the women on kitchen duty often have a very hard time of it. No wonder, then, that when an International Red Cross team visited the political detainees' prison last year, they were shown round the kitchen of the criminals' prison, a reasonably well-equipped and well-built kitchen, which happens to be located very close to the political prisoners' block. None of the political prisoners was able to enlighten the visitors of the 'error' as all communication was forbidden, the team being informed that "none of the political prisoners can speak English"!

Lighting in the cells is good, though all electric bulbs are bought by the prisoners themselves. Bulbs of 60 or 75 watts are permitted, though in Salemba prisoners may not use bulbs of more than 15 watts. If, however, a bulb wears out and the prisoners in the cell concerned cannot afford to buy a new one, they may go for months without any lighting, as the administration never provides such things. Lights are switched on and off by a central switch and are kept on throughout the night. All cells must be well illuminated throughout the night for purposes of control.

The prison is run by a commander, three assisting officers, and two civilian personnel, all male. There is a nurse (female) on duty during office hours on working days, though she is often absent. She appears to show more interest in business affairs (selling handicrafts produced by the prisoners) than in ensuring the prisoners proper medical attention.

Food

Food supplied by the establishment consists of only two plates of rice a day (about 200 grams in all), two small pieces of tahu or tempa (soyabean cake) sorely under-seasoned, and a helping of unsalted spinach. The spinach is supplied from the spinach plot at Salemba Prison, and when it does not turn up, which is fairly often, the women go without. Occasionally, a dish of watery vegetables is supplied instead of the soyabean cake. The food is seriously lacking in quantity, quality and variety. From remarks made during control visits, Salemba Prison officials seem to assume that meat is served at least once a week at Bukit Duri and they no doubt report this to outside visitors. In actual fact, meat dishes are extremely rare; at the most, offal used in a vegetable dish or soup that makes little difference to flavour or nutritional value. The only times I received meat in any sizeable quantity was on Moslem festive days, when we each got pieces the size of a 50-pence coin. At the New Year's celebration and on one other occasion, we had a meal containing meat, but this was supplied by the Indonesian Council of Churches.

On one occasion, the news spread that we would be given one good meal per month. We did in fact get one meal with a whole duck's egg each; several weeks later, we got another, but the egg ration was cut to half. After that, the 'good meals' stopped. One of the standing jokes at prison was that better dishes were served on days when outside visitors were expected. This happened on the day when an Indonesian Red Cross Team visited the prison; we were served reasonably tasty soup and each of us got a tiny piece of meat (real, edible meat!) plus half a small potato. There is no way of knowing what impression this had on the members of the team as they were not allowed to talk to us.

Five hundred rupichs (the equivalent of about 50 pence) is spent each day at Bukit Duri for prisoners' food. This is used only for the soyabean or vegetable dish, as rice and spinach are received in natura from Salemba. Part of this money has to be used to buy cooking fat and an egg or other food for the guard on duty, so that even less is actually used for the prisoners.

Apart from the rice and vegetable dishes referred to above, no other food or beverage is supplied to the prisoners. No sugar, tea, coffee, fruit, fat or anything is given to the prisoners. They are not even supplied with soap to wash their clothes. Nothing whatsoever is provided for breakfast except hot water. Breakfast usually consists of rice left over from yesterday, plus sambel (chilli sauce) or simply condiments emersed in a little water for 'gravy'. If yesterday's rice was all finished up or turned bad overnight, the women have to wait till eleven or twelve o'clock for their first meal of the day.

The casual visitor to the prison may well be struck by the relatively healthy appearance of the prisoners. Indeed, the women manage to keep themselves fairly well dressed and look fairly well-fed. In this respect, I fear, few other prisons would bear comparison with Bukit Duri. The relatively prosperous appearance of the prisoners, however, is due entirely to their own industriousness and to the fact that, by contrast with Salemba and other prisons, the prisoners are allowed a certain amount of freedom to embroider, knit, crochet or do other handwork, and to sell the things they produce. As is to be expected, some of the officers in charge exact 'tithes' on the proceeds of these sales, and the women need to work hard, from early morning till late at night, to earn enough to keep themselves in basic essentials.

Some women receive regular supplies of food and clothing from their families and can therefore maintain a reasonably good standard of living. But for the others, standards are maintained only by dint of very hard and consistent work, which, in many cases, is detrimental to eyesight.

I am unable to give any indication of the amount of money intended for the prisoners' upkeep that is corrupted by the officers in charge. I frequently heard stories about the corruption carried out by the man in charge of finances and supplies at Salemba, with the connivance of the Prison Commander, but I could not give any estimate of the amounts involved. Just before my release, we heard that a new commander was going to be appointed for Salemba, a man called Captain Samingun. However, according to reports, the official transfer had not yet taken place as the new man was not prepared to accept the accounts in their current state but demanded clarification of a number of inexplicable items.

During the four days I was staying at Salemba prior to my departure I was served food which, according to the guards, was the same as that received by the men prisoners. The composition of the food was roughly the same as at Bukit Duri, with the addition sometimes of a small piece of salted fish. But helpings were slightly larger. The food looked revolting and I could not touch it. The food at Bukit Duri was less in quantity but certainly better in quality. The latter can be explained by the fact that our women cooks just seemed to do a better job and anyhow were catering for a smaller number of persons. The reduction in quantity is no doubt caused by the "siphoning off" of funds that occurs somewhere along the line from Salemba to Bukit Duri.

The relatively higher standard of living among women prisoners at Bukit Duri can be accounted for chiefly by the productive efforts of the women themselves and also by the fact that benefits accruing to prisoners who receive regular visits from home are partially enjoyed by the other prisoners too. I think it would be correct to conclude that standards at the men's prison in Salemba and Tangerang are far less satisfactory as there are virtually no forms of productive endeavour and a smaller percentage of the prisoners receive food from home. In some blocks at these prisons, the percentage of prisoners receiving food parcels is extremely low and this inevitably affects standards throughout the block. I can cite the case of my own husband at the time of his release at the end of 1967 by comparison with a friend, also released from Salemba at roughly the same time. Both men were receiving substantial food supplies from home. My husband, who came from a fairly prosperous block with a high percentage of men receiving food parcels, returned home looking robust. My friend, who came from a block where very few parcels were received, looked haggard and thin.

Although the quantity of rice given to the prisoners is now higher than it was in 1967 and 1968, the quality and quantity of the other food has hardly changed for the better, and I am sure that many men prisoners are living on the verge of serious under-nourishment. In Salemba it frequently occurs that men who receive soap from home 'employ' less fortunate prisoners to do their washing which entitles

them to use the soap for bathing or washing their own tattered clothing. Such practices are completely absent in Bukit Duri because nobody there really goes without soap of their own.

I should add that men prisoners who work on the agricultural projects at Salemba and Tangerang or perform other special prison duties receive larger rations of food; this applies also to women engaged in kitchen duties at Bukit Duri. (As an afterthought, it occurs to me that the larger rations I was receiving while at Salemba might conceivably have been the ration for these more 'privileged' prisoners.)

It is a comment on the present state of the rank-and-file soldier in Indonesia to note that the guards and low ranking officers on duty at the prison are given the same rations as the prisoners. They do get additional things like sweetened coffee or tea but little else. Of course, they do not have to live on this kind of food all the time as they have money to spend and homes to go to when off duty, but that is all they get from the Army.

Health Conditions and Medical Care

In view of the relatively favourable food situation in Bukit Duri with all prisoners living somewhere above the survival line, health standards there are not too bad. I think that a fair proportion of ailments there are caused by emotional stresses and strains and the numerous frustrations of protected prison life. Hysteria and allergies caused by emotional disturbances are fairly widespread.

It is fairly common for the visiting doctor to diagnose some kind of tranquiliser and advise the patient to 'stop worrying' and 'take things easy'. Two young girls were recently diagnosed as having tuberculosis in its early stages. Both have been in prison for six years and though they eat perhaps a little more than absolute minimum requirements, it is obvious that the long-drawn out detention with no predictable end in sight is having a very debilitating effect.

There is a very low resistance to infection and an attack of flu usually spreads rapidly. Early this year, when an epidemic of eye infection broke out in Djakarta, more than 30% of the prisoners were affected. Virtually nothing could be done to prevent the disease from spreading as living quarters were overcrowded and clothes' lines were very inadequate.

There are several prisoners who have sudden attacks coming as an aftermath of the tortures they were subjected to during interrogation, even where the torture was inflicted several years ago. One young girl, who was heavily clubbed in the thigh with the butt of a rifle occasionally suffers from severe pains in the thigh and becomes almost paralysed for several days. Another girl whose vagina was pierced with a truncheon suffered frequent splitting headaches and back pains and swellings around the vagina for several years after entering prison.

Medical care by any standards is inadequate, and yet here too, Bukit Duri detainees fare rather well by comparison with prisoners elsewhere. An Army doctor who should visit the prison once a week appears once a fortnight or less. That may not be his fault, for when he does come, he examines his patients carefully. The number of prisoners allowed to consult the doctor is usually restricted, especially when the officer on picket duty happens to be in a bad mood. Here again, Bukit Duri prisoners reap the advantage of small numbers; I am pretty certain that many of the cases that do get a chance of examination by the doctor at Bukit Duri would not stand a chance at Salemba.

As far as I can judge, I think the doctor gives proper and sympathetic attention to the patients who he examines, and prescribes medicines from the prison clinic just as he would prescribe for any patient. While on this point, I should like to make the same remark about the medical treatment given to prisoners who are taken to the Army Hospital. From what I have heard from women who have been hospitalised, there is no evidence of any kind of discrimination from the medical or nursing staff. In fact, remarks dropped occasionally by some doctors when examining patients at the out-patient departments reveal that they are angered by the fact that though they may, for example, require a patient to return for further treatment or check-up, they know that this will be very difficult to arrange. (See below, for further description of hospital facilities and arrangements for prisoners.)

To repeat: once a prisoner gets to the doctor, she can be fairly sure of sympathetic examination and prescription. But new problems arise at the next stage. The prescription should be filled by the prison clinic, but it rarely happens that the patient receives the dosage prescribed. What should happen is that the nurse at the prison gives the doses to one of the prisoners, herself a trained nurse, who distributes them to the persons concerned. What in fact usually happens is that the first day after the doctor's visit, the prescribed dosage or slightly less is distributed for that day and as the days go by the supply gets less and less. On days when the nurse does not turn up, nothing can be distributed. The prisoner with medical duties can do little to remedy things. I have often seen her return from the office (where medicaments are kept) in tears or verging on hysteria, because a modest request for pills from the medicine chest made to the officer who holds the key has evoked a filthy stream of invective. Such incidents are frustrating beyond description because there is no redress against such humiliating treatment. This poor soul suffers even more when the prisoner who needs the pills criticises her for not doing enough to get them. A gross lack of understanding, but to be fair, she too feels frustrated at the thought that she is not getting the medicine she needs. Indeed, the prisons are full of frustrated people.

When injections are prescribed, the situation is even worse. Injections can only be given by the official nurse. I can cite a personal experience which I think is fairly representative. I was prescribed ten liver and vitamin injections to be given over a period of a couple of weeks for very low blood pressure. I got one in the first week, another one about ten days later, and nothing more.

It is strictly forbidden for prisoners to keep medicines of their own in their rooms, with the exception of vitamins and mild analgesics. Some prisoners who have families visiting them prefer to have the prescription filled by their families so as to ensure that they get the proper amount. But the medicine has to be stored in the office and there are often difficulties getting the pills or injections as required. It is difficult to understand the logic of this prohibition on keeping medicines. The reason is probably that the authorities fear the danger of suicide, but it seems ridiculously far-fetched. Suicides do occur (I personally know of three cases - not in Bukit Duri) but men who are as desperate as that can think up the most ingenious methods. It seems grossly unfair to deprive all prisoners of the right to hold prescribed medicines just for the sake of a few desperate souls who would probably do what they want to do anyway.

On a number of occasions, we heard that considerable supplies of medicine had been sent to Bukit Duri, in most cases if not all, by various church organisations. What percentage of this medicine actually reached the persons for whom it was intended is anyone's guess. But certainly a large amount goes in other directions.

Finally, let me deal with what I consider to be the most glaring injustice as far as medical care in prison is concerned. However ill a person may be, it

is virtually impossible to hope that he will be released for reasons of health, even if it is a matter of life and death. The death rate at Salemba is high, and I am certain that many deaths could have been prevented if the person concerned had been released in due time or given treatment quickly enough. If we consider that these are all, without exception, persons held without trial and in many cases far from having any kind of political consciousness, it is a truly damning comment on the whole system of political detention in Indonesia.

An account of a death that occurred while I was at Bukit Duri reflects what has certainly happened in so many cases.

I should explain first of all that this was the first death at the prison during the whole six years of political detention, a very good record but unfortunately not matched at all by developments at Salemba. At least four women at the prison (there may have been more, I can only remember these four definitely) have lost their husbands in detention at Salemba.

The woman who died at Bukit Duri was Rumini, detained because she was a functionary of a Gerwani local branch, nothing more than that. There were no charges about any connections with the October 1965 Affair. Indeed her activities with Gerwani had diminished to virtually nil several years before the Affair because of ill health. When she entered Bukit Duri in January 1971, she had been suffering from asthma for more than 13 years. Within weeks she got her first attack. The general chill and damp caused her much trouble, and whenever something disturbing happened in the prison (which is quite often) she would inevitably get another attack. The attacks lasted for days. She did get shots and pills, but almost always too few and too late, so the attacks would drag on sometimes for a week at a stretch. It was obvious that her heart and blood circulatory system just could not stand the strain; she became weaker and weaker and the attacks became worse and worse. She was hospitalised twice (they did try to help her) but it just did not help, because as soon as they had got her over the attack, she was sent back to the prison, and the attacks would start again. The only thing that could have helped her was to be at home where she could get immediate attention to shorten the duration of an attack. We frequently heard that officers in charge at Bukit Duri had reported her case and suggested that she be placed under house arrest, but that was too much to expect from the authorities.

After returning to prison from her second bout of hospital treatment, she told us that the doctor had warned her that the next attack might be the last one. He was right. Seven days later it came, during the morning hours when the official nurse was on duty. By midday she was writhing on the floor, and it was all we could do to keep her from falling down again and again. But at 2 p.m. the nurse went home, leaving her patient in that state. Just before 5 in the afternoon, she died, surrounded by people who had no medicaments to relieve her agony or to facilitate her breathing. It is horrifying to think that this happened at a time when the news of releases was so much in the air. By no stretch of imagination could she have been classified higher than C. Yet the whole system of political detention has become so hardened that it allows not the slightest flexibility even in such a case where an act of humanitarianism would have saved a life and would certainly not have jeopardised Indonesia's much-vaunted security.

What are the chances of getting hospital treatment? Here again, conditions vary, from time to time, from place to place and even from person to person. Let me give some examples. There is an Army dental clinic within walking distance of the prison. Theoretically, it was arranged that prisoners needing dental treatment could be taken for treatment every Wednesday morning. Sometimes it worked like that, and it was just a question of getting your name registered and accepted. On other occasions, we all went for months on end without any hopes of being taken because an order had been given from Salemba that no prisoner be taken out of the prison.

On one occasion, for a couple of months, there was a sudden, enthusiastic interest in the health of the prisoners, and all were asked to register any chronic ailments like bad eyesight, repeated nasal trouble and so on. Probably as many as 60% of the women were taken in groups to the Army Hospital ophthalmologist, which only goes to show how many had been needing their eyes examined for a long time. Almost all were prescribed spectacles, but many could not buy them. Once again, the church filled the breach. Spectacles were bought for many prisoners (including Moslems) by the Council of Churches and by the Catholic Church. Incidentally, several of the officers cashed in on the arrangement and received spectacles, too.

The women at Bukit Duri have a far better chance of being taken to hospital for out-patient treatment than the men at Salemba. I remember being taken to the Army Hospital for nasal congestion. It was not very serious; I only wanted to consult a specialist to know whether he thought I ought to have an operation. I was taken by the Salemba Health Officer. Together with us, there was a prisoner from Salemba with a fearful cancer growth extending from his ear to his shoulder. He should have been hospitalised months beforehand. The contrast between the two of us probably reflects the contrast between the degree of attention to health in the two prisons.

But even within Bukit Duri prison, there were people who can expect less attention than others. On the same occasion as mentioned above, Dr. Sutanti Aidit was also taken to hospital. She has a very weak heart, and had been waiting more than two years for permission to go to hospital to have a proper examination. Things are much more difficult for her as she is held in isolation, and the Salemba Commander seems to have been specifically instructed to be very strict with her because she is Aidit's*wife. After examination, she was told to come back in ten days time for the diagnosis. It was not till nine months later that she did eventually return. She had had several relapses in her condition in the interim period, and when she did go back, the doctors decided to hospitalise her. She was still in hospital when I was released. I feel sure she is getting good treatment at the Hospital. Many doctors there are old acquaintances of hers and display towards her the courtesy one would expect from a professional colleague. But I heard that security arrangements at the ward had been tightened after her admittance.

All prisoners who are hospitalised, both men and women, are placed in the ward for mental cases. This is a strict rule imposed by the prison authorities. The prisoners are kept under constant guard and are not allowed to receive visitors at hospital; only food parcels are allowed in. All prisoners who I spoke to who had spent some time in hospital said how unpleasant it was to have to share a ward with mentally deficient patients. But, as far as I heard, the doctors and nurses treated them in just the same way as they treated any other patient; there was no discrimination.

While on this point, I should like to mention the case of one prisoner who was treated at the hospital for severe wounds inflicted during interrogation. Her name is Sri Ambar and the events I recount occurred before she was sent to Bukit Duri. She had been severely tortured for refusing to give her interrogators information, and at one point, one of her torturers tore through her thigh with a very sharp knife; the cut was 15 cm long. After being cut a second time on the other hip, she lost consciousness, and came to three days later to find herself in hospital. The cuts had been stitched and other wounds treated. A day or so later, a doctor came along and said that the stitches would have to be removed for a moment. The pain, he said, would be excruciating, but it had to be done. Why? She soon found out. One of the doctors who had received her upon arrival had protested to the Army about her condition. An order was given for the wounds to be measured in length and depth, in order that a detailed report could be made. The result was that the man responsible for her interrogation and who had ordered the torture, was placed in military detention for a few weeks. Was he demoted?

*Leader of the Indonesian Communist Party

Not at all! He has powerful backers, and he was soon out of detention and back at his job. But the story shows how some people in the medical profession have tried to curb bestialities during interrogation.

Recreation and Contact with the Outside World

No books are allowed into the prison except for the Bible, the Ku'ran and other strictly religious books. The prisoners have no access whatsoever to any news from the outside world; newspapers are strictly forbidden, as also the wireless. The neighbouring criminals' prison has a television set and arrangements could be made for prisoners to view selected programmes, but this has never been considered.

With the exception of an illiteracy course, no educational activities have been permitted at Bukit Duri. There is a strong desire among the prisoners to acquire new abilities or improve their knowledge in certain fields but this has never been permitted. Even language classes were never held, much to the dismay of many prisoners who wished to take advantage of my presence there to improve their English. Prisoners are strictly forbidden to possess any kind of writing material. On one occasion, an Army officer who came to the prison fairly regularly to give lectures on the Moslem faith heard of my presence there and asked me to teach him English. I consented and with the permission of the commander, lessons commenced. But even for officially-sanctioned lessons we were told that only religious texts could be used; no English language teaching books were permitted. Considering the obtuse and pedantic English of the Bible and of any available books on the Moslem religion, it is small wonder that the lessons did not proceed for very long.

The reference above to illiteracy classes calls for a comment. Many people may wonder how it could be possible for political prisoners to be illiterate; people worthy of the title, political prisoner, ought presumably to be fairly well-read and well-informed to have any kind of political consciousness. Yet, there were quite a few illiterates at Bukit Duri and they were all completely lacking in any understanding of politics. This includes Mrs. Njono, the wife of Njono, the first man tried in connection with the October 1965 Affair, and who has already been executed.

The only form of recreation permitted - and this perhaps hardly comes under the heading 'recreation' - were lectures on religious topics given by Army chaplains for protestants and catholics and by the equivalent officer for Moslem religious instruction. While on this point, I should like to expand a little about religious activities in the prison. It is compulsory for all prisoners to attend lectures or other activities for their respective religions. Registers of attendance are kept, and there is a constant check-up of the registers. For many, these activities are a source of consolation and interest, but the fact remains that they are compulsory, with always a vague hint in the background that this may have some influence on one's 'conduite', should the question of release ever come up for consideration.

It is quite impermissible for any person to attend the activities of any other religion than the one recorded on the prison register when entering the prison. Religious conversions are impermissible under any circumstances. I know for a fact that quite a few persons are anxious to enter the Christian faith and be baptised. Many of the Moslems have been deeply moved by the sympathetic care and attention shown to political prisoners by the Church and feel an attraction towards the religion that cultivates such attitudes. I do not know to what extent this religious inflexibility is imposed in other places but it is very strictly adhered to in Salemba and the prisons subordinated to it.

Various church organisations and also the Moslem religious council in Indonesia did on several occasions obtain permission to show films to the prisoners. These were always religious films, with texts either in English or Arabic. The persons who brought the films were never permitted to give any outline of the content of the film, let alone provide a translation to make the dialogue intelligible. With English films, a small number of prisoners could assist their neighbours with a running commentary, but when Arabic films were shown, it was anybody's guess as to who was saying what to who. How ludicrous it was to sit through an Arab religious film which no-one understood and then afterwards to be lectured by the officer in charge of 'spiritual affairs' on the need to draw the lessons from what we had seen and heard and to become devout believers!

Contact with relatives is confined to an annual meeting lasting fifteen minutes, under guard. The annual visit is arranged at the time of the Christmas and Lebaran festivities, though this year, for the first time in several years, prisoners were permitted a second meeting on the occasion of Indonesia's independence day in August. Relatives are allowed to send food and clothing parcels into the prison, and important family news can be sent in, but apart from that there is absolutely no contact with one's family outside. Probably the channel for sending in important family news works more smoothly at Bukit Duri than at Salemba. What little I knew about my children while I was there, I am certain, was far more than what my husband knows.

It is not even permitted for prisoners to receive photographs of children or other relatives, though a sympathetic guard might turn a blind eye if he happens to be in a good mood.

During the first years after 1965, arrangements were made about once a year for husbands and wives who are both in prison to meet, but for the years 1968 - 1970, no meetings were permitted. Actually, in 1969, an announcement was made at Bukit Duri that women with husbands at Salemba would be permitted to meet them. The women concerned were extremely excited, and busily made preparations for weeks before to take gifts to their husbands. On the appointed day, the group of women departed, full of hope. When they arrived at Salemba, it so happened that the husband of the first woman to be called had apparently already been moved to Pulau Buru. There was consternation among the Salemba officers. They suddenly realised that it is simply not permitted to inform wives in detention that their husbands have been moved. After hurried consultations, it was decided to cancel the permits for all the meetings and without any further explanations, the women were told to return to Bukit Duri. This incident strikingly reflects the complete absence of any humaneness in the entire apparatus which handles political detainees.

This year, just a few months before my release, those of us with husbands at Salemba were once again permitted to meet. For several days, the meetings proceeded fairly well, but after eight of us had been able to meet, the meetings suddenly halted. There were still another ten or twelve women awaiting their turn, but nothing more was heard.

Defenceless Position of Prisoners

Perhaps the most humiliating and frustrating aspect in the life of a political detainee in Indonesia - and this applies generally, in all places - is the complete defencelessness of their position, both with regard to their treatment in prison and the handling of their cases. They are deprived of all rights to consult lawyers; indeed, they are almost all quite unaware of legal procedures. They are never informed of their prospects, or of any future developments, and no explanations are ever given of any developments that do occur.

As far as I know, there are only three women at Bukit Duri today who have fairly good reason to believe, from what they have been told during interrogations, that they will eventually be brought up for trial though it may still take years before anything concrete happens. They are Mrs. Sundari A.R., Mrs. Sumarti and Miss Sulami. The remainder only know that they are included under the broad heading of 'direct or indirect involvement in the PKI October, 1965 Affair'. No-one is ever informed of their classification under A, B, C or X categories. Indeed, I had never even heard of the 'X' category until I arrived in England. The news that 'B' Category detainees' cases are being reviewed in order to shift them up to A or down to C has never penetrated through prison walls.

When people are kept so completely in the dark about their status and prospects, they are inevitably prone to wild speculations, high hopes soon dashed to the ground in bitter disappointment and extreme sensitivity. Anything out of the ordinary that occurs in the dreary routine of isolated prison life leads to analysis and counter-analysis, and rumours of all kinds, favourable and unfavourable, are rife.

Few of the detainees are called for interrogation. I entered the prison at the beginning of August, 1970 and I can say with certainty that starting with me, none of the new detainees entering the prison as from August 1970 were ever called for any kind of interrogation up to the time I left the prison in November 1971, with the exception of Asrona and her sister Sukarsih (see separate sheets on their cases).

As far as prison discipline and life is concerned, the detainees are completely at the whim of the guards and there is no opportunity for the redress of grievances. Any decision taken by a guard about details of prison routine must be strictly adhered to without question, however unreasonable it might be. And however hard you try not to do anything wrong, you may find yourself in hot water if the commander or a guard responds unexpectedly to any event. I well remember the experiences of a young girl, Sudijami, who suddenly found herself in solitary confinement for 'breach of discipline'. What happened was this: she had for a long time been in charge of the rice store-room. She is an agile girl, full of initiative and very adroit. Some stray chickens had hatched a couple of eggs near the prison kitchen and she took charge of the baby chicks and reared them till they grew into good-sized birds. One day, she thought it would be a good idea to slaughter the chickens, cook them and share the meat to all the detainees. She consulted the guard on duty, and he thought it would be a good idea, too, and he gave her permission. So she went ahead. The next day, when the commander turned up, he asked what had happened to the two chickens. When he heard, he ordered that Sudijami be placed in solitary confinement without even consulting the guard on duty or questioning the girl. She was kept there for three weeks, and only eventually released as she was on the list of persons to be sent to Plantungan. Strangely enough, the guards realised how unjustly she had been treated but dared not intervene on her behalf with the commander for fear of being accused of 'siding with the prisoners'. Even the guard who had given his consent did not have the guts to do anything, but just shrugged his shoulders and said: "There's nothing I can do." And probably, he was right. There was nothing he could do as the commander's word is law.

The principle of 'collective punishment' is rigidly adhered to in the regulation of the prison life of political detainees. I myself heard the Salemba Prison Commander declare that it was always assumed, when a political detainee was deemed guilty of indisciplinary action, that the other detainees were also involved and should therefore be punished as well.

In October 1970, the military discovered that one of the prisoners at Bukit Duri had been sending letters out to her son. The letters apparently only contained advice to her children on how to regulate their lives while both parents

were in prison. After a thorough search of the entire prison, during which nothing incriminating was found, a new, punitive regime of prison routine was introduced and remained in force for about eight months. The woman involved was placed in solitary confinement in a cell in the criminal prisoners' block and was not allowed to receive any kind of extra food from visitors or from other prisoners. The block where she had been living at the time she committed the offence was the block of so-called 'heavy cases', and the entire block was placed under rigid isolation from the other two blocks of political detainees. The detainees in this block were only permitted to go out of the block for two hours in the morning and one hour in the afternoon, and for a few minutes in the evening to go to the toilet before cells were locked at 8.00 p.m. All forms of communications between detainees in this block and those in the other two blocks were strictly forbidden, and even when attending Sunday services and holy communion, the blocks had to be clearly separated.

For some reason quite obscure to me, I was moved to the 'heavy cases' block right at the beginning of all the trouble and experienced this isolation till about three months later when, for reasons equally obscure, I was moved back to one of the other blocks. The prisoners in these other blocks, too, were only permitted to leave the blocks at certain times: three hours in the morning, two in the afternoon and a slightly longer period of time before going to bed at night.

There was considerable resentment against this regime, particularly among 'the children' as we call them - the twenty- and twenty-one year olds who have been in prison since their early teens and most of whom were in the 'heavy cases' block.