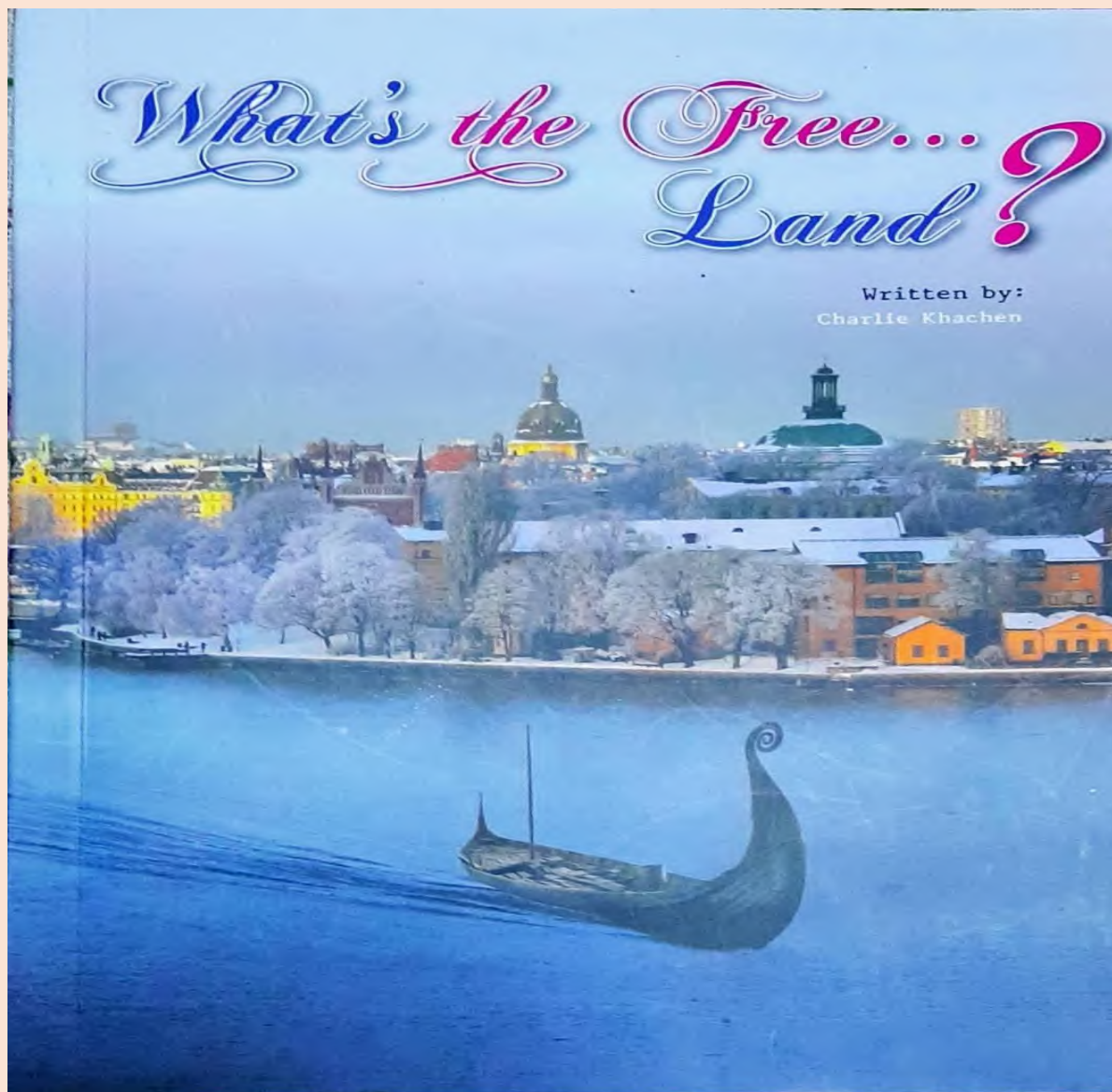


What's the Free... Land?

Written by:
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Synopsis

The world is a vast land divided into 7 continents, comprising more than 190 countries, with a global population of approximately 7.674 billion people. Its geography spans across tropical, temperate, and arctic regions, with varying levels of fertility and aridity. Additionally, the people living in these countries differ in terms of ethnicity, religion, economy, society, and politics.

Countries that are rich in resources, possess beautiful nature, thrive with arts and culture, and enjoy peace and tranquility are often focal points that attract people to visit and study. In the past, when cities were not developed and transportation was inconvenient with no proper routes to travel, people in ancient times had no opportunity to discover the wonders of the world. It was as if they were living in a narrow world, with life revolving around repetitive and monotonous surroundings. However, with the advancement of global development, transportation routes to various countries have become more

convenient and faster, bringing people closer together. The lifestyles and international activities have evolved over time.

Between 1977 and 1984, I had the opportunity to visit the Scandinavian region, living in Sweden. During my travels, I encountered many new things that I had never seen before, which greatly enriched my life experience. The Scandinavian countries, including Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark, are considered well-developed in all aspects. Life in these northern countries is simple, with people enjoying full rights and freedoms in a just manner. They are also given equal opportunities, especially in terms of the welfare state and social security systems, which serve as a model for the world.

I wrote this book out of inspiration from the things I encountered that left a lasting impression on me. I hope to share these valuable insights with you, the readers, as they might offer some benefit. If this book has any value or meaning, I dedicate it as a merit to the soul of "Berna...the gracious mother" and all spirits who are connected with me. If there are any errors in the text, I humbly ask for your forgiveness.

With respect,

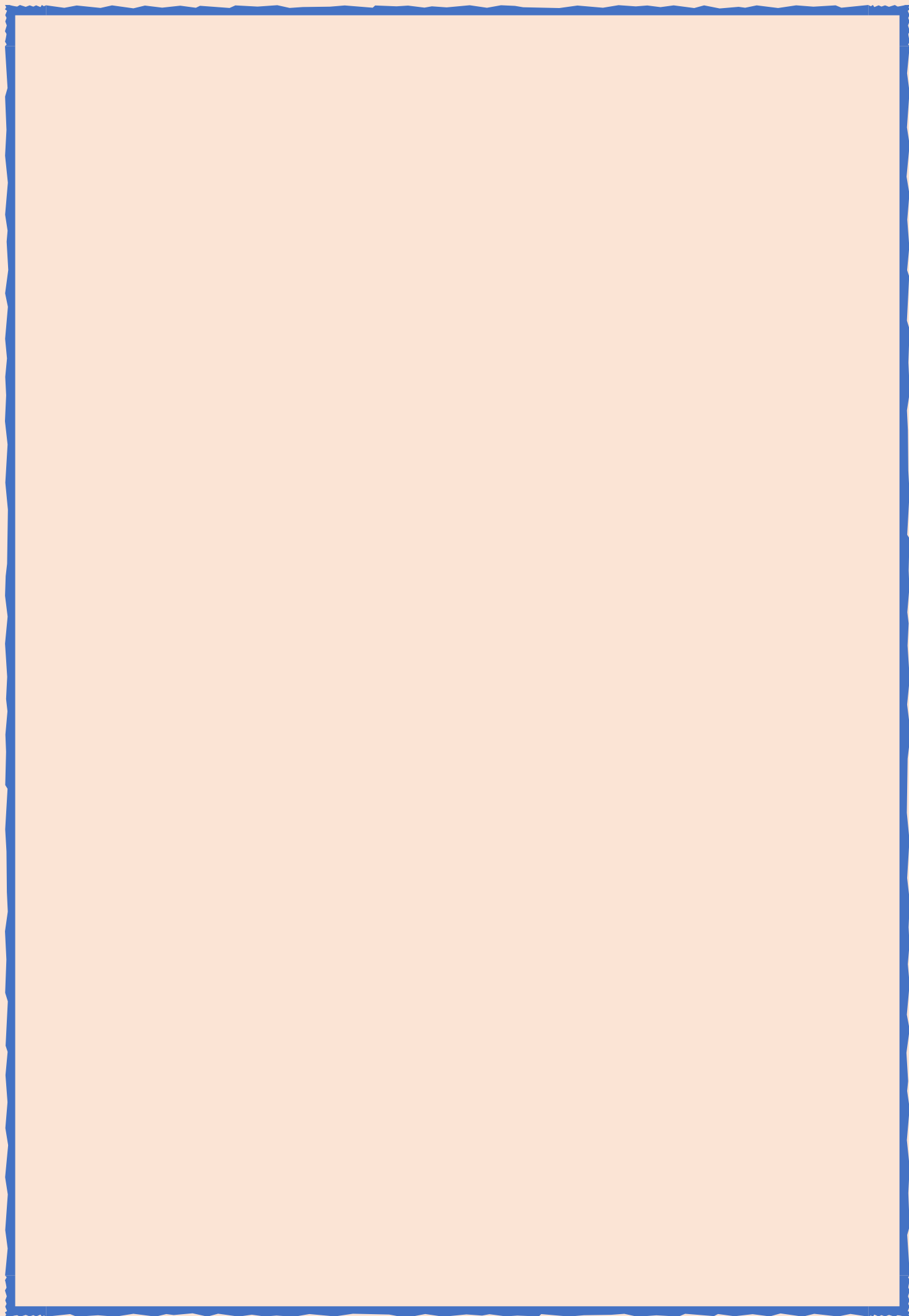
Chalie khachen

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Ep. 01. Tired... Take a Rest

October 1974

After completing a covert mission in Laos in the middle of 1974, I spent several months resting at a house in Korat. At that time, I had no plans to do anything because the country was in a state of turmoil, with an economic downturn and political instability under a dictatorial government. The job market was tough, and unemployment was widespread.

One morning, while sitting and drinking coffee under the house, I noticed a group of people walking by asking about rental houses in the neighborhood. They then walked into the yard and explained that they were from Surin and were looking to rent a small house. A middle-aged woman, who appeared to be around thirty, introduced herself as "Pim," a widow with a five-year-old child named "Or." She was accompanied by her older sister, who had a disability in her left arm, named "Auan," and her brother-in-law, "Thongpoon," who worked as a laborer.

Seeing that the small house by the street was still vacant, I agreed to rent it to them for only 800 baht per month, with free water and electricity, as I could see that their financial situation was likely not very good.



Pim worked in the housekeeping department of a prestigious hotel in the city, while her daughter was studying in grade 4. Her father had abandoned the family when she was still an infant. As for her aunt, Auan, who had a disability in her left arm, she could only work as a housekeeper, doing cleaning and household chores.

After resting for three months, my physical condition was ready to return to work, so I decided to travel to Bangkok. By then, many of my friends who had worked with me during the war in Laos had already traveled to the Middle East to find work in the gold mines, mostly in countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait. The news was that the salaries were high, and the positions were significant, some even being “camp bosses.” However, I did not think I was ready to take a chance in the oil-rich countries yet, as I felt there were still many things I wasn’t prepared for.

I wrote job applications to several leading companies and waited for weeks, but I received no response. One day, I was walking along Lat Phrao Road near Chokchai 4, and as I glanced at the lobby of Chokchai Building, I saw a group of people having a

meeting. By chance, my eyes caught sight of two familiar faces in the group: "Riengtong" and "Suwit," who had collaborated with me during the war in Laos.

I waited until the meeting broke for lunch, and we were delighted to reunite after nearly a year since the end of the war. We went to a nearby restaurant to chat and share a meal. They told me that they were currently working as security guards at a company in the Rajthewi area, near Pratunam, and, looking to increase their income, they had also applied to work as direct sales representatives for "Sylvania" TV, the first color television brand in Thailand. They had attended a meeting to learn about direct sales methods, and the next day would be their first day promoting the product in communities and villages.

When they learned that I was looking for work, they invited me to join them in selling TVs, suggesting I sign up for training that same day and start working the following day. The method of selling was simple—just distribute leaflets and shout advertisements in front of communities, or sometimes, we had to ring the doorbells of potential customers in a "knock door" system. They also offered me a security guard position if I was interested, as there were vacancies. This suggestion made me realize that it might be a good opportunity. Sometimes, in desperate circumstances, sticking to something could lead to new chances.

They invited me to stay with them at a place behind the Pratunam Market shopping center. At night, I worked as a security guard at a company near the Inthra Hotel. During the day, we prepared sales documents and then split up to go door-to-door, advertising the quality of the color TV in various villages and communities. People showed interest, likely because it was the first color TV brand in Thailand, but many hesitated to make a purchase. At that time, the "knock door" sales method was new,

requiring us to sell directly, right in front of potential buyers. In villages where people weren't familiar with the system, they were suspicious of strangers, thinking we might be scammers, so they wouldn't open their doors to greet us. Some even let their dogs bark aggressively at us.

After a week of hard work under the hot sun and in the rain, we managed to sell only two TVs. The company paid a fairly decent commission for the sales, but after dividing the earnings, we each ended up with only a few baht—barely enough to cover the cost of transportation and food for each day. It became clear that surviving in this line of work would be difficult. We also learned that success in direct sales requires a lot of technique, persistence, and the ability to persuade customers to trust you. Since we were not skilled in talking or convincing people, we knew that if we continued, we'd end up broke and hungry. So, we decided to stop after just one week.

We then discussed how we could make our work as security guards more organized and up to standard. At that time, there was construction all around the Inthra Hotel, and the Pratunam Market shopping center had just opened. However, there was a problem with the access points being inconvenient, and the area inside was not safe and was prone to threats.

With local criminals and thugs frequenting the area, and the parking lot being disorganized, we decided to mark parking spaces and take turns directing cars in and out. At night, we were responsible for ensuring security across the entire area.

The "Phumipawan" shopping center company paid a monthly salary of 900 baht. It was disheartening to see how much my life had changed. Just the year before, I had worked in a high-ranking position with a salary comparable to that of a minister, but

now I had to accept the role of a security guard with a salary that had dropped almost tenfold. Well, I thought, it's still manageable since I had some savings to support my family.

Within a month, the organization of the shopping center had improved significantly. Traffic inside the area became smoother, and the local thugs began to disappear, possibly because they knew that we had fought in the war. At that time, business competition was fierce, and the tall "Baiyoke Tower" was under construction. Two entertainment centers and movie theaters were being built nearby.

However, since this area was a business hub with diverse activities, criminals often lurked and tried to exploit the situation. One afternoon, a robbery occurred at a jewelry store in the shopping center. The owner's son resisted and pulled a gun, but he was shot and wounded. He managed to escape and hide on the roof of a nearby building. The manager instructed us to help, asking me to go up and bring the injured person down. I knew it could be risky since the wounded man still had a gun, but since it was an order and my duty, I tightened my grip on my own weapon and started walking.

I climbed up to the second and third floors while signaling to alert the injured man. In the end, I managed to rescue him, carrying his bloodied body down from the third floor. This took place in front of police officers and reporters who followed shortly after. My efforts were highly appreciated by the owner of the jewelry store, who rewarded me with a gold ring. The company also recognized my actions and rewarded me by doubling my salary.

The company trusted us greatly. When they learned that we wanted to establish a place to meet with former soldiers who had participated in the secret war in Laos, they

allowed us to use a space to form the "Fex-T.S.P." club. We were able to gather more than 300 members, both soldiers and civilians (which later became the "Anonymous Warriors Association 333" to this day). This place became the starting point for our ongoing efforts to demand the rights of the soldiers from the government.

After six months of working as a security guard, I realized that my prospects in this job were limited. The income was just enough to get by month to month, with nothing left to send back to my family. The cost of living was high due to the economic downturn, so I decided to resign and return to Korat to find a new career path.

One day, while resting, a veterinarian from my hometown came to visit me. He invited me to run for parliament as a candidate for the Social Action Party, saying that I had the qualifications. He mentioned that I had been a teacher with many former students and was well known in the community.

I initially declined the offer, citing several reasons for not being ready. However, I was only giving a half-hearted refusal, as I still had the hope of entering politics someday. When I learned that M.R. Kukrit Pramoj was leading the "Social Action Party," someone whom I had long admired and respected for his knowledge and wisdom, I was convinced. I ultimately agreed with Dr. Narong and Mr. Chawalit, my teammates, and we decided to run for the first district seat in Nakhon Ratchasima.

In reality, I had been interested in politics for a long time. I had studied political events since their beginnings. It all started with the 1932 revolution that overthrew the absolute monarchy and changed the government to a constitutional monarchy on June 24, 1932. Led by Phaya Phahon Phonphayuhasena and other former Thai students from France, such as Pridi Banomyong and Khwank Anubhand, along with a group of