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Government
and Politics

Thailand

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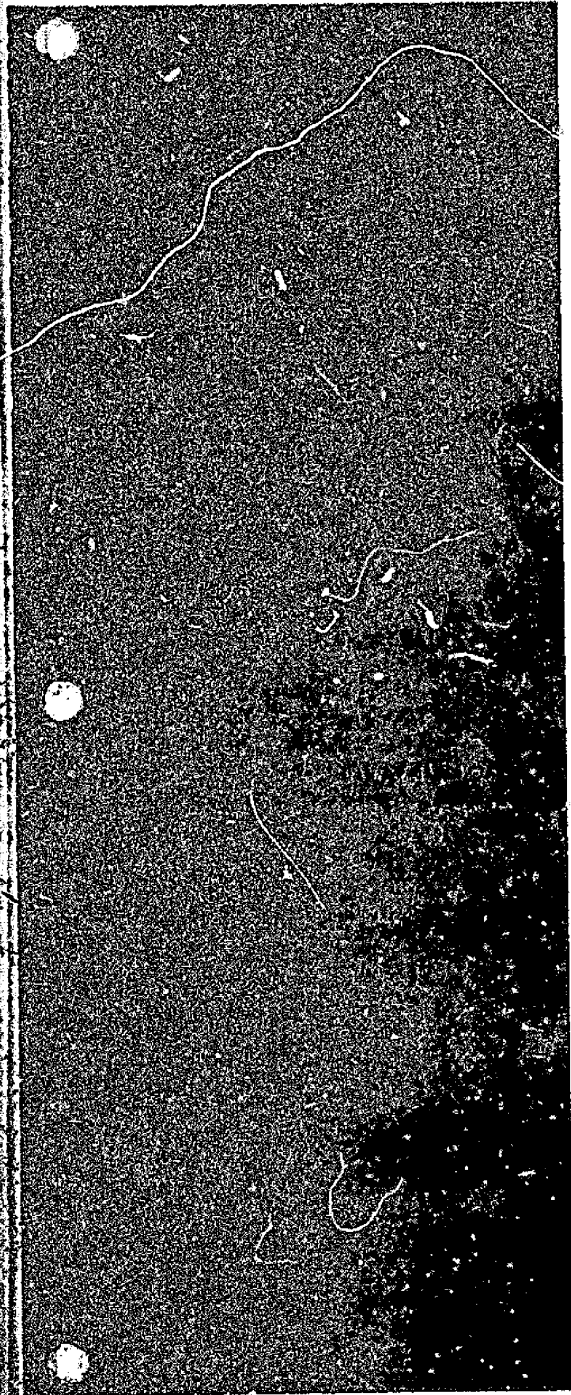
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Thailand

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Government and Politics

A. Introduction (C)

In early 1974 Thailand's civilian caretaker government awaited a new constitution which was to set up a parliamentary democracy—a form of government tried and terminated several times since the 1932 coup ended absolute monarchy. In the meantime the form of government in mid-1974 was still loosely fixed by the interim constitution of December 1972 which calls for executive primacy, with an appointed parliament and a king designated head of state. The King is a strong and unifying national symbol who exerts considerable influence. The executive branch dominates all levels of government, makes and carries out policy, controls the legislature, and wields some power over the judiciary. The Prime Minister heads the executive branch, aided by the bureaucratic elite who traditionally have included military and police officers as well as a cadre of civil servants. As a unitary state with a strong central government, the country has no tradition of strong local government institutions. All key agencies are concentrated in Bangkok, and government direction flows from the center out and from the top down through a network of officials in the provinces, districts, communes, and villages.

Western political and legal ideas and forms have been selectively adopted since the late 19th century. In the 1932 coup d'etat, a small military-civilian group ended the monarchy's absolute power and transferred sovereignty to the people through a constitutional government. Thailand has since had nine constitutions and is awaiting a tenth, but the usually bloodless coup d'etat has been the chief instrument for political change. All national elections

have been held to sanction existing regimes rather than to choose leaders. Military control over civilians—long a fact except briefly after World War II and now again since late 1973—was formalized when the army seized complete power in 1947, and military cliques ruled from then until the Thanin regime's upset in October 1973. The continued presence in the government of army chief Krit Siwara and other high officials of the ousted regime in early 1974 seems to point to continued military influence.

While active participation in politics is limited, most people, until recent months, generally concurred with whatever the government did. This attitude stemmed from the strong Buddhist faith and traditional culture—with its respect for authority and strong sense of national identity—from complacency derived from at least tolerable economic conditions, and from political apathy rooted in Thai political history. Since government before 1932 was the exclusive domain of the King and court officials, there was little reason to agonize over its subsequent monopoly by public officials, career civil servants, and politicians in Bangkok. Traditionally the government was expected to act without the people's assistance, participation, or involvement, and since state affairs concerned only public officials, the people accepted official decrees and disregarded events that did not involve them personally. Any law or obligation that was too abusive or demanding was simply ignored or evaded. Only in extreme cases, as in October 1973, have the people rebelled against authority. At the same time those who govern have always been expected to be just, to publicly reflect certain moral virtues, and to justify their rule by effectively performing their political duties. Both the monarchy

and the military elites generally have fulfilled this requirement.

Over the years all monarchs have had to embody the 10 "kingly" virtues demanded by the *Thammasat* (the Hindu-Buddhist code of law) or risk overthrow. Thailand's escape from colonialism attests to the enlightened rule of the kings who governed in the last century.

Although the military regime which ruled until October 1973 shared no power with the people, it generally avoided repressive steps while building a stable government under firm executive control. It also showed a flexibility remarkable for a military government. It long had a genius for surrounding and enfolded political opposition and its leaders before they could get organized and, until late 1973, generally absorbed dissent instead of fighting it. Some of the opposition's urgent ideas—such as negotiating a detente with Peking—ended up in the government's program, as did some opposition leaders. For a long time the regime was neither very popular nor very unpopular, was firm but not blindly repressive, and tolerated quite a lot of dissent although it did not like it. However, from November 1971, when the regime ended a 3-year experiment in semiparticipatory democracy, until late 1973 the consensus grew that Bangkok was being badly governed, that Thanom and Praphat should leave, and that the military establishment's monopoly of the nation's political life should be terminated. Student agitation was the catalyst that finally brought the government down in October 1973.

The civilian caretaker government of Sanya Thammasak (Figure 1), a former Supreme Court justice and rector of renowned Thammasat University



FIGURE 1. Prime Minister Sanya (U/OU)

who is respected for those rules and for being a royal appointee, is nonetheless tentative and indecisive and has yet to show the kind of stamina heretofore mandatory for ruling Thailand.

B. Structure and functioning of the government (C)

1. Constitution

Thailand's constitutions have never been deemed the basic law of the land but devices to legitimize and ease the rule of each successive regime in power. There have been nine constitutions since the absolute monarchy was supplanted four decades ago by the bureaucracy. The latest, promulgated in 1972 by the now defunct Thanom regime, is considered operative until the interim Sanya Thammasak government promulgates still another constitution probably in 1974. The first constitution (of June 1932) theoretically vested power in the people—who were to be aided by the King and by the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the government—but in practice all effective power was held and wielded by the small group of coup leaders. Later constitutions (of December 1932, 1946, 1947, 1949, 1952, 1959, 1964, and now 1972), while variously shaped by their sponsoring regimes, all shared the fate of being bypassed by ruling groups outside the constitutional framework.

The usual pattern following an army coup in Thailand is to dissolve the constitution in effect, promulgate an "interim" constitution, and "lay the groundwork" for a new "permanent" constitution and a return to "democracy." Civilian leaders, on the other hand, try to reverse authoritarian trends and stress democratic safeguards and social goals when they revise constitutions.

The 1972 "interim" constitution closely resembles the provisional constitution of Field Marshal Sarit several months after he took personal control of the government, banned political parties, and imposed martial law. The 1959 document called for three separate branches of government—executive, legislative, and judicial—but gave the Prime Minister such broad emergency powers that he dominated all aspects of government. Legislative power was vested in a Constituent Assembly whose members were appointed by the executive and charged with drafting a new constitution. Sarit placed low priority on drafting a new constitution, however, and the legislature did not approve new constitutional governing principles until January 1964 (the month

after his death) or a "permanent" constitution until 1968.

The 1972 interim constitution gives the Prime Minister even broader powers but further limits those of the National Legislative Assembly which is unicameral and appointed like the 1959 body rather than bicameral like the legislature provided for in the 1968 "permanent" constitution. The 1972 document transferred two major legislative functions—the handling of financial legislation and the drafting of still another "permanent" constitution—to the cabinet, which was a more manageable body than the unwieldy legislature that has been handling the first of these functions. The organization of government is shown in Figure 2.

The revamped Thanom regime, having legitimized a cabinet in December 1972 just in time for the Crown Prince's investiture at the age of 20 (Figure 3) seemed no more inclined than its predecessor, the National

Executive Council, to press for a "permanent" constitution even though important matters like Prime Ministerial succession and civil rights remained in limbo. The regime when it fell expected to have a permanent constitution within 3 years.

Sanya Thammasak, the civilian whom the King chose as Prime Minister in October 1973, formed a committee to draft a new constitution by about mid-1974. Retaining the 1972 constitution in the meantime, he froze the assets of the exiled Thanom and Praphat under its Article 17 which empowers the Prime Minister to take any steps "appropriate for the purpose of preventing, repressing, or suppressing actions which jeopardize the national security, or the Throne, or the economy of the country, or the national administration, or which subvert or threaten law and order or the good public morals or which damage the health of the people." The new draft constitution completed in early 1974 calls for a bicameral

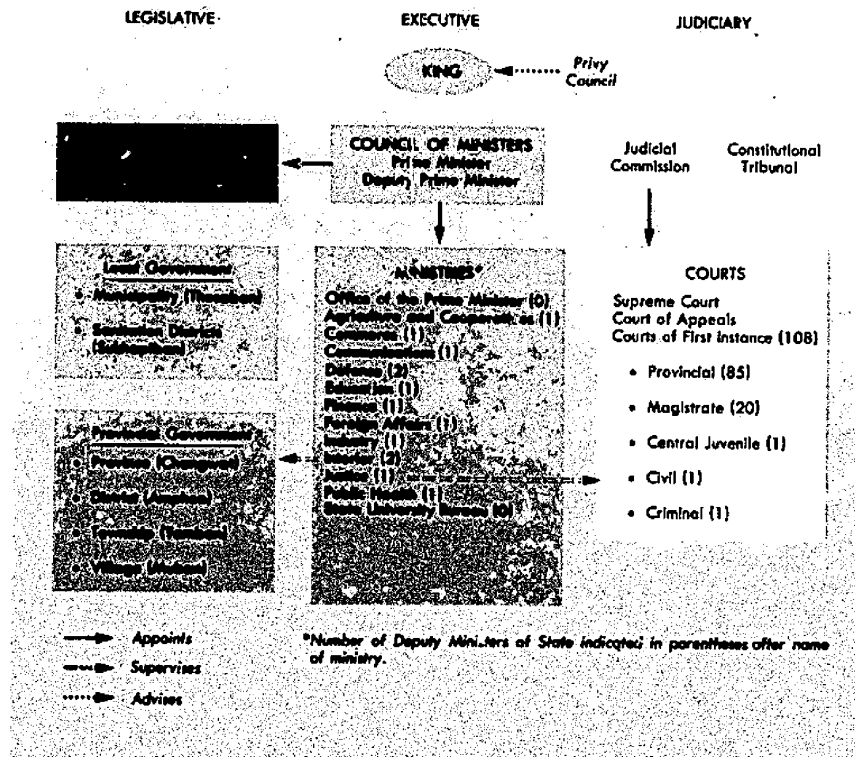


FIGURE 2. Structure of government, 1974 (U/OU)



FIGURE 3. King Phumiphon invests the crown prince, December 1972 (U/OU)

legislature with an appointed upper house, distinct separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers, more social-welfare commitments, and protection against martial law.

2. Monarchy

Although all power is exercised in the name of the King, he has had very little real institutional power in his own right. For nearly two decades following the 1932 coup Thailand had no resident monarch. Since his permanent return from abroad in 1950, the present King generally has stayed aloof from national politics although at times exerting considerable influence behind the scenes. The King's chief significance in national politics has been to respond, as a symbol of national unity, to the ruling groups' periodic need to have him legitimize their rule by promulgating constitutions and appointing the major state officials. Beginning with the fall of the Thanom government in October 1973, however, the King has interjected himself more directly in the political process than he ever did in the past.

The stature of the Kingship has grown immeasurably since the 1950 coronation of the popular King

Phumiphon—ninth in the Chakri line of Thai monarchs. Both Prime Ministers Sarit and Thanom took advantage of Phumiphon's popularity by trying to identify their regimes with the monarchy and to associate the King more closely with government policy. Phumiphon works hard at being King and is extremely well informed on national and international affairs. He uses his position shrewdly to influence the tone of government through private audiences with officials and, at times, through public actions which guide Thailand toward a more democratic system of government. His extraction of a promise from the ruling group to repeal its judiciary decree (discussed under the Judiciary) before he promulgated the interim constitution in December 1972 was widely recognized and applauded. The King devotes a significant part of his time to students, whom he strongly backed in the events leading to Thanom's downfall in October 1973, and is actively involved in helping the hill tribes. Figure 4 depicts the royal family.

The monarch is aided by three small bodies: the Privy Council, which advises the King and, at times, appoints a regency to exercise royal powers; the Office of the Royal Household, which organizes ceremonies and handles the court's finances and housekeeping; and the Private Secretariat, which performs clerical and secretarial tasks for the King. The Privy Council, whose nine members the King chooses from the royal family relatives and elder statesmen, is the most important of these bodies; it links the throne and the administration and occasionally exerts some influence on government decisions.

3. Executive

Under the interim constitution of December 1972— which the Saanya government is observing until a new



FIGURE 4. The royal family (U/OU)

constitution is promulgated in 1974—the Prime Minister and the cabinet are responsible for all administrative power and policy decisions. The Council of Ministers (cabinet) consists of an "appropriate number" of members presided over by the Prime Minister; all are appointed by the King but the constitution does not specify the criteria or methods. The Prime Minister's appointment must be countersigned by the President of the National Legislative Assembly. The Prime Minister and cabinet members may not hold seats in the legislature but may attend parliamentary sessions to state facts or express opinions. Although the Prime Minister is theoretically responsible to parliament, he virtually controls it. The Prime Minister (or a cabinet member) countersigns all royal decrees "relating to affairs of state," and simply informs the National Legislative Assembly—which has no veto power—of the many "orders and steps taken" by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has considerable official and informal authority additional to his constitutional powers. The Office of the Prime Minister has ministerial status and a number of key ministerial departments have been transferred to his office over the years. In late 1972 the Office of the Prime Minister was reorganized to include the following:

Government House Secretariat
 Cabinet Secretariat
 Budget Bureau
 National Security Council Office
 Office of the Board of Inspection and Follow-up of Government Operations (BIFCO)
 Office of the National Economic and Social Development Committee
 Office of the Under Secretary of State in Charge of the Office of the Prime Minister
 Office of the Juridical Council
 Office of the National Education Council
 Office of the Civil Service Commission
 Office of the National Research Board
 Office of the Board of Investment
 Office of the National Energy Authority
 National Statistical Office
 Department of Public Relations
 Department of Central Intelligence
 Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation

Prime Ministers of military regimes traditionally buttress their powers by holding key positions in the military. This is not the case with the civilian Sanya government, which has few military men in the cabinet but nonetheless works closely with important military figures like army chief Krit Siwara.

Thai Prime Ministers also hold important informal powers. Because they customarily head the chief

political faction or party and control patronage and the power to appoint and dismiss senior military and civilian officials, they usually maintain the backing of key bureaucrats and military leaders. To insure this support, all Prime Ministers since 1932 have been careful to reward deserving followers. Payoffs have been in the form of lucrative jobs in government-owned enterprises, political appointments, and cash awards.

The cabinet frames and implements all important national policies and is the nucleus of the entire political and administrative system. The cabinet appointed in October 1973—the 33rd in 41 years of constitutional government—contained 1 Deputy Prime Minister and 13 deputy ministers in addition to the heads of the 13 ministries.¹ The ministers were chosen by the Prime Minister who was appointed by the King. Nearly half of the cabinet members (six ministers and seven deputy ministers) were holdovers from the Thanon regime, but three of the ministers held different posts.

Outside the cabinet's administrative structure but subject to its supervision are a number of quasi-autonomous state economic enterprises. Among them are the following:

Thai Rice Co.
 Yankee Electricity Authority
 Metropolitan Electricity Authority
 Provincial Electricity Authority
 Ports Authority
 State Railway of Thailand
 Thai Navigation Co. Ltd.
 Glass Organization
 Cold Storage Organization
 Naborn Rubber Plantation Organization
 Warehouse Organization
 Express Transport Organization
 The Lottery Bureau
 Tourist Organization of Thailand
 Lignite Authority
 Tanning Factory
 Fuel Oil Organization
 Telephone Organization
 Thai Paper Mill

While some of these enterprises—notably the Telephone Organization—are self-supporting businesses, many others run a deficit every year and require regular budgetary support. Part of their revenues traditionally goes into the pockets of their officials and their supporters in the administration.

¹For a current listing of key government officials consult *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments*, published monthly by the Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency.

4. Legislature

The legislative institution in Thailand has never been firmly established or strongly supported by either the government or the people. Few members of the 1932 coup group aimed at creating lasting democratic institutions when they abolished the absolute monarchy; they simply wanted to limit the King's prerogatives and set up a government system their coalition could control. During most of Thailand's checkered constitutional history the legislature has played a supportive role to the executive, the presumed power holder, and its strength has varied inversely with that of the government. Except for 1946-49, the executive branch has had the power to appoint at least half the legislature—or all upper-house members in the years when it was bicameral. The executive branch has thus assured itself a majority in a largely underdeveloped legislature having little decisionmaking authority. Forces outside the legislature have set the limits for its power, creating conditions for its exercise, and calling a halt when conditions change.

The first National Assembly, created in 1932, was unicameral with half its members government-appointed; its 10-year constitutional limit was extended on the eve of World War II. In 1946 the legislature became bicameral, with the lower house popularly elected and the upper house elected by the lower house. In 1949 a new constitution—following the ouster of civilian-dominated government in late 1947—kept the legislature bicameral, with the lower house popularly elected but the upper house appointed by the King. In 1951 the military voided the 1949 constitution and returned to the 1932 concept of the partially appointed National Assembly. This legislature was firmly under government control until 1955 when Phibun, in a sudden policy reversal, decided to permit free discussion and the creation of political parties. The government's vulnerability to charges of fraud and graft following the tense election in February 1957 gave the Sarit faction the opportunity to seize control in September. Sarit abolished the National Assembly when he assumed direct power in late 1958 but appointed a temporary Constituent Assembly in January 1959 to draw up a "permanent" constitution. The legislature which was finally created a decade later (March 1969)—a bicameral parliament with a popularly elected lower house and an upper house appointed by the King—lasted until the November 1971 coup abolished parliament. During the next 13 months the National Executive Council ruled the country.

The unicameral, 299-member National Legislative Assembly which the Thanom government had appointed in January 1973 was dissolved by the King the following December to make room for a new parliament more responsive to the interim civilian Sanya government. The King picked 2,346 citizens from different walks of life to meet and choose a new 299-man assembly—presumably to last until a new constitution demands creation of a new parliament. The makeup of this body reflects a shift toward civilian technocrats, intellectuals, and administrators; only 12% of it is military compared with 67% of the Thanom parliament.

At times, Thai legislatures have shown some skill at facilitating the expression of local interests, acting as a potential check on the executive, and providing experience in political party organization and in electoral and parliamentary procedures. More often, they have shown extreme fragmentation marked by the political groups' tendency to place their allegiance in a national figure rather than an ideology; the self-interest of factions competing for personal power; and the frequent realignment of political attachments vis-a-vis the dominant political group.

The Thai legislature is generally most active just before a coup; after the coup, it is either abolished or replaced by a much weaker body. All previous periods of parliamentary influence—1944-47, 1955-57, and 1968-71—ended with a coup and the return to power of a more unified military group.

5. Judiciary

Thailand's system of jurisprudence has evolved from a combination of customary law and Western-based law. Procedural rules follow the English system except for trial procedure, which is patterned after practices used in Japan since World War II. Tort rules are based on German theories, while the laws of inheritance and domestic relations are generally founded on ancient Thai customs. A comprehensive penal code was first promulgated in 1908; this was modified and superseded by the Criminal Code of 1956.

The large Malay population in southern Thailand receives protection under special laws. When a Malay is indicted, all proceedings must be translated into Malay and each judge must have a Malay adviser to give guidance on Islamic law, beliefs, and practices, and Malay custom.

The nation's judicial structure is based on the 1935 Law of the Organization of the Court of Justice, as subsequently amended. This law provides for three

levels of courts—courts of first instance, an appellate court, and a supreme court. There are 108 courts of first instance located in nine judicial regions. Eighty-five are provincial courts and 20 are magistrate courts (at the district level in some larger provinces) which handle petty offenses to relieve the burden on provincial courts. Both provincial and magistrate courts have jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases. The remaining three courts of first instance (all located in the first judicial region of Bangkok) are the Central Juvenile Court, the Civil Court, and the Criminal Court; the jurisdiction of the last two special tribunals is sometimes extended to the country as a whole.

The Court of Appeals sits in Bangkok and hears cases for the entire country. This court considers appeals on questions of both law and fact and may reverse, revise, or remand lower court decisions. The Supreme Court, also in Bangkok, has not only appellate jurisdiction but also jurisdiction in election disputes. Although decisions of the court are final, the King may be petitioned for clemency in criminal cases.

Court cases can be initiated either by the public prosecutors—who are officials of the Ministry of Interior rather than the Ministry of Justice—or by private litigants; there is no provision for trial by jury. All courts are administratively supervised by the Ministry of Justice although the Judicial Commission—an independent statutory body—is responsible for insuring the independence of the court system. This 11-man group of senior judiciary officials (President of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals, Deputy Minister of Justice, and eight members elected from among senior or retired judges by judges from all courts) recommends—through the King—all appointments, promotions, transfers, and disciplinary actions concerning judges, but all its proposals must be first approved by the Minister of Justice.

In the early 1970's the Thanom government made several abortive attempts to switch all judicial controls to the Ministry of Justice. During the short period of legislative freedom (1968-71) the assembly rejected such a request. The attempt was repeated in December 1972 through Decree 299 which the NEC issued shortly before going out of existence. This time the press and intellectuals spoke out against the decree, thousands of students took to the streets in protest, and the King threatened to veto the interim constitution unless the decree were rescinded. The government dropped the decree 2 weeks after its promulgation but expressed its intention to introduce a "judicial reform" bill in the new 1973 legislature.

However, the supplanting of that parliament with a largely civilian body and the replacement of Thanom with former Supreme Court Justice Sanya would seem to spell the end to such efforts.

Standing outside the regular judicial hierarchy is a Constitutional Tribunal composed of the President of the National Legislative Assembly, the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals, the Director-General of the Public Prosecution Department, and four other persons appointed by parliament on the basis of their legal qualifications. It hears only cases involving constitutional interpretation and its decisions are final.

6. Civil service

Employment in the bureaucracy has traditionally been prestigious in Thailand. Civil servants are greatly respected, and attaining an official position has been the chief way to move up socially. Most college students therefore hope for careers in government.

Although the civil service system was first established in 1929, methods and standards familiar to Western nations were not formulated until the Civil Service Organization Act of 1933. The Civil Service Commission thereafter built a modern, standardized career personnel system based, at least theoretically, on the merit system.

Beginning in 1941, however, wartime inflation reduced the small fixed income of the lower grades to a point roughly half that of the average unskilled laborer, and the continuing dearth of government pay after the war was a major cause of corruption. Although a new Civil Service Act was promulgated in 1954 and further amended in 1959 and 1969, low salaries—along with overstaffing and other administrative weaknesses—seem to have made corruption and inefficiency permanent earmarks of the Thai bureaucratic process. Constructive influences on the bureaucracy have been the increased exposure of officials to foreign training, improved local training, and the presence of foreign advisers in government offices.

While neither the Civil Service Act nor the constitution bars civil servants from engaging in politics, most traditionally have not done so. As a result the bureaucracy, except for a few senior officials, has been little affected by power shifts at the top level and career officials have been a source of administrative stability.

The civil service bases employment and promotion on public examinations, sets standardized salaries for the various grades, and provides pensions in most categories. Women have formal equality with men but

relatively few have entered government service; the man-woman ratio is about 18:1. There are five personnel classes in the system, ranging from fourth class (administrative-clerical) at the bottom to special class, which includes senior career positions such as ministerial undersecretaries. Each class is further divided into grades.

7. Local government

Thailand is a unitary state whose territorial divisions are largely extensions of the central government, although some have a degree of local authority and responsibility. These divisions are the province (*changwat*), district (*amphoe*), township or commune (*tambon*), village (*muban*), and municipality (*thesaban*).

Government policy has alternated between centralization and decentralization for decades. Before World War II, local government was encouraged, elected provincial and municipal assemblies were introduced, and the regions—administrative bodies above the provincial level—were abolished. This decentralization trend was interrupted by the war, when an army-dominated authoritarian regime was imposed.

Controls became more centralized in the immediate postwar period. In 1952 regional administrations were reestablished with supervisory powers over all central government activities in provinces under their jurisdiction. The centralization trend was temporarily reversed in the mid-1950's by Prime Minister Phibun who—hoping to boost his waning popularity—initiated several reforms. The most significant changes were introduced through the Provincial Government Acts of 1955 and 1956 which gave the province a degree of independent authority and abolished the region as a government body, although retaining it as an administrative subdivision of the ministries and other central government agencies. Phibun also announced a program for popular elections at provincial and local levels. These moves toward decentralization and democratization were suspended in 1958 when Field Marshal Sarit seized control of the government, but the Thanom government later authorized some decentralization in the security-sensitive provinces included in the Accelerated Rural Development Program. The 1955 Provincial Government Act is still in force and the structure of provincial and local government remains almost unchanged, but the actual authority and independence of local units has dwindled markedly.

Since the mid-1950's the number of provinces has remained constant at 71, although smaller administra-

tive units have gradually increased. During 1972, the formation of the new province of Yasothorn out of several districts from Ubon Ratchathani province would have raised the total to 72, but was offset by the amalgamation of Bangkok and Thon Buri into a single metropolis.

The region—abolished as a government body in 1956—continues as an administrative division for subordinate field offices of the ministries and other government bodies, including courts and the police. Inspectors assigned by the Ministry of Interior supervise ministerial field representatives and provincial personnel, particularly on personnel actions, and sometimes reprimand them for exceeding their authority or engaging in politics. The overlapping authority of the government's regional offices and of the provincial governors has created serious jurisdictional disputes—which the Ministry of Interior usually resolves in favor of the governor. While the importance of regional offices has increased with the initiation of national programs cutting across provincial boundaries, no attempt has been made to reinstate the region as a comprehensive administrative unit.

a. Province

The 71 provinces are extensions of the central government as well as units with a separate charter for administering purely local affairs. Their dual nature has allowed them a modicum of self-government, empowering them to provide local services, levy taxes, and even operate commercial businesses. The provincial governor is the chief executive and the provincial assembly the legislative body.

The provincial governor, appointed by the Minister of Interior, carries out all laws, orders, and policies of both the central and provincial governments—including ministerial representatives. He is assisted by a small administrative staff and advised by a board composed of the deputy governor and the chief provincial representatives of the ministries and independent agencies. The trend toward more specialized services and better qualified technical personnel has placed the governor in fact—if not in law—more and more in the position of a general supervisory manager. This trend, however, has not yet lost the governor his dominant position in the province. Fifteen border and/or Communist-threatened provinces also have vice governors who help strengthen anti-Communist suppression activities.

Provincial assemblies enact local government ordinances and bylaws and must approve the

provincial budget. Their membership—like that of their national counterparts—has at times been half-elected and half-appointed, other times all-elected, and still other times all-appointed. When the National Executive Council abolished the national legislature in late 1971 it decided to allow provincial legislatures to continue until the members' terms expired, after which all members would be appointed. The fact that these legislatures were nearly always considered under the provincial administration's thumb—rather than independent and abrasive like their national counterpart—was undoubtedly a major factor in this decision.

Provincial authorities actually perform few services because their powers are closely circumscribed by the central government. Governors are given discretionary power to determine when the assemblies have exceeded their authority. Although provincial assemblies may levy taxes, they have few sources of revenue because most lucrative tax sources are in the cities, outside provincial jurisdiction. The inability of provincial authority to operate effectively makes it dependent upon the central government for most services.

b. District

The district is the lowest unit of the provincial administration staffed with central government officials and the smallest unit having its own budget; it has no assembly. All administrative authority rests with the district officer, who is appointed by the Department of Local Administration in the Ministry of Interior but is directly responsible to the provincial governor. His exceptionally broad duties include the maintenance of law and order, administration of laws not specifically assigned to other central government officials, and the supervision of all central government officials attached to the district office. Officials attached to the district office from departments other than the Department of Local Administration are also responsible to their own provincial counterparts. The district officer also supervises quasi-government officials such as the township headman and the village headman, and is an ex officio member of the council of the municipalities and the commission of the sanitation districts in his area.

In addition to his duties as a central government official, the district officer tries to act as the representative of the people in the townships and villages. Because of the extent of his duties, only an exceptionally energetic district officer can provide the necessary leadership to gain his district's cooperation

in initiating and completing village projects and still meet his obligations as a central government administrator.

c. Township

The township, sometimes referred to as a commune, is the lowest level of local government over which the central government asserts direct control. Typically comprising 8 to 10 villages, the townships are established by the Ministry of Interior and supervised by the district officers. The principal official is the headman who is usually elected for life by the village chiefs; he may be removed from office by a vote of the chiefs or at the request of the district officer or provincial governor. Most of his duties are performed on behalf of the central government and include revenue collections, administration of law, and the conduct of public meetings on communal matters. As spokesman for the township, the headman is limited to such matters as providing guidance within the township and villages and providing liaison between the township and district.

In the mid-1950's some townships gained greater autonomy through legislation permitting the establishment of elected township councils and providing for the incorporation of communes. The incorporated township or township authority consists of a local council, an executive committee, and other offices if deemed necessary. Township authorities are empowered to legislate ordinances, levy taxes, and formulate a budget.

d. Village

About 80% of the population lives in villages, most of which vary in size from 50 to 200 households. A village officially consists of at least five households, but it is not considered an official administrative unit within the local government system. The village headman as a rule is elected by a vote of all inhabitants over 20 years of age—or over 17 if married—who meet residence and citizenship requirements. He is supervised and directed by the district officer and has responsibilities to the village and the central government similar to those of the commune headman. In the predominantly Malay villages and in the northeast, however, the headman often is appointed by the district officer. Before World War II the chief had considerable autonomous powers because villages were highly isolated. Since then his position has weakened markedly due to improved communications and transportation and closer government supervision.

As a result of government-imposed requirements the chief's position carries heavier responsibilities and greater demands on his time. He therefore tends to be viewed more as a representative of government than as the village representative who deals with the government—until now his traditional role. The village headman, however, seldom takes an important step without consulting the key persons in his community.

e. Municipality

All towns and cities were governed by appointive officials until 1932, but in 1933 a Municipality Act was passed which provided for local self-government in urban areas. As amended in 1953, the act establishes three classes of municipalities based on population size: 1) the township or commune municipality, in areas having some urban characteristics; 2) the town which includes provincial capitals, and urban areas with a population of at least 10,000 and an average density of not less than 3,000 per square kilometer; and 3) the city which must have a population of at least 50,000 and a density of 3,000 persons per square kilometer.

The municipality is administered by an executive council and by a legislative assembly whose membership—like that of its national and provincial counterparts—has at times been all-elected, all-appointed, or half of each. The municipal executive council consists of a president (mayor) and two councilmen appointed from the assembly. In theory the assembly has certain restrictive powers over the council, particularly on budget matters, but in practice these powers are seldom used.

Thai municipalities have more effective administration than other local-government units because of better trained personnel, greater tax resources, and greater central-government support. Despite these advantages, the degree of local self-government enjoyed by the municipalities is minimal; their boundaries may be changed and their existence terminated by central government decree. Furthermore, the personnel and financial resources of the municipalities are not sufficient to meet obligations. As a result the central government has assumed a number of responsibilities for urban services.

Bridging the gap between the rural and urban government are the sanitation (or sanitary) districts (*sukhaphitban*). Despite their name, they are multipurpose corporate bodies performing various services in addition to sanitation. They resemble but have less autonomy than the municipalities and are

located in semiurban areas, particularly in and near district seats. The sanitation district is administered by a commission composed of senior officials from districts, townships, and villages, as well as several others appointed by the provincial governor. This commission has both executive and legislative powers. Services the commissions are authorized to provide include community development, public health, and sanitation. However, a lack of funds has minimized their performance and as a result central government units often provide these services.

C. Political dynamics

1. General (U/OU)

Politics and government have been dominated by one small elite or another throughout Thailand's history. The royal family, with a bureaucracy of royal-family relatives and appointed officials, ruled until 1932 when a coup d'etat transformed the King from an absolute to a constitutional monarch. Power shifted from the throne to a cabinet composed of Western-educated leaders of various factions in the armed forces and civil service. Although there have been many changes of government since 1932—through other coups and new constitutions—power has remained in the cabinet and elections and political parties have played a relatively minor role. The leaders' paternalistic-conservative policies of government, while authoritarian, have brought Thailand more prosperity and stability than many of its neighbors have, and these leaders have been little opposed by the general public or the educated elite.

The Thais' acceptance of authoritarianism derives from attitudes developed during the pre-1932 monarchy. The people believed the King to be divinely inspired and protected, considered even lower officials higher than ordinary men, and viewed government above the village level as remote and unreachable. Since they equated rank with moral worth, no one questioned government decisions because they assumed decisionmakers were morally virtuous. These views were buttressed by the fact that royalty followed a code of *noblesse oblige* based on Buddhist/Brahman moral precepts and was rarely tyrannical. These deep-seated attitudes still foster political lethargy and account for the casual public reaction to the frequent starting and stepping of political activity.

Certain socioeconomic factors historically have reinforced Thailand's political authoritarianism and conservatism. There is as yet no serious population

pressure or extreme poverty on the rich agricultural land whose residents for the most part are smallholder peasants cultivating on an owner-operator basis. For a long time there was little absentee landlordism, sharecropping, or rural indebtedness and the government barred widespread commercial land exploitation. While some farmers in the early 1970's felt short changed by what they considered the government's preoccupation with industry at the expense of agriculture, particularly its rice-handling policies, farmers over the years have tended to be conservative and to favor the status quo.

Economic expansion over the years has not spawned social or political disruption. Most industry consists of small, family-size enterprises, but there are a substantial number of medium and large private industries as well as large government-owned enterprises. This industrial pattern has not stimulated working-class solidarity or political consciousness. Fragmentation of the urban working class among various occupations and regional and ethnic backgrounds has further reduced the growth of a politically minded class consciousness.

The small urban middle class also tends to be conservative and politically noninvolved. Most Thai members of this class are white-collar government workers who devote more time and effort to getting ahead than to politics. The sizable Chinese middle class finds strictly Chinese political activity hazardous, and for the most part is content with its role under an elite that gladly exchanges political protection and bureaucratic partiality for a share in their profits.

The political apathy of most Thais has made politics almost exclusively the province of the new upper class which has come to the fore since 1932. This class is led by senior military and civil officials, prominent businessmen (many of them Chinese), and ranking professionals, but is also influenced by and drawn from the "political public" of educated citizens—university and high school graduates, junior military and police officers, professionals, journalists, writers, and other intellectuals. This politically significant element comprises no more than 2% of the entire adult population, however. The King maintains apparently cordial relations with the leadership and rarely gets directly involved in politics, but he does not hesitate to show his strong support for democratic processes. In December 1972 the King would not approve the interim constitution until Thanom nullified his decree limiting judicial freedom, and in late 1973 he backed student demands which led to Thanom's downfall and then handpicked a Prime Minister and a varied group of citizens to choose a

new legislature. The King counsels moderation in disputes with foreign countries and influences domestic programs such as hill-tribe projects.

For most of the last few decades a tight coterie of military officers has held effective political leadership in the upper and educated classes. The military has kept a profitable alliance with civilian politicians and bureaucrats who in 1932 joined it in bringing down the absolute monarchy. The civilians have exercised some influence but the relationship has always been one-sided. The military has clearly dominated politics except for a few short periods.

Groups forming the governing elite since 1932 have followed fairly consistent patterns in their seizure and consolidation of power. Each has comprised at least one clique, and usually more, centered around a dominant personality. After the power seizure one clique has become an "inner circle" whose success depends on its skill in controlling the support of other factions and organizations—including the legislature when there is one—through political patronage and financial benefits. An essential prerequisite to a successful coup has been the existence of a military power base. After achieving power, the new rulers have drafted a constitution legalizing their actions, appointed the membership of the legislature to assure its control, and eventually formed a political party based on its supporters. The leaders of the power clique have always held strategic posts in the government hierarchy—notably the office of Prime Minister and the Ministries of Defense and Interior. In most cases when a regime has been ousted, only the members of the policymaking inner circle have been replaced. Fringe members of the ruling groups have generally managed to stay in government, partly because their ties with the ousted leaders were not strong and partly because of the lack of capable replacements.

2. Politics: 1932 through Sarit (U/OU)

Twelve individuals have been Prime Minister and the office has changed hands 16 times since the 1932 coup. Until late 1973, however, politics was dominated by only a few men—Phraya Phahon Phonphayuhasena, Field Marshal Phibun Songkram, Pridi Phanomyong, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, and Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn. The military men received their main support from military-backed coup groups, while Pridi received his from the young, intellectual element of the original 1932 coup group and, later, from the anti-Japanese World War II Free Thai movement and elements in the navy and air force. Other leaders who played major roles were

Khuang Aphaiwong, Prime Minister for much of the period between 1944-48; Phao Siyanon, the powerful Director General of Police between 1951-57; and Field Marshal Praplat Charusathien, Minister of Interior and Deputy Prime Minister until the Thanom regime was ousted in October 1973.

The original, largest, and most broadly based coup group consisted of at least 50 individuals who took part in the coup of 24 June 1932. The group's military leader was Colonel Phahon and the chief civilian and intellectual leader was Pridi. At first this group ruled through Phraya Manopakon (or Phraya Mano), a conservative bureaucrat who was acceptable to the royalists and other conservative elements. When Phraya Mano tried to seize control in 1933 he was summarily displaced by Phahon, who subsequently was premier until he retired in December 1938. Phahon was succeeded by his shrewd protege, Gen. Phibun Songkhram, who quickly gained more personal power than his predecessors by acquiring the chief ministerial posts as well as the military rank of field marshal.

World War II threatened the political arrangement of the ruling elite and the Phibun government—faced with a Japanese invasion—abruptly joined the Axis war effort. When Japan's ultimate defeat became assured, Pridi in mid-1944 engineered a parliamentary vote which removed Phibun and his clique from power. Pridi dominated Thai politics from August 1944 until November 1947 although he did not become Prime Minister until March 1946 when he won a large parliamentary majority over the widely respected civilian Khuang Aphaiwong.

Thailand was spared Allied occupation and the reorganization of its armed forces at the end of World War II by forming ostensibly pro-Allied, civilian governments, returning territory gained as Japan's ally, and paying some reparations. The nation thus avoided foreign rule and—more importantly for future politics—the armed forces retained their ability to intervene decisively in the political process. By entering the political arena, however, Pridi opened himself to direct attack and was forced to take responsibility for the postwar economic dislocation and resulting corruption. Opposition to Pridi came to a head with the mysterious death of the young King Ananda in June 1946. While the exact circumstances were never revealed, Pridi made no public statement to clear himself and failed to launch a full investigation. Savagely attacked by Khuang and his party in the assembly, Pridi in August 1946 resigned from the premiership and, ostensibly, from public life. Pridi was succeeded by a supporter, retired Admiral

Thamrong Nawasawat, whose toleration of widespread corruption discredited civilian rule and representative government and paved the way for a return to military control.

A military clique loyal to Phibun seized power in a swift and bloodless coup on 8 November 1947. Pridi fled the country and his supporters went into hiding. Khuang Aphaiwong was again premier for a brief period but in April 1948, after the major powers had recognized the new regime, Phibun seized direct power and once more became Prime Minister. The 1948-51 period was extremely unstable. A plot involving members of the General Staff was discovered in October 1948. In early 1949 Pridi returned from exile and tried to overthrow the government by force with the support of navy and marine elements. This abortive, bloody effort was followed by severe government repression. Pridi was again forced to flee and has remained in exile, in the People's Republic of China for the most part, ever since. In June 1951 navy elements kidnapped Phibun and briefly held him hostage while negotiating with the army and police regarding formation of a new government. This desperate effort also failed and there were many casualties in the ensuing fighting.

These episodes dramatized Phibun's inherent weakness. From 1949 on, real political power passed increasingly to his powerful lieutenants: Gen. Phao Siyanon, who became Director General of Police in 1951, and Sarit Thanarat, who was ultimately appointed Commander in Chief of the Army; Phibun held the balance of power. The power consolidation by this triumvirate was accompanied by a rapid decline of constitutional government. A new constitution, drafted by a team of experts appointed by the Khuang government, was promulgated in early 1949. This relatively liberal document was an obvious effort to curb the military's power and remained a thorn in the side of the military administration. The situation finally came to a head in November 1951, when a group of Phao-Sarit military and police supporters broadcast that the 1949 constitution had been abrogated and the 1932 constitution reinstated. The reasons they cited were the danger of internal communism and the serious world situation. Phao and Sarit further consolidated their power through elections held in 1952. Because Khuang and many of his supporters boycotted these elections, claiming their outcome was a foregone conclusion, the government party won most of the seats.

The years 1952-55 saw growing corruption, intrigue, and police repression of anyone suspected of leftist sympathies. The police became involved in major

scandals, like opium smuggling, and the military group around Sarit in highly lucrative commercial enterprises.

A dramatic reversal in internal politics took place in 1955. After a tour of the United States and the United Kingdom, Phibun announced a new era of democracy; new political parties were allowed to register and local governments were given more power. This democratic experiment prompted the establishment of a number of political parties of varied outlooks, including a small, loosely organized, but highly vocal leftist Socialist Front. Free public discussion was marked by vigorous denunciations of the government and its leaders. In the February 1957 elections the government-dominated parties—the larger of the *Seri Manangkhasila* (SMP)—won due to heavy expenditures of money and probably fraudulent election practices. Sarit, who was not closely linked with the SMP, broke with the other two members of the triumvirate and publicly agreed with opposition charges that the elections were "dirty." Finally, in September 1957, he ousted Phibun and Phao in a bloodless coup. Phibun fled the country, and Phao soon afterwards was permitted to go into exile.

New, carefully supervised elections, held in December 1957 by an interim government, gave no single political party a working parliamentary majority. Sarit then organized the National Socialist Party (later called *Chat Niyom*), a cumbersome coalition of parties and individuals with heterogeneous outlooks. The new government of Gen. Thanom Kittikachorn, Sarit's deputy, was beset by intraparty wrangling over political and economic spoils and over the inclusion of leftwing politicians in the ruling party.

Field Marshal Sarit, who initially had stayed in the background while recovering from major surgery in early 1958, took personal control of the government later that year. In October he proclaimed martial law, abrogated the constitution, dissolved the National Assembly, banned political parties, closed down a dozen newspapers suspected of leftist inclinations, and arrested a number of persons suspected of leftist inclinations or activities. This was followed by an extensive reorganization of the Office of the Prime Minister which brought nearly all policymaking and supervisory functions of the government directly under Sarit's control. Finally, an interim constitution was promulgated on 29 January 1959 to legitimize the Prime Minister's rule.

Sarit justified his strongly authoritarian regime—which he termed a revolutionary government—on grounds that the Communist threat from North Vietnam and China necessitated a firm hand, as well

as on the contention that the 1955-57 experiment in democracy showed the country was not yet ready for political liberalization. An astute politician, he was able to minimize opposition by balancing the various military cliques against each other and by diffusing the power of his subordinates by frequent shifts in assignment. He further strengthened his position by liberal use of political and business patronage. He stiffened the country's pro-Western alignment by accepting sizable increments of U.S. military and economic aid. With U.S. assistance and advice he inaugurated extensive socioeconomic development programs encompassing road construction, irrigation projects, the building of schools and agricultural stations, and a civic-action program centered mainly in the northeast provinces. Sarit's death in December 1963 marked the first time a Thai Prime Minister had died in office, and power was transferred to his deputy, Thanom Kittikachorn, without serious factionalization or instability.

3. Politics: Thanom to Sanya (5)

The nearly 10 years of rule by Prime Minister Thanom (Figure 5) and his deputy, Praphat Charusathien² (Figure 6)—a much more tough and forceful personality—did not vary a great deal from

²Prior to October 1973, Thanom was Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and of Foreign Affairs, and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces; Praphat was Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Director General of the Police, and director of the counterinsurgency program. Both were field marshals in the army.



FIGURE 5. Former Prime Minister (Field Marshal) Thanom (U/OU)



FIGURE 6. Former Deputy Prime Minister (Field Marshal) Praphat (U/OU)

those of their mentor, Field Marshal Sarit. Political events after 1963, however, showed vacillation between the two poles of representative government and military dictatorship, the newer leaders perhaps feeling more obliged to allow a certain amount of democracy and civilian participation but not too much.

Generally the new government continued to follow Sarit's policies without major modifications. Retaining the cabinet he inherited, Thanom focused his efforts on trying to maintain political stability; promote economic development, especially in security-sensitive border areas; raise the standard of living; and safeguard the country from the Communist threats posed at home and from abroad. The government gradually took on more civilian participation. An increasing number of civilian officials were brought into important positions below the cabinet level, and civilian ministers accounted for at least half the cabinet membership. Civil service cadres played an important stabilizing role by providing administrative expertise and continuity. Nevertheless the army, particularly the capital garrison command stationed in Bangkok, continued to be the single most potent source of power.

There seemed no great haste to reestablish a popularly elected government, however. The first draft of a new constitution which Sarit had called for in 1959 was finished by the end of 1964 but was held up for further deliberation and amendments. Official controls on the press were relaxed in an effort to create a relatively liberal political climate. While the leaders

agreed on the need to establish a more democratic political system in tune with the country's heritage, however, they disagreed on the pace at which the projected change was to be made. Some leading officials believed an early resumption of political activities would do much to broaden the base of politics and further strengthen popular identification with the government, the monarchy, and Buddhism. Others argued that restoring party politics when the country was confronted with serious internal problems would aid Communist efforts to infiltrate civic, labor, student, and political organizations.

By 1965, however, there were signs that Thanom had decided to promulgate a new constitution that would restore a parliamentary system and allow some popular participation through an elected lower house. While the government took a few steps toward organizing a political party in 1966 and other dormant political groups began to stir, the constitution was not promulgated until 20 June 1968, at which time elections for the lower house were set for February 1969.

In October the Political Parties Act was passed and parties were officially allowed to organize and begin campaigning for the national elections. Thirteen parties were registered, but only the government's *Saha Pracha Thai* (United Thai Peoples Party—SPT) and the opposition Democrat (*Phat Prachathipat*) Party contested the elections on a nationwide scale; a large number of candidates simply ran as independents. The SPT won only 35% of the vote, with 32% going to independent candidates, 26% to the Democrats, and the rest to splinter parties. Elections were conducted in an orderly manner and few irregularities were reported. Following the election, Thanom was formally asked by the King to form a new government. The cabinet he chose differed little from its predecessor; some minor portfolios were shifted, but the balance of power among the governing elite did not change and no opposition politicians were included.

While the government party did not win a clear-cut majority of seats in the House of Representatives, it did attract enough support from independent legislators to give it a working majority in the parliament. Fifty independent legislators eventually joined SPT ranks after being given access to provincial development funds—boosting the SPT assembly figure to 125 or well over half the 219 total. The government clearly favored SPT members in apportioning seats on the standing committees but gave other groups a token number of positions.

Government leaders fully expected the new parliament to be a lethargic rubber stamp at the bureaucracy's beck and call. The Senate, after all, was handpicked, and government-party members predominated in a House whose members were required to have no more than a 4-year elementary education and to meet only once a week for one 90-day session a year. The legislature did prove to be a do-nothing body—given the parties' lack of organization and policies and the MP's preoccupation with "pork barrel" politics. Senators, in particular, were often too immersed in their own careers to devote time to political roles which in many cases had been forced on them. The most aggressive SPT members of the House of Representatives turned out to be the Government House (*Tham Niep Rathaban*) faction which—unlike the military—supported the creation of strong democratic institutions. Vocal members of many parties leveled criticism at the national budget, foreign policy, alien residence laws, corruption, rural political participation, and other issues which threatened executive-branch prerogatives.

It became clear to the military hierarchy—as the *Nation* later described it—that "the House of Representatives by its sheer irresponsibility was behaving more like shackles to the executive arm of the government instead of its fundamental role as a legislative body that aids the cabinet to function at its maximum efficiency." Thanom complained that "Never, in my long political career, have MP's caused such trouble to government administrators as in these recent times," and if there were no MP's, government administrators "could certainly work more smoothly and efficiently, like the days during the time of the late Field Marshal Sarit." While he considered himself a patient man "there were times when he thought his patience would come to an end one day. And that day has come."

The regime-sponsored coup did come on 17 November 1971 when four tanks and less than 50 troops surrounded parliament, while periodic radio announcements assured the populace that Thailand was "again secure" under the firm hand of the Revolutionary Party (*Khana Pattivat*), the name of the late Sarit's group. This time the coup leaders—all of them members of the original Sarit team—wanted the title translated as National Executive Council. Martial law was enforced, all political parties dissolved, the 1968 constitution revoked, and the cabinet and both houses of the parliament dispensed with. Except for a few outspoken MP's, professors, and students (3,000 of whom massed at Chulalongkorn University) most Thais took "just another coup" in their stride.

Thanom and Prapchat headed the 16-man NEC which was created almost immediately after the coup and which for 13 months wielded all power in the absence of a cabinet, constitution, and legislature. Six of the men comprised a core group at the center of power (Figure 7).

Initially the NEC drew up a three-stage plan for reorganizing Thailand's administration:

- a) A revolutionary stage in which the NEC would lay the basis for official administration in general;
- b) A second stage in which an organization would be set up to administer the country in accordance with the democratic system, using an interim constitution;
- c) The third and final stage with a permanent constitution under which a general election would be held for members of the legislature.

During the 13-month first stage the NEC issued many announcements and decrees, all having the full force of law and covering a wide range of subjects. Principal decrees included: the abrogation of parliament, the termination of political parties, the reintroduction of the death penalty, the strengthening of anti-Communist laws, the appointment—rather than election—of municipal and provincial council members, the establishment of workers' associations and setting of minimum standards for working conditions, placement of controls on alien businesses, the merging of the twin cities of Bangkok and Thon Buri into a single metropolis, reorganization of the administration, and increased authority of the Minister of Justice over judges (this latter was rescinded as a quid pro quo for the King's promulgation of the interim constitution in December 1972). There were also numerous decrees on improving living conditions, particularly in Bangkok, on such matters as controls over traffic, noise, exhaust fumes, and the quality of food.

Throughout the 13 months the NEC carefully nurtured its public relations image, giving frequent



FIGURE 7. Leading figures of the National Executive Council (U/OU)

press conferences while at the same time tightening control over the press. It was anxious to prove its superiority over the previous parliamentary government in reforming the administrative structure, implementing improvements in living conditions, and increasing the "peace and contentment of the nation." These same NEC leaders—when they headed the previous cabinet under the 1968 Constitution—could have undertaken any reforms they pleased, but from 1969 through November 1971 they chose not to do so. The main impact of many of these actions was to widen the gap between rich and poor, and between the elite and the masses. In terms of real economic development, internal security, and defense there was little significant improvement. In terms of developing political institutions and attitudes, the NEC's actions pushed Thailand back by about two decades. By December 1972 the NEC felt it had successfully completed the first stage of its goals and technically expired as the King promulgated an interim constitution.

For the first 10 months of 1973 Thanom and Praphat remained at the helm of a government which included an all-appointed National Legislative Assembly and a new cabinet which was responsible for drafting a "permanent" constitution. On the surface the government in 1973 did not seem far removed from Sani's regime of a decade earlier. Indeed, with an "interim constitution" almost identical to the one in force from 1959-68, most Thais viewed the political situation as the normal state of affairs from which the government temporarily deviated when it promulgated the 1968 constitution and then swung back beyond center in the NEC period. There were two additional factors, however—a power struggle involving the top leaders, Thanom, Praphat, and Krit Siwara (Figure 8), and a strong undercurrent of student, labor, and general discontent which was to sweep the Thanom government out of office near the end of 1973.

The power struggle peaked in the early 1970's as all three top leaders reached or neared the mandatory military retirement age of 60. Their civilian jobs had no age limits but were enmeshed with their military post whose loss would have meant a cutoff of political power. In Thailand—where command of the army historically has been the key to power—Thanom was Prime Minister and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Praphat was Deputy Prime Minister and Commander in Chief of the Army, and Krit was Minister of Industry and Deputy Commander in Chief of the Army. The big question in 1973 was whether Thanom (who at 62 had received three 1-year



FIGURE 8. General Krit Siwara (U/OU)

extensions beyond the military retirement age) would step down from either or both of his posts and allow Praphat (who at 60 had received one extension) to step up. Praphat clearly would have welcomed being Prime Minister but at the same time was reluctant to turn the army command over to Krit. In mid-September 1973, however, a major military reshuffle raised Praphat to deputy chief of all armed forces and finally placed Krit in command of the army—making him heir-apparent to the regime. The only loser was 40-year-old Col. Narong Kittikachorn (Figure 9), Thanom's son and Praphat's son-in-law, who was hungry for power and clearly had expected to inherit the Thanom-Praphat mantle.

In the meantime it had become clear that Thanom and Praphat had made a fatal mistake in November 1971 when they abrogated the constitution, abolished



FIGURE 9. Colonel Narong Kittikachorn (U/OU)

parliament, and ended a 3-year experiment in semiparticipatory democracy. The fact that these actions evoked no great outcry at the time simply had confirmed the regime's belief that democratic trappings were more of a luxury than a necessity. By abolishing democratic institutions, however, Thanom and Prapat also removed a facade behind which they might have continued to mask their own shortcomings and unknowingly put themselves and the military establishment on the spot. When they proved unable to right old wrongs, deal with new and recurrent economic and social problems, and arrest a sense of drift and indecision, the foundation for a change of leadership was laid. Change did not come at the top from within the military establishment itself, although that style of political succession has not necessarily disappeared from the Thai scene. This time, at least, the action passed from the military to the students, the civilian intellectuals, technicians and bureaucrats, and, most important of all, the King. In mid-October some 50,000 student demonstrators—joined or backed by labor groups, parts of the bureaucracy, prominent citizens, and the press—forced Thanom and Prapat to leave the country along with Colonel Narong and the three families. An estimated 200 were killed and another 1,000 wounded during the unprecedented violence.

The King named Sanya Thammasak as the new Prime Minister, to preside over the country until a new constitution should be promulgated and a new government formed. The King dissolved the old legislature and convened a large group of citizens (2,346) to elect a new interim assembly which is to promulgate a new constitution drafted by a committee supervised by the Ministry of Justice. Sanya appointed a new cabinet which drew heavily on veteran technicians and bureaucrats. While a conscientious man and loyal supporter of the King, Sanya clearly has little taste for dealing with critics and with rough-and-tumble politics. In early 1974 he threatened several times to resign and at least once expressed the desire to become a Buddhist priest after resignation so that he could get a real rest.

In the background through all of this was army chief Kri Siwara, sole remaining member of the former top three, who in early 1974 believed Thailand was in a state of "general rebellion" and who was prepared to intervene with force at the King's request. While avowing since the coup that the military should stay out of politics Kri, too, reaches the mandatory military retirement age of 60 during 1974 and—for the first time—is unchallenged by any other key military figure.

4. Political parties (C)

Political parties were not allowed until the end of World War II, were later prohibited from 1958-68, and now again have been banned since November 1971. Within this limited experience personalities rather than ideology have determined the membership and objectives of political groupings. Parties traditionally have not been concerned with soliciting mass support or advancing large social interests, but have been organized around one or more prominent individuals in order to promote the personal interests of party members. The turnout of about 50% of the eligible voters in the 1968 election suggested a growing political consciousness, but popular interest in national politics has had little chance to develop. The likely promulgation of a political party law under the interim Sanya Thammasak government may provide new opportunities during 1974.

The first organized political group in Thailand was the People's Party (*Khana Rat*), which was formed in 1932 by the coup leaders. The People's Party, however, was in effect an extension of the government rather than a true political party. Its chief functions were to control the government apparatus and to provide political education for the people rather than to define issues or present candidates. Because important government officials were deeply suspicious of political parties, the People's Party agreed to transform itself into a political debating club shortly after the 1932 coup.

Political parties did not actually start developing until early 1946, while the civilian faction led by Pridi Phanomyong was in control of the government. The first was the Cooperation Party (*Phak Sahachip*), which was formed principally by the Free Thai supporters of Pridi from the northeast and advocated a generally socialist policy. The second party was the Constitutional Front (*Phak Nago Rattathammanum*), which contained a number of military and civilian leaders of the 1932 coup, including Pridi. The Democrat Party (*Phak Prachathipat*), formed in May 1946 after Khuang's split with Pridi, was the major opposition prior to the November 1947 coup in which the Constitutional Front and the Cooperation Party were both crushed. The legislature was briefly dominated by Khuang Aphaiwong's Democrat Party, but eventually the Might is Right Party (*Phak Thammathipat*), led by Phibun, became the dominant group. Political parties played no significant role in the early 1950's but in 1955 government leaders formed two parties, of which the *Seri Manangkhasila* Party (SMP), named after the house where its founders

met to debate political strategy, was the more significant. Dominated by Phibun and Phao, the policies of the SMP were basically conservative and pro-Western, and it was the only party with branch offices and at least a rudimentary organization in all 71 provinces. SMP members held all the appointed and more than half the elected seats in the National Assembly. The party's complete disintegration after the downfall of Phibun and Phao in September 1957 illustrated the singular importance of personalities in Thai politics.

After the December 1957 elections Field Marshal Sarit formed the new ruling party, the National Socialist Party, which anyone willing to support the new regime might join. Sarit said the policy of the National Socialist Party would be "50% nationalism and 50% socialism." This ambiguous policy and the heterogeneous views of the party members led to confusion and conflict and eventually to Sarit's decision in September 1958 to abolish political parties and assume personal control of the government.

After a 10-year absence political parties were again legalized by the 1968 constitution and their organization subsequently regulated by a law passed in October 1968. This act was designed to curb the proliferation of splinter parties and to counter the growth of pro-Communist groups by setting specific guidelines for official recognition of parties and enabling the Ministry of Interior's Registrar to suppress groups deemed detrimental to public order or morality. Parties could be founded by 15 or more citizens who, after receiving preliminary approval from the Registrar, were then to submit a list of their regulations and officers and the signature of 500 members to obtain final approval. Parties were to be automatically deregistered if their membership fell below 500 or if they failed to win seats in two consecutive elections.

Although the government initiated plans in 1965 to organize its political party the *Saha Pracha Thai* was not officially formed until October 1968, 3 months before the election, because of longstanding factional differences in the ruling oligarchy. Although differences had long existed between the civilian elements and the old-guard military establishment, efforts to form a political organization were more seriously hindered by a polarization of the military group itself into factions roughly divided between the followers of Thanom and Praphat. Thanom initially tapped Pote Sarasin in 1965 to begin to organize a government party, but neither he nor Praphat made any moves to officially support Pote's efforts, which then were unsuccessful. By the fall of 1967, when it

was clear that the constitution would soon be promulgated, Praphat entered the political arena and with his superior resources rapidly undercut Pote's position. Thanom subsequently completed Pote's isolation by naming another individual, Air Chief Marshal Thawi, as secretary general of the government party. General Praphat used the Free People's League of Thailand, a quasi-official anti-Communist group, as his political vehicle. This organization's supporters, which included several well-known leftists and even a leader of the normally apolitical Buddhists, were undoubtedly attracted by Praphat's power and his command—as Minister of Interior—of the extensive and far-reaching provincial bureaucracy. The faction associated with Thanom concentrated on recruiting former members of the National Assembly, but their efforts were halfhearted and hampered by the understandable confusion among politicians outside of Bangkok over determining which group the government was backing.

The regime could not reconcile the various rivalries in time to support a common slate of candidates in the Bangkok municipal elections of 1968, and lost to the more cohesive Democrats in a city that traditionally has voted against the government. When the Political Parties Act was passed the government factions were ostensibly united and registered as the SPT with Thanom as chairman, General Praphat, General Prasert, and Pote Sarasin as deputy chairmen, and Air Chief Marshal Thawi as secretary general. These same five men, plus Krit Siwara, later comprised the core group of the National Executive Council from November 1971 through December 1972.

The SPT's predictable general policy statement espoused international cooperation, the maintenance of Thailand's sovereignty, suppression of Communists, free enterprise, and economic development and diversification. Friction was still evident between the two factions, however, and in the final list of the party's selected candidates roughly half were from the Free People's League and the rest from the Thanom group. The SPT declared candidates for all constituencies, and, because of its funding resources and position as the government party, it had more applicants for its slates than seats available. Those politicians who were not selected by the SPT generally preferred to run as independents rather than join another party or not contest the election. The SPT won its strongest electoral support in the central plains region outside of the Bangkok metropolitan area. Although it did not win a majority of seats, it later gained sufficient support from independents to control the lower house.

The leading opposition party from 1946 to 1958 was the Democrat (*Phak Prachathipat*) Party. It was the only group to emerge from the 10-year hiatus with a dedicated leadership, a small but loyal following, and a strong sense of identity. Established in 1946 by a group of former Pridi followers led by Khuang Aphaiwong, the Democrats were conservative monarchists whose opposition to the ruling elite was based more on dislike of military domination than serious conflicts with government policy. The party's strength traditionally was concentrated in the Bangkok-Thon Buri area where it drew support from the civil servants and educated middle class. The party was led for many years by former Prime Minister Khuang Aphaiwong, and following his death in early 1968 the chairmanship passed to Seni Pramot. The Democrat sweep in the Bangkok-Thon Buri municipal elections gave the party a much-needed psychological boost. In confronting the poorly organized government forces, the Democrats conducted a low-key, effective campaign largely based on local issues which benefited from widespread dissatisfaction with the incumbent municipal government. The platform released for the national elections concentrated on criticizing corruption in the government and rule by martial law; it also called for amendments to the constitution to make the government more responsive to the people and for increased government aid and attention to farmers, labor, and industry. Although there were some frictions between the older leaders and the younger members, the Democrats maintained relatively good discipline in their campaign and ran candidates in most constituencies. In the elections they won Bangkok and Thon Buri and demonstrated some strength throughout the country by taking 12 seats in the north, 9 in the northeast, 9 in the south, and 6 in the central plains.

Several splinter parties contested the national elections in various parts of the country, but few managed to win any seats. The Democratic Front Party (*Phak Naeo Prachathipatai*) and the Economist-United Front (*Phak Naeo Ruam Setthakon*) were two of the better known left-of-center organizations. Both parties stood for a neutralist and nonaligned foreign policy and diplomatic recognition of China. The Economist-United Front also favored trade with mainland China, reportedly had the financial backing of some Chinese merchants and Thais of Chinese origin, but was able to elect assemblymen only in one province of the northeast. The Democratic Front Party drew its support mostly from young intellectuals who opposed a government controlled by the military, while the Economist-United Front consisted of

remnants of the old, elitist Economist Party led by Thep Chotimuchit. In the 1969 elections the newer party won seven seats and the older, four. The People's Party (*Prachachon*), of nebulous orientation but stressing strong local government, won two seats in 1969.

Under the civilian Sunya Thammasak government in early 1974, prospects for the legalization of political parties and the holding of national elections stirred new interest in politics. Emerging groups comprise remnants of the former government's SPT, including its former secretary-general, Defense Minister Thawi Chulasap; the Democrat Party still led by Seni Pramot; a new *Seri Rat* (Free People) group under wealthy former SPT legislator Thawit Klinphathum; and independent groups such as one headed by Pui Ungphakon, popular and influential former governor of the Bank of Thailand.

5. Interest groups (S)

Until a coalition of students, labor groups, and other interested citizens pressured the Thanom government to resign in October 1973, there were virtually no interest groups of significance in Thailand outside of the ruling elite, remnants of the banned political parties, and the bureaucracy. Labor unions, banned along with political parties in 1958, were few in number, loosely organized, and limited to Bangkok and a few other small industrial areas. The creation of "labor associations" had been allowed since March 1972, but they were closely controlled by the government and their potential for becoming an autonomous pressure group was limited. University students, chiefly intent on getting their degrees and then good jobs in the bureaucracy were increasingly vocal over issues often opposed by the government, but they were rarely disorderly or violent.

In 1973, however, still-unorganized workers became a strong force in Thai society—using the strike weapon effectively and planning to push for a new labor law and the implementation of social security legislation. Student movements—particularly the National Student Center of Thailand (NSCT) which tried to include students from vocational, technical, and teacher-training colleges as well as the more elite universities—were out on the streets over many issues. In October about 50,000 of them, augmented by sympathizers from other segments of society, banded together in a spirited uprising that prompted the resignation of the Thanom regime. In a political crisis most students, including those critical of the government, still look for guidance to the King, whose

actions in October underscored the fact that he is the most important single shaper of student opinion and influence over students in general.

Professors and lecturers at Bangkok universities have also become an informal pressure group since the Thanom regime's overthrow. As before, however, peasant organizations are unknown, the farmers' associations which promote cooperatives and other mutual assistance projects are government-sponsored, and the Buddhist clergy remains uninvolved in politics.

6. Elections (U/OU)

While Thai citizens have had some exposure to the electoral process, the nine general elections since 1932—conducted under different laws and various constitutions—were all designed to legitimize the existing regime rather than to choose government leaders. Most Thais are indifferent toward elections, viewing the process as irrelevant to their daily lives, but some more educated and sophisticated voters are increasingly aware that elections offer a way to exert some influence on ruling government circles. Moreover, some of the villagers' insularity is probably being eroded by development programs over the past decade—particularly in education and transportation—and by improved communication.

Voter participation in the December 1957 election, which was essentially a rerun of the fraudulent February elections, was only 23% for the country as a whole. With Sarit firmly in power the campaign was dull, poorly financed, and lacking in substantive issues. Although participation in 1969 rose to 50%, there was no marked change in voting patterns after the 10-year hiatus. The government limited the use of mass communications media, and campaigns generally centered on personalities and local issues.

The municipal and provincial elections of 1967 and 1968 were governed by existing laws of 1939 and 1953, but a new election law was passed in October 1968 to regulate the national elections. According to the constitution, all Thai citizens 20 years of age or over could vote unless they were mentally ill; deaf and mute; a priest, novice, monk, or clergy; under arrest; or had been disenfranchised by court order. The election law required citizens with alien fathers to meet additional requirements based on education or a specific term of government employment. Senate appointees had to be Thai citizens and not less than 40 years old, while those running for House of Representatives seats could be no less than 30 years old. Candidates with alien fathers were subjected to additional qualifications identical to those imposed on

voters with alien fathers. The election law also stipulated that a candidate had to have completed a primary (4th level) education, did not have to join a political party in order to run for election, and had to deposit US\$250 in order to register as a candidate—the money to be forfeited if he received less than 10% of the vote. The law also contained safeguards against election irregularities in registrations, balloting, and campaigning, and set strong penalties for aliens or government officials caught trying to influence the election's outcome.

The national election in 1969, as well as the preceding municipal and provincial elections, were viewed by observers and participants as "the freest and least corrupt in Thai history." Numerous isolated incidents of bribery, ballot-box stuffing, and double voting by military units were informally reported, but very few protests were officially filed with the Ministry of Interior. Metropolitan voters followed the trend set in past elections of repudiating the government in power. Bangkok voters—in contrast to much of the rural electorate—were impressed with neither the government's boasts about its economic-development program nor its call for a strong central administration to combat the Communist threat. Instead, they reserved their greatest enthusiasm for candidates calling for an end to corruption, militarism, intolerable traffic conditions, and rising pork prices.

D. National policies (S)

Since World War II Thailand has tried to maintain its independent status and internal stability and at the same time adopt a strong pro-Western, anti-Communist stance to promote external security and economic development. These aims led the military groups predominant since 1932 to keep a strong authoritarian government and, for more than two decades from 1950, to seek ties with the United States so close as to involve Thai military units in the Korean and Vietnam wars. In the early 1950's calculations of national interest led the regime to align Thailand with the United States. The relationship held out the promise of protection if Thailand were attacked by hostile neighboring powers and Bangkok stood to gain a substantial flow of economic and military assistance from Washington. By the early 1970's, however, the Thanom government began to broaden its international options in view of the impending—then actual—settlement and consequent U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. Major policies announced in late 1973 by the interim Sanya government were close to those publicized by the former Thanom regime, but placed more stress on public welfare.

1. Domestic

Thailand's internal stability stems from a fairly prosperous economy and a largely homogeneous population which respects authoritarian traditions and remains politically apathetic. The recent military leadership—which in late 1971 ended a brief venture into parliamentary democracy—nevertheless responded to the people's nonpolitical desires. For nearly two decades it was development-oriented, providing the infrastructure for economic growth and meeting many actual and anticipated demands. Schools, roads, and health centers were built; irrigation, water, and electricity supply expanded; and natural-disaster assistance quickly and publicly provided. A labor law effected in March 1972 permitted the organization of labor "associations" for the first time since 1958, fixed a minimum wage, authorized a workmen's compensation fund, and set up a compulsory procedure for strikes. Labor groups, which became more militant during 1973, were expected to pressure the government during 1974 for a new labor law and the implementation of social security legislation.

Most key government plans and policy statements in recent years have stressed economic security and economic development. The first two National Economic and Social Development Plans (1961-66 and 1967-71) broadly aimed to improve communications, transportation, and hydroelectric power. The completion of many such projects over the 10-year span benefited both the people and the economy. The current third plan (1972-76) sets out to: boost the declining economic growth rate; stabilize prices; spur the rural economy by diversifying agriculture to help reduce income disparity; and heighten the private-sector role in economic development. Headway had been made on some of these problems when the interim Sanya government took over in late 1973, but inflation was serious, the economic growth rate continued to decline, urban-rural income was still unequal and agriculture remained undiversified, and the investment climate was poor due to new restrictive laws against foreign business.

Better education and health are goals which have been pursued with some success. Thailand has a high simple literacy rate but faces problems in raising the national educational level. Teachers and schools have not been able to keep pace with the rapidly growing school-age population. The government, however, has increased its education funds to expand secondary schools, vocational facilities, and institutions for higher education. The central government supervises all public and private schools and has made vigorous

efforts to secularize education. Health and sanitation improvements are reflected in a greatly reduced death rate and incidence of disease, but large numbers of nurses and doctors leave Thailand each year for more lucrative work abroad.

The government's policy toward minority groups is based on assimilation but has varied widely with the political situation and individual ethnic group. The government has firmly and sometimes forcibly repressed irredentist and separatist agitation by such groups as the Malays and Lao-Thai. On the other hand, friction once caused by required use of the Thai language in Malay areas led the government to relent and permit instruction in the Malay language and Islamic religion. In the past remote minority elements, particularly the northern hill tribes, were free to follow their own ways. In recent years the government has been more aware of them but its policies have been belated, inconsistent, and therefore ineffective. The positive effects of resettlement programs for villagers and civic-action projects to improve living conditions have been negated by harsh restrictions against the opium trade—chief source of income for some hill tribes—and against their slash-and-burn agricultural practices. Moreover, armed reprisals against tribal villages suspected or known to be sympathetic to Communist insurgents have further alienated the tribespeople. Thailand's large ethnic Chinese minority of about 3.5 million has been absorbed into Thai society so thoroughly that only about 1 million still recognize themselves as Chinese. Extensive intermarriage has made for relatively harmonious relations between the Thais and Chinese, and many Chinese have adopted Thai customs, language, and citizenship. Some discriminatory legislation against Chinese merchants exists but is leniently enforced. Since the 1950's the ruling elite and Chinese commercial interests have developed an increasingly symbiotic economic relationship.

A major exception to the assimilation policy is the treatment of Vietnamese refugees who fled to the northeast provinces during the French-Viet Minh hostilities and have not been allowed to become Thai citizens (except through marriage to a Thai) or to obtain permanent alien status. In 1959 North Vietnam agreed to their repatriation and in the early 1960's some 36,000 were returned. Hanoi discontinued the repatriation in 1964 after large-scale hostilities erupted in Vietnam. Thai officials sought to reopen the question again in 1970 and in early 1973 after the Vietnam war officially ended, but by early 1974 there were no indications that conversations were actually taking place. The estimated 35,000 to 40,000

Vietnamese remaining in the northeast have been an unassimilated group vulnerable to Communist influence and viewed with considerable suspicion by Thai authorities.

2. Foreign

Thailand and the United States are linked by a mutual security commitment through the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a bilateral Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations, agreements covering military assistance and economic and technical cooperation, and a memorandum of understanding on narcotics. In practice, the two countries have been bound even more closely over the past 20 years by a policy of close cooperation over a wide range of Asian and world problems. For many years the Thai Government was prepared to agree to virtually any reasonable request the United States made in the military or security field, simply because they saw U.S. goals in Southeast Asia as consistent with their own. Thailand supported the U.S. effort in Indochina by allowing the United States to conduct logistic and air operations from Thai bases, by supplying combat troops (withdrawn in February 1972) to the allied effort in Vietnam, and by allowing Thai nationals to serve as volunteers with Lao forces. There has been a growing feeling among some Thai that these activities constitute an incentive for terrorist infiltration and attacks, and that the continued use of Thai bases by the U.S. Air Force for prosecuting the air war or maintaining a retaliatory capability to enforce the peace could eventually invite some form of serious retaliation from North Vietnam. By and large, however, Thai leaders have believed that Thailand's long-range interests are best promoted by supporting the U.S. presence until there is real peace in Indochina. In anticipation of an eventually reduced U.S. military commitment to Thailand (an initial reduction of force was announced in August 1973) and Southeast Asia in general, however, Bangkok has begun to reassess its foreign policy and take a more independent stance by seeking to renegotiate some of the commercial and administrative agreements that have governed U.S.-Thai relations. These actions—accompanied by moves to broaden Thai contacts with other nations including several Communist countries—are also motivated by the Thai Government's desire to inject more flexibility into its diplomatic posture, to counter any anti-U.S. sentiment among its critics, to increase support for its foreign policy as well as emphasize to the United States that Thailand's allegiance cannot be taken for granted, and perhaps to generate a step-up in the level of U.S. aid, particularly military.

For years the Thai Government maintained diplomatic relations with only one Communist country, the Soviet Union. Cultural and trade contacts were minimal, and travel by Thai citizens to Communist countries was discouraged. Thailand established diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. in 1946 to avoid a Soviet veto of Thailand's application for U.N. membership, and in 1960 allowed the Soviet news agency TASS to reopen its Bangkok office. In line with its more flexible stance in early 1969 the government established full diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia and sent a trade mission to the U.S.S.R. and East European Communist countries. Thailand signed a trade agreement with the U.S.S.R. in 1970, and in 1972 trade representatives from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria were stationed in Bangkok.

Relations with the People's Republic of China—with which commercial and cultural contacts had been officially banned for 14 years—began to thaw in 1972 soon after President Nixon's visit to Peking. "Pingpong diplomacy" also marked the Thai-Chinese detente, as a high-level Thai and Chinese government official, respectively, accompanied the Thai team to Peking in August 1972 (Figure 10) and the Chinese



FIGURE 10. Thai official (center) visits Peking (U/OU)

team to Bangkok in June 1973. Although the Thai Government still opposed China's support of insurgency in Thailand, it agreed to establish a joint telecommunications link and draw up a trade agreement involving Chinese diesel fuel, as well as to allow the placement in Thailand of a Chinese delegation to ECAFE. While the Thais generally suspect Chinese motives and influence regardless of whether the Chinese are from Taipei or Peking, they have considered reducing their diplomatic contacts with Taiwan in preparation for possible full recognition of Peking.

The changing face of Asia in the wake of the Vietnam settlement and big-power realignments has emphasized Thailand's need to build bridges with her immediate neighbors.

During 1973, ties with Burma—which have been correct but cool—were strengthened through an exchange of visits at the foreign minister level, followed by Prime Minister Ne Win's journey to Thailand in May. On the Burma border there have been problems involving Chinese Nationalist irregulars and anti-Burmese Shan and Karen insurgents who sometimes cross into Thailand to escape attacks by the Burmese Army and who also use the border area as a base for forays into Burma. Thailand reaffirmed its nonsupport for former Burmese Prime Minister U Nu, who had political asylum in Thailand and led an anti-Burmese Government movement there from 1969 until late July 1973 when he left Thailand for the United States. Burma agreed to an earlier return of captured Thai fishermen. The two countries revived the Thai-Burmese Border Committee and agreed to cooperate in suppressing narcotics and curbing illegal logging activities in their rugged mountainous border area.

Relations with Laos are generally good. Thailand backs Souvanna Phouma's regime and permits Thai citizens of ethnic Lao background to join the military forces in that country. Problems do exist, however, over the Mekong River border where both sides have difficulty enforcing laws against smuggling and illegal crossing and where there is a dispute over the ownership of islands. A treaty imposed on Thailand by France in 1893 gave Laos all islands in the Mekong, but the river has since changed its course and made new islands of parts of Thailand.

Of all its neighbors, Thailand's relations with Cambodia have been the most tempestuous. Ancient antagonisms have been refueled in modern times by a dispute over ownership of the Khao Phra Vilam temple on their border (which the International Court awarded to Cambodia in 1962) and by Thailand's

covert support of rebel Cambodians (the *Khmer Serai* or Free Cambodians) to overthrow the Sihanouk regime. Relations were severed in 1961 and not renewed until mid-1970 after Lon Nol had assumed power. Since then relations have been cordial enough for Thailand to have trained some Cambodian troops in Thailand and provided economic assistance, but another dispute is developing over 4,000 square miles of continental-shelf territories claimed by both countries, as well as over boundaries for fishing waters.

Malaysia-Thailand relations have been dominated by the use of Thai border areas by remnants of the Communist Terrorist Organization guerrillas (who provoked the 1948-60 "emergency" in Malaya), and by the Thais' belief that Malaysian Communists spur irredentist and separatist sentiment among Thailand's ethnic Malay population in the south. Nevertheless, the Malaysian King received a warm welcome during a visit to Thailand in February 1973, and subsequently the two countries' prime ministers met to further cement relations.

As for other Southeast Asian countries, Thailand hosted Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew during 1973 and later trained Singaporean commandos at Loi Buri; Thailand was to buy three fast patrol boats from Singapore's shipyards. In 1971 Thailand signed a continental-shelf agreement with Indonesia and another with both Indonesia and Malaysia. Thailand signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty at the end of 1972.

In the past decade Thailand has been increasingly active in Asian regional cooperative activities, and the development of closer ties among Southeast Asian countries has become an important facet of foreign policy. Thailand sees its membership in the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization chiefly in terms of the United States' defense commitments; it views the other regional organizations as more truly Southeast Asian and therefore exerts greater efforts to promote their goals. In 1961 Thailand joined Malaysia and the Philippines in forming the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) to further cooperation in economic, social, and cultural fields. ASA was suspended in 1963—when relations between Malaysia and the Philippines were severed during the Indonesian confrontation with Malaysia—but was revived in 1966 largely through Thai initiative. Although not formally dissolved, ASA and its projects were absorbed into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a larger organization which was founded in 1967 and includes Indonesia and Singapore as well as the ASA members. ASEAN's seventh meeting, held in the Philippines in June 1973, focused on a possible 10-

nation "zone of peace, freedom and neutrality" suggested by Malaysia in 1971; the area would embrace the five ASEAN states plus the two Vietnams, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma. Thailand also belongs to the now moribund Asia and Pacific Council (ASPAC) which was created in June 1966 at a meeting of Asian foreign ministers in Seoul, Korea. Thailand has been an active member of the United Nations since 1946.

E. Threats to government stability

1. Discontent and dissidence (C)

Thailand has been relatively peaceful and stable in contrast to neighboring countries long beset with disruptive nationalist and Communist movements. Long favored with self-government and freedom from foreign domination; an abundance of land, food and economic opportunity; a loose social structure; and a strong sense of national unity stemming from loyalty to the King and from a common religion and language, Thailand has virtually no history of indigenous rebellion. Although Communists infiltrated from neighboring countries have been active since the 1920's, they have attracted little support from the bulk of the population who are ethnic Thais and concentrated in the central provinces. Since the mid-1960's, however, Communist-directed insurgencies have erupted in remote regions where government control has been weak and its services few, and where many people are not ethnic or cultural Thais.

Discontent has been most marked in the northeastern provinces, particularly those bordering the Laotian panhandle. Separated physically from central Thailand by a north-south chain of forested mountains and hills, the northeast was until relatively recently isolated from the central Thai "heartland" and for many years was grossly neglected by Bangkok. Although the population is ethnic Thai, most speak Lao or regional Thai dialects and are culturally different from the central Thais. In the dry season the land is largely arid and less fertile than the alluvial central plain, and most of the inhabitants are farmers with meager incomes. Despite the government's increased attention to assimilation and development in recent years, many people in this area still feel ignored and discriminated against.

Movements favoring the secession of the northeast from Thailand and its union with Laos developed after World War II, particularly after the popular Pridi Phanomyong was ousted in 1947. In 1961,

however, suppression of the leftist-oriented, separatist Solidarity Movement headed by Krong Chantawong dealt a major blow to secessionist aspirations. Afterwards, dissidence in the region became increasingly Communist-sponsored.

Discontent is also found among the estimated 35,000 to 40,000 Vietnamese refugees—there were originally 75,000—who have remained in the northeast since French Indochina hostilities ended in 1954. The government's refusal to let them become resident aliens or Thai citizens (except through marriage with Thai nationals) and its stringent travel and registration restrictions, coupled with the Thais' deep anti-Vietnamese prejudices, have prompted wide support among these Vietnamese for Hanoi which maintains a strong degree of control over them.

Discontent and dissent also is found among the peoples of Thailand's mountainous northern provinces. Here the main disaffected groups are various non-Thai hill tribes, the Meos being the most aggressive and the prime target for Communist recruitment. Antigovernment feeling among the tribes stems primarily from government attempts to restrict their traditional opium production and trade and their destructive slash-and-burn agricultural practices. Despite efforts to offset hostility through a Hill Tribe Development and Welfare Program, many tribesmen are receptive to Communist appeals and some have become active in Communist-led insurgency. The King has taken a particular interest in the hill tribes and visits them to demonstrate the regime's concern for their well-being and security (Figure 11).

Some 850,000 Muslim Malays who comprise about 75% of the people in the southern provinces bordering Malaysia—Satum, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat—have cultural, religious, and economic ties with Malaysia and are only nominally loyal to Bangkok. They are mostly small rubber planters, farmers, and fishermen. Although the Thai Government has made modest efforts to assimilate this minority, the Malay language and Muslim religion predominate. A few Muslim Malays have become involved in the Malaysian Communist movement or in separatist activity. The rest of the population—many of them rubber growers and merchants—is largely Chinese, and many cooperate either willingly or under duress with the Malaysian Communists, whose ethnic makeup is also mostly Chinese.

Although the Chinese comprise the largest ethnic group and have supplied many of the top Communist leaders in Thailand, the great majority appear to be loyal. Most are engaged in urban business and are Thai citizens. Well-off economically, they have a

FIGURE 11. King Phumiphon with hill tribesmen (U/OU)



stake in the country's stability and prosperity. Moreover, there is little of the cultural or social friction between the Thai and Chinese communities that prevails in a number of neighboring countries. Inter-marriage is common and over the years has resulted in creating a large Sino-Thai group whose cultural traits are mostly Thai. The more wealthy Chinese and Sino-Thais are prominent within the political-economic power elite.

The dominant central Thai population remains strongly loyal, but there are potential sources of instability that could become active in the event of a major national crisis. Chief among these is the mounting economic gulf between residents of the greater Bangkok urban area and the poorer outlying rural districts. There is also a large population of urban poor in Bangkok. Other irritants—at least until the Thanom regime's demise—were endemic official corruption, both national and local, and the government's authoritarian and sometimes arbitrary nature.

Students and intellectuals—particularly in Bangkok—have been Communist targets because of their liberal and leftist orientation, but close government scrutiny and the fact that most university students want government jobs have severely curbed leftist tendencies. Until the Thanom government's overthrow in October 1973 most students did not respond readily to political agitation, and the government effectively controlled universities through the surveillance of potential provocateurs and the cultivation of student leaders with scholarships and job guarantees. However, during 1973, a groundswell of dissatisfaction with the regime—triggered by

several student incidents but supported by labor groups, the bureaucracy, and citizens in general—prompted violent student demonstrations which led to the regime's overthrow. While the students have quieted down, they undoubtedly could be provoked to demonstrate again given a similar set of circumstances. They continue to look for guidance to the King, who favored both their objectives in October 1973 and their concentration on studies in early 1974.

Thailand's labor movement is still organizationally weak. It is, however, no longer politically impotent, although the Sanya government early in 1974 had yet to lift the restrictions whereby labor associations—banned completely from 1958-68 and from 1971 until March 1972—could not contribute to political funds or get involved in politics. Before Thanom's overthrow these restrictions had created some frustration and encouraged clandestine Communist recruitment within the urban labor force, but for a long time government security measures, combined with labor's inherent weakness, largely nullified the impact of labor discontent. During 1973, however, labor groups promoted several successful strikes and supported the students in the final ouster of the Thanom government. If Sanya does not alter Thanom's restrictive labor laws, these groups might well feel inclined to act against his government as well.

Peasants in the thickly populated central lowlands have traditionally accepted whatever government is in power, but many farmers have grievances—corruption and ineffectiveness of local government, as well as poor schools and health facilities—that could be exploited by dissident elements. Farmers and villagers living nearest to Communist insurgent areas,

particularly in the north-central provinces, have been proselytized since the late 1960's and by early 1974 a small number had joined the insurgency. A serious deterioration in the economy or in government security controls in these areas could prompt further dissent and greater Communist inroads.

Many junior officers in the Thai military—the main repository of power—are discontented with their lot and with the military leadership. Reasons include the slow rate of promotions, the basing of promotions on political favoritism rather than professional merit, corruption among senior officers, and the negative influence of politically preoccupied senior officers on the development of an effective military force. Some navy, air force, and police officers are also unhappy as a result of the army's traditionally predominant position. With possible rare exceptions, however, these military officers would not favor a radical change in government organization or policies.

2. Subversion (S)

Communist elements—in the form of political parties, front groups, and insurgent forces—have been the only subversive force of any significance in Thailand since the absolute monarchy was overthrown in 1932. Although a number of military coups have occurred since then, the coup groups have all sprung from the power elite who accepted the legitimacy of the monarchy, the preeminence of Buddhist values, and the maintenance of the socioeconomic status quo. Moreover, regional dissidence in Thailand—with the possible exception of separatist activity in the northeast after World War II—was not a significant problem until it came under Communist leadership in the mid-1960's.

a. *Origins and development of the Communist movement*

Communism was introduced into Thailand in the mid-1920's by exiled revolutionaries from China, Java, and Indochina who organized small study cells, primarily among the Chinese in Bangkok. The precise origins of subsequent, larger Communist organizations are obscure. Chinese cadres reportedly first formed an organization in 1927, directly after the Kuomintang (KMT)-Communist split in China, which in 1931 was formalized as the Thailand branch of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP-T). Other reports also point to the formation in 1927 of the Communist Youth of Siam, which remained active until at least 1934. In July 1929 the *Nan Yang* (South Seas) Communist Party, which had been established in Singapore in

1927-28 as the hub of Chinese Communist activity in Southeast Asia, claimed that a Communist Party, a Communist Youth Organization, a General Workers Union, and a Young Workers General Labor Union existed in Thailand. Another Communist organization reported in Thailand around this time was a Chinese, Annamite, and Siamese Red Cross Society. For the most part these early organizations were led by, and had the bulk of their following among, Chinese and alien minority groups; most of their energy was directed at neighboring colonialist regimes.

Immediately after the 1932 coup, Communist activists began to exploit the liberal policies of the new government, but were quickly countered by enactment of the Anti-Communist Law of 1933 making adherence to communism punishable by fine and imprisonment. The ban was generally effective, although Thai Communists defied it by sending delegates to the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in Moscow in 1937 and by holding the First Assembly of the All Siam Communist Delegation in Thailand in December 1942. At this assembly the present Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) was formally inaugurated.

During World War II CPT groups actively participated in the underground Free Thai movement led by Pridi Phanomyong and organized, with U.S. and British assistance, to work against the Japanese occupation forces. As with the Viet Minh in Vietnam, Communist cells in upcountry villages formed the nucleus for guerrilla bands, but Communist influence was less pervasive than in Vietnam.

In 1946 the government, as a price for U.S.S.R. agreement on Thailand's admission to the United Nations, recognized the Soviet Union and abolished the 1933 Anti-Communist Law. A number of Communists reemerged on the political scene in late 1946, publishing propaganda in various newspapers and periodicals and advancing a 10-point program calling for liberal reforms. Many others, however, remained underground, operating through fronts and infiltrating existing organizations. The CPT, together with the exclusively Chinese CCP-T, soon controlled much of organized labor in Bangkok and developed extensive influence in the press. After the 1947 military coup by Phibun, however, the Communists were again largely driven underground. Continued covert Communist activity, including the holding of the CPT's Second Assembly in the spring of 1952, culminated in the passage later that year of a new Anti-Communist Law which has since remained in effect.

The party's 1952 assembly heralded a major change with a strong Maoist resolution stating that armed struggle was to be the principal path to socialism in Thailand and that the peasantry was to be the main source of strength for the revolutionary army. However, vigorous suppression following enactment of the 1952 Anti-Communist Law severely hurt the organization and forced it further on the defensive. The CCP-T was virtually destroyed at this time and disappeared as a separate entity in 1956, with most of its remaining members joining the CPT.

In the early 1960's the CPT, acting on the decision of the Third Provisional Revolutionary Assembly held at Thon Buri in 1961, began to step up its subversive activities in remote border regions—particularly the northeast. Communist agents organized party cells, indoctrinated villagers, and sent cadre to Laos, Communist China, and North Vietnam for training. The creation of two Peking-based front organizations in late 1964 and early 1965—the Thailand Independence Movement (TIM) and the Thailand Patriotic Front (TPF)—heralded a shift in Communist tactics to active insurgency. In early 1965 guerrilla forces began a series of clashes with government patrols in the northeast which peaked in early 1967. The government then began a counterinsurgency effort that improved security in the area and exposed the insurgents' weaknesses—notably their failure to build a base of popular support in the villages. Dwindling food and medicine supplies, coupled with mounting defections and government security operations, rapidly eroded Communist strength. By the spring of 1967 the high level of insurgent incidents dropped sharply and, by and large, continued at lower levels into 1974. At the same time, however, an easing in government pressure allowed the Communists to shift to a more cautious, painstaking and successful strategy for building up a rural support base.

After being forced in 1967 to lower the level of violence in the northeast, the insurgents then shifted their focus to the north, where Communists had been proselyting among the Meos and other hill tribesmen since the early 1960's. The security forces' heavy-handed repression of the tribes in those years had stirred up traditional animosities and encouraged the tribes to accept Communist assistance, training, and leadership. By mid-1967 a full-fledged insurgency had developed. The tribal guerrillas made dramatic military gains and government control over the area quickly deteriorated. In late 1968 the government was also confronted with an upsurge of Communist-led tribal insurgency in the north-central "tri-province" area straddling Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, and Loei

provinces. There guerrillas managed to seriously harass security forces and disrupt rudimentary development programs. By 1972, however, it was obvious that the Communist political base among the Meos was shallow, with the tribesmen increasingly disturbed by the CPT's insistence upon imposing its political stamp on their life.

Other but less significant areas of Communist strength have been the "mid-south"—the interior parts of Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, and Trang provinces in the Kra peninsula—and the "far south," the provinces bordering on Malaysia. Unrest in the former area was originally based on depressed economic conditions in the rubber plantation areas and has been kept alive by continuing government neglect and corruption. Open insurgency in this area began in 1965 but never attained the virulence of the insurgency of the northeast and north, in part because of its distance from logistic sources. In the far south the Communist elements are organizationally part of the Communist Party of Malaya, are primarily oriented toward Malaysia, and have only tenuous ties with the CPT. These elements first began moving into the Thai border provinces in 1954 to escape British suppression. Since they have generally followed a policy of avoiding contact with the Thai Buddhist population and the Thai security forces, Bangkok has not taken vigorous counterinsurgency measures against them.

b. The Communist Party of Thailand

Little is known about the current organizational structure of the highly covert Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). Much of the available information is outdated or derives from unreliable CPT defectors. Before the outbreak of the insurgency the party's headquarters were in Bangkok, but since then they have shifted upcountry with the insurgent forces. Some CPT members continue to operate out of Bangkok, where they collect funds for the insurgency and engage in limited urban operations.

Upcountry the leading members of the party's top echelon, the Central Committee and Politburo, are apparently scattered among the main insurgent bases—in the Phu Phan (hills) in the northeast, the tri-province area in north-central Thailand, and the northern border area straddling Nan province and adjacent Sayaboury province in Laos. CPT headquarters probably consist of no more than the Secretary General and a few other senior CPT figures, with its location shifting from time to time as the insurgent situation necessitates. CPT headquarters are believed to be somewhere in the tri-province area. Presumably members of the Central Committee or

Politburo manage to meet occasionally to coordinate policy and tactics.

The party leadership remains shrouded in mystery, with no confirmation of their identity or whereabouts since 1968. The chief figures are almost certainly Sino-Thai, but younger leaders may well be drawn from ethnic Thai elements. In 1967 Wirat Angkhatlwan, also known as Nai Suan, reportedly became Secretary General of the party and the ranking insurgent leader in the northeast following the arrest and execution of his predecessor.

In its theoretical structure the CPT follows orthodox lines, with supreme authority nominally vested in a Representative Assembly which is known to have met only three times; in 1942, 1952 and 1961. This assembly outlines general aims and policies and selects the Central Committee (CC). The latter in turn selects a Secretary General and Politburo from among its own membership. In the late 1960's the CC was reported to number 30 members and the Politburo 11, including the Secretary General. The Politburo appoints the assembly and in actual practice controls party policy and administration. The Secretary General is the principal figure in the party hierarchy, chairing both the CC and Politburo.

In 1962 the Politburo decentralized control of party administration by creating four regional branches of the Central Committee (Northeast, North, Central and South), better known as Regional Committees. At the same time it created a Jungle District, with headquarters in Na Kae district of Nakhon Phanom province, as the field headquarters of the planned insurgency. CPT activities in the Bangkok area remained directly under CC jurisdiction. The Northeast Regional Committee is believed to be situated in the Phu Phan (hills), probably in Na Kae. The Northern Regional Committee is probably located in northwestern Sayaboury province of Laos. The Central headquarters, also referred to as West Central or Area 7, was reported in the late 1960's as being either in Suphan Buri or Nakhon Pathom provinces west of Bangkok; since then little has been heard of this unit. The South Regional Committee is with the small insurgent force in the mid-south region of the Kra Peninsula. Below the regional level the party organization as of the late 1960's called for provincial committees, whose membership is appointed by the regional committees, as well as district and subdistrict committees formed along the same pattern. Below these are unit committees, which can be formed wherever there are more than seven CPT members, and, at the base of the structure, the three- to seven-man party cell. Since 1972 the covert

cell structure in the northeast provinces has been supplanted by more overt "village committees," which are intended as forerunners of a future local Communist administration.

The CPT in the late 1960's had an estimated 1,000 members, of whom about 300 were dedicated hardcore personnel. Membership has probably increased since then, although information is lacking; it does not reflect the extent of armed insurgent strength which involved from 6,800 to 7,000 men in early 1974.

Financial and logistic support for the CPT and the insurgents derives from both foreign and local sources. Peking funnels some money, arms, and other supplies through Laos, provides ideological and guerrilla warfare training in China, and gives propaganda support through the China-based *Voice of the People of Thailand*. Hanoi's training and logistics support increased during 1973, and limited assistance was provided by the Pathet Lao. However, the CPT forces are largely self-sustaining since arms, food, and other supplies are readily obtainable locally and in the Laos border areas.

c. Communist fronts

From time to time the Communists have sponsored or exploited a large number of smaller parties or front groups within specific ethnic and functional groups and in various geographic regions of Thailand. Many of these parties and fronts have been short-lived, others have been marked by changes in name and structure, and some have existed more in name than in fact.

In the period of increased Communist activity which began in late 1964, the Thailand Independence Movement (TIM) and the Thailand Patriotic Front (TPF) were the preeminent front organizations for the insurgency. In November 1964 the establishment of the TIM was announced by the *Voice of the People of Thailand*. This was followed in January 1965 by a similar announcement of the formation of the TPF, and both organizations were immediately given propaganda support by Peking. In November 1965 the TIM was absorbed by the TPF.

The TPF was to have been exploited chiefly for psychological objectives, on both the Thai domestic and the international scene. Repetitive propaganda and international activity, such as the dispatch of delegates to world conferences, have been intended to provide it with a veneer of authenticity. The official TPF manifesto included the following objectives: to fight for national independence (from the United States and the "Thanom-Praphat clique"); to fight for

the democratic rights of the people; to implement a foreign policy based on peace and neutrality; to develop the national economy; to reorganize the living conditions of the people; and to develop education and health services. The dozen or so other front organizations announced under the TPF banner—covering such functional groups as teachers, youths, farmers, and plantation workers—have appeared with few exceptions to be no more than paper organizations. Communist propaganda indicates that the TPF was intended as the political arm of Thailand's insurgent movement, acting as international spokesman for the movement much as the National Liberation Front does in South Vietnam. Since the late 1960's, CPT propaganda has paid increasingly less lip service to the TPF and to the general concept of a united front.

d. Communist Party of Malaya

Driven from Malaya in the mid-1950's, the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), whose membership is predominantly ethnic Chinese, has since maintained a skilled, tightly disciplined and well-equipped guerrilla force in Thailand's southernmost provinces. Claiming that it aims only to return and liberate Malaysia and Singapore, the CPM has not initiated an active insurgency against the Thai Government. Except for the training of Thai cadre by CPM elements in southern Thailand, there has been little evidence of contact between the CPM and the Thai insurgents. There have been reports, however, of mixed bands operating in Songkhla province. The CPM has tried to capitalize on the anti-Thai and pan-Malay sentiment prevailing among the Malay population who comprise the dominant ethnic group in these provinces. The paramilitary army of the CPM—commonly called the Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO) or, officially, the Malayan National Liberation Army—has an estimated strength of about 2,000, of whom a few hundred are Malays. It has also organized the Malayan Communist Youth League to serve as a recruiting pool, training organization, and reserve military force. Members for the most part are Chinese youths and number at least 2,500. The CTO is militarily entrenched in the south and has fortified its position through penetrations and bribery of the police and local government officials. Although the government has agreed to increase its cooperation with Malaysian forces, it has neither the resources nor the desire to mount any effective military or economic development programs which could upset the CPM's control over the border area.

3. Insurgency (S)

Communist insurgency in Thailand as of early 1974 does not appear an immediate threat to Bangkok, but statistical indicators point to gradually increasing levels of Communist-initiated attacks, ambushes, assassinations, and propaganda. The growth in the number of insurgent incidents countrywide is reflected in the following tabulation:

1965	45
1966	585
1967	921
1968	1,034
1969	1,981
1970	2,550
1971	est. 3,500

Because of regional differences in topography, population, Communist leadership, and government administration, the growth of the insurgency has been uneven—varying considerably between the north, northeast, and south. In early 1974 there were an estimated 6,800 to 7,000 armed insurgents, about 3,000 more than in 1969, not including the estimated 2,000 CPM insurgents in the far south. Their military capability has mounted as a result of better training, more experience, and, above all, better weapons.

a. The northeast

The northeast, where much of Thailand's leftist heritage is rooted, has a long history of political dissidence.

The Communist Party of Thailand apparently decided on armed struggle in the northeast as early as 1952 and organizational work, although periodically disrupted by government repressive operations, proceeded during the 1950's. The Communists claim the first shot in the revolutionary armed struggle was fired in the northeast's Nakhon Phanom province in August 1965.

Since 1964 the Communists have located most of their important base camps in the Phu Phan. These hills stretch intermittently from Laos south and east through Udon and western Sakon Nakhon and then east into Nakhon Phanom. Although covered in part by heavy vegetation, the hills are by no means impenetrable. The Communists have tried to extend their influence over the villages in the Phu Phan and into outlying areas. They have been most active in the Na Kae district of Nakhon Phanom province, which has had the greatest number of violent incidents in the country. The government admits that armed insurgents have considerable influence over 100 of the district's 115 villages.

Since 1972 the Communists have tried to tighten control over villages already under some form of Communist influence, primarily through setting up village military units and political committees. The formation of village militia units represents a change in emphasis from 1964-67 when villagers usually were incorporated into the ranks of guerrilla units. The strategy now is to recruit villagers and use them initially in their local areas, after the pattern used effectively in Indochina. Although evidence is still sketchy on the size of this effort, there are at least 4,000 villagers organized into such units in the provinces of Kalasin, Sakon Nakhon, and Nakhon Phanom. The CPT hopes to upgrade the capabilities of these militia units to the point where they can fight alongside the 1,800 regular guerrilla forces. This is being accomplished by integrating the militia with full-time soldiers on limited operations such as short-range patrols, assassinations, and propaganda discussions. Recently militia elements have begun to assume greater military tasks such as attacking government defense posts.

Although the militia's primary purpose is to serve as an auxiliary force, the CPT has not ignored their political potential. For example, militia units have been used to organize public demonstrations against the Royal Thai Government in Khao Wong subdistrict of Kalasin province and in Na Kae district of Nakhon Phanom province. More important, however, has been the party's use of the militia to form the backbone of its newest manifestations of political control—the village committee. These organs are replacing or supplementing the covert cell structure that served as the initial source of Communist influence in the villages. The establishment of these committees—which are now in evidence in the provinces of Nakhon Phanom, Sakon Nakhon, and Kalasin at the village, district, and province levels—is meant to be the forerunner of a future local Communist administration. District committees have also been established in western Udon province but to date there is no evidence of village-level political control.

Since committees by nature are more sophisticated and less clandestine political instruments than cells, their formation marks a significant step forward by the CPT in its attempt to create a political following in the northeast. A conservative estimate, based in part on captured Communist documents, indicates that a nascent Communist political apparatus, ranging from covert cells to full-blown committees, has reached into some 200 villages affecting a population base of some 100,000 people. These figures, however, represent less than 1% of the total population of the northeast and

the apparatus remains confined to the more remote areas of Nakhon Phanom, Sakon Nakhon, and Kalasin provinces. The only other area in the northeast that has seen a hint of Communist progress is western Udon province, where a revitalized party leadership appears to be pressing hard to establish village-level committees. The Communists have been singularly unsuccessful in building either a viable military or political apparatus in the neighboring provinces of Ubon, Korat, Buriram, and Prachin Buri, despite years of effort.

The failure of the insurgents to expand significantly beyond their traditional base areas of the northeast can be attributed to a fundamental weakness of the Thai Communist apparatus—a chronic shortage of ideologically motivated and experienced political cadre. This shortage, coupled with the Communist Party's rigid ideological approach to its propaganda campaigns, has been a major factor behind the Communists' inability to better exploit the needs and grievances of the local populace. Although the Communists have addressed themselves to some local issues, they still tend to focus their propaganda against U.S. "imperialism" and the Sanya government, both of which have little relevance to Thai farmers.

Moreover, Communist political gains in the northeast may be only superficial. Sustained government pressure against the Communists' political and support apparatus in northeastern Kalasin province, for instance, seriously eroded their influence at the village level. This may be only an isolated case, but it does raise questions about the viability of the Communists' village-level political base in the northeast.

The vigorous, but short-term, suppression campaigns that have characterized government counterinsurgency in the northeast have had only a temporary effect on the situation. Persistent military patrolling has led to a marked decline in insurgent-initiated incidents in certain areas such as Sakon Nakhon province, but the Thais have not brought themselves to apply this lesson to the insurgent core area in Nakhon Phanom. Insurgent organizational work, aimed at the eventual resumption of a "liberation struggle," goes on there largely unimpeded except during the government's sporadic suppressive operations. In these areas the villager often faces the simple choices between accommodation to Communist political control, abandonment of his home, or death. For years villagers in the Na Kae district of Nakhon Phanom province who have refused to cooperate with the insurgents have been routinely shot.

Communist forces in the northeast continue to be armed primarily with weapons of U.S. origin. The use of weaponry of Communist origin has been increasing, however, and the limited and tenuous evidence available suggests a small but continuous trickle of Chinese-manufactured arms from southern Laos into the northeast. An increasing number of small insurgent units have been sighted armed with AK-47's, and in 1972, B-40 rocket launchers and 60-mm mortars were used in attacks against village defense posts—the first use of these weapons in the northeast. Nevertheless the northeastern insurgents, unlike their comrades to the north, are in a poor geographic position to draw on external sources of weapons and other material support. Their major problem is that the main base area, the Phu Phan, does not border on Laos. The land between the Phu Phan and the border is flat, open, and heavily populated. This makes it difficult for the insurgents to operate a major clandestine supply system from Laos. Nevertheless, some infiltration across the Mekong River (even if patrolled) is quite easy, as the increased availability of Communist weaponry suggests.

Local procurement has never been a problem. Weapons are readily available on the Thai and Laotian black markets at reasonable prices. The northeast insurgents also seize arms from village security units and, less frequently, capture them during armed engagements.

The relative self-reliance of the insurgents in the northeast is beginning to extend into the area of training. Although clandestine reporting indicates that the training of recruits in Laos, North Vietnam, and China is continuing, the insurgents now appear to be receiving much of their basic training in schools in the Phu Phan base area. It is not known how long these facilities have been in existence—perhaps as early as 1970—and none has a permanent location, but in 1972 eight were identified in Nakhon Phanom province. Six of these schools offer courses in politics, one concentrates on military subjects, and the other offers a course in combat medical training. The creation of training installations in the northeast has undoubtedly strengthened the party's recruitment capabilities. In the past, potential recruits were reluctant to leave their homes for the long and arduous trek into Laos and North Vietnam for training.

b. Tribal insurgency in the north

Most insurgent gains since the late 1960's have occurred in the north—the only region in the country where the Communists have never lost the initiative and where they have chalked up a steady record of

victories over government forces. The difficult terrain—dense forest and rugged mountains—and proximity to Laotian base areas provide ideal conditions for guerrilla operations; the lack of an adequate road system offers the insurgents an added measure of security.

The ethnic character of the insurgency in the north also distinguishes it from that in other areas of Thailand. Although an integral part of the nationwide Thai Communist movement, the insurgency in the north is based on people not ethnically Thai—the Meo hill tribesmen. Traditionally neglected and treated with disdain by the Thai, the Meo were flattered by, and quickly responded to, Communist blandishments. Contacts with the hill tribesmen date from the early 1960's; young recruits were sent to training schools in Laos and in some cases North Vietnam. Encountering little government opposition, the Communists began to extend their influence from the Laos border into the adjacent ridges in Thailand. By 1966, they were organized and recruiting in earnest on the Thai side of the border.

The insurgency in this area is directed by the Communist Party of Thailand's (CPT) Northern Regional Committee, which reportedly has its headquarters in northwestern Sayaboury province in Laos. The insurgents' growing military strength in the north is distributed in three areas—along the eastern border of Chiang Rai and Nan provinces (where the Communists have proclaimed a "liberated area"); in the "tri-province area" straddling Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, and Loei provinces; and in Tak province along the Burma border. The insurgents have managed to push the government out of most of its lightly defended border posts between Chiang Rai and Loei provinces.

In the so-called "liberated" area along the border in Nan province, government authority has been severely eroded by systematic Communist terrorism and propaganda. District officials rarely leave the confines of the towns for fear of being ambushed; when the army moves it travels in convoys, and these have been attacked on a number of occasions. By early 1974 the insurgent grip in this area had not been seriously challenged; the government judges that the costs of the sustained campaign to clear the border area of insurgents would far exceed the possible benefits. On the few occasions when the army has conducted small-scale forays, the insurgents' firepower, aggressiveness, and tactics have proved too much to handle.

Aside from the necessity of keeping Thai security forces at arm's length, the Communists have two basic missions to fulfill if the tribal insurgency in the north is

ever to serve as a springboard for nationwide revolution. First, a solid base of popular support must be created among the Meo population of the northern highlands. Second, the insurgent movement must somehow be extended to the ethnic Thai population dwelling in the adjacent lowland areas. To date, the insurgents have not achieved significant successes in either of these endeavors. In the mid-1960's the CPT attracted Meo support by offering rudimentary medical services, education, and above all the prestige of carrying sophisticated weapons and using them against a traditional enemy—the Thai Government. These appeals proved popular and within a 5-year period insurgent ranks swelled from 250 to over 5,000 armed regular and part-time guerrillas.

Since 1972, however, signs have begun to mount that the Communist political base in the Meo areas is both weak and vulnerable. Disaffection with the Communists appears to have grown out of the CPT's insistence upon imposing its political regimen on traditional tribal village life. Travel restrictions, confiscation of surplus food stocks, and forced drafts into the insurgent army have combined to undermine the villagers' support of the Communist movement.

Unrest within the tribal base areas, moreover, has hampered Communist efforts to shift the emphasis of their activities into the adjacent lowlands. To this end the Communists have broadened their propaganda themes to include topics they hope will appeal to lowland Thais. The Communists are evidently still experimenting with various approaches to the Thai villagers. Although some of the villagers and village headmen have been executed, the insurgents still hope to win the confidence of the Thais by good deeds rather than intimidation. Propaganda and civic action teams, usually composed of ethnic Thais accompanied by a tribal security force, enter remote Thai villages from time to time to offer medical treatment, help with farm work, and spread antigovernment propaganda. The Communists' tactic of purchasing foodstuffs at prices far above the market value has developed into a flourishing trade between some lowland villages and the insurgents. By early 1974, however, the Communists had done little more than establish friendly contacts with a handful of lowland villages. They still had not reached the crucial stage of political organization in these areas.

The military capabilities of the northern insurgents have grown in correspondence to an increase in external support. Over the past several years the insurgents have come to rely almost completely on weapons and other equipment manufactured in the Communist nations. The qualitative improvement in

armament, which has made the insurgents a more formidable military threat, includes the B-40 rocket, AK-47, 60-mm mortar, light machineguns, and plastic antipersonnel mines. Most of this equipment is of Chinese origin, but it is not known whether the weapons entering north Thailand are drawn from North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao stockpiles already in northwestern Laos or are shipped directly from China to the Thai border.

The construction of a Chinese-built road in northern Laos, which terminates at Pak Beng on the Mekong River, has enhanced the Communists' ability to resupply the insurgents in northern Thailand and to respond more quickly to unforeseen insurgent needs. Any reasonable projection of the northern insurgency's manpower growth based on local recruiting, however, makes it reasonably clear that the road will not be essential to support insurgent requirements for many years.

In 1968 the arms moving across the border amounted to little more than an estimated 8 tons. By 1973 estimates based on insurgent expenditure of ammunition suggested that the guerrillas are consuming about 100 tons of Communist-produced materiel a year. This is a relatively small amount—it could be moved in one 25-truck convoy—and the insurgents can easily move far more than this amount by horse caravan over the existing trail system. Whatever its logistic importance to the development of the northern insurgency, the road has served to raise Thai fears of large-scale Chinese-supported insurrection in Thailand.

Thai concern has also been aroused by information of direct involvement in the north of personnel from China's Peoples Liberation Army (PLA). Evidence of this stems principally from the testimony of an ethnic Meo PLA defector in June 1972. His testimony indicated that at least 30 and perhaps as many as 200 PLA "volunteers" entered Thailand from Yunnan in 1971, with orders to remain indefinitely. However, his testimony suggests that this was a one-time operation, and not part of a regular infiltration program.

c. The mid-south and far south

Insurgency in the Kra isthmus—or "mid-south" region—is growing slowly. It is much less significant than that in the north or the northeast. Because the region is far removed from Laos and other supply areas and because the Communists have devoted neither the time nor the energy they have expended in these other areas, their prospects for continued growth are not very substantial. Indeed, evidence indicates that the party has withdrawn some of its most promising cadre

from the southern provinces to serve in the north and northeast. Moreover, during 1972 the Thai Government so disrupted the Communist organization in the mid-south that unless a significant number of experienced political and military cadre are injected by the CPT, its chances for any sort of rapid recovery are extremely bleak. Nevertheless, the jungle and mountain terrain of the region is well suited to insurgent activity, as is the south's traditional popular disaffection caused by corrupt government officials.

Farther south, the Malayan National Liberation Army, the armed, jungle-based branch of the Communist Party of Malaya—commonly called the Communist Terrorist Organization—has used the southern border provinces of Thailand as a refuge and support base since the early days of the Malayan emergency in the 1950's. The organization operates against Malaysia, rather than Thailand, and its members are not considered a threat to Thailand itself. The terrorist organization—about 2,000 strong in early 1974—maintains only limited contact with the Thai Communists. Some Thai insurgents have been trained in Malaysian camps near the border, and there have been indications of mixed bands operating in southern Songkhla province. The southward movement in late 1972 of some small Thai Communist groups into the periphery of terrorist-controlled areas in southern Songkhla province suggests that cooperation between the two groups may grow. Until Bangkok sees some greater threat to Thailand in these terrorist activities, however, it is unlikely to join Malaysia in coming to grips with the problem.

F. Maintenance of internal security (S)

1. Police

The Thai National Police Department (TNPD) is responsible for providing police services and maintaining peace, order, and internal security. Its duties embrace routine police functions as well as intelligence, counter-subversion, and paramilitary matters. Police capability to perform these tasks varies from unit to unit, the range running from poor to excellent. While progress has been made in improving the TNPD's overall efficiency, it is still hampered by endemic corruption, inadequate equipment, and lack of trained personnel for rural areas. Much assistance and training has been provided since 1957 by the U.S. Government. Significant developments since then include: a manpower increase from about 52,000 to 79,000; institutionalized training of police recruits and advanced training of officers; creation of a self-

supporting airlift capability and of a Highway Patrol Police section covering 70% of the major highways; establishment of an effective Crime Suppression Laboratory and allied scientific crime-investigation equipment; and development of an improved counterinsurgency capability.

The TNPD is headed by a Director General of Police under the Minister of Interior. The TNPD has three main sections—Administrative Affairs, Special Affairs, and Suppression—each subdivided into specialized areas with staff, technical, and service responsibilities directly responsible to the Director General. The organization is quasi-military, with all ranks but the lowest (constable) corresponding to military ranks. In case of war, police units, excluding the Metropolitan Police, are to be mobilized and assigned to military organizations. The total strength of the TNPD in 1973 was about 79,000 men.

a. Administrative Affairs

This section contains three main units—Personnel, Budget and Finance, and Support and Welfare. Personnel has subunits covering normal hiring and firing procedures, education, and the prosecution subdivision of the Legal Affairs Division (which is under Suppression). The Budget and Finance unit has divisions for accounting, finance, and the financial aspects of licensing. The Support and Welfare Unit has a quartermaster division covering logistical matters, as well as welfare and medical divisions.

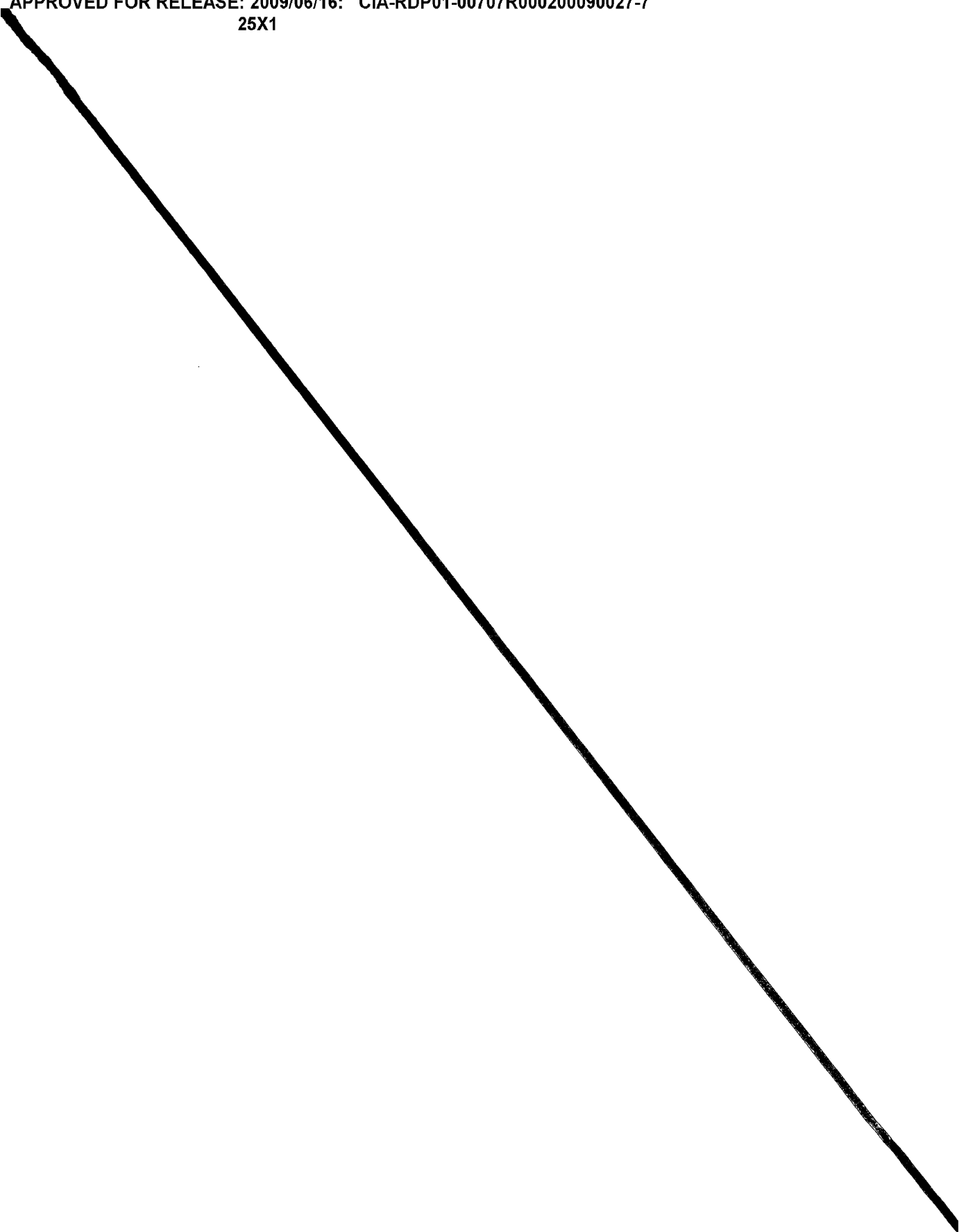
b. Special Affairs

This section provides specialized services in crime detection and suppression and is concerned with maintaining national security. It includes the Special Activities unit, the Border Patrol Police, and the Special Branch—chiefly an intelligence unit.

The Special Activities unit contains the Crime Suppression Division, which covers all types of criminal investigations including narcotics and even charges of corruption and malfeasance in the TNPD; the Police Aviation Division, whose 120 pilots support police counterinsurgency efforts; the Marine Police Division, whose 1,700 personnel (with 176 watercraft) are an anti-smuggling force along Thailand's riverine and coastal frontiers; and special divisions dealing with railways, highways, traffic, forestry, alien registration and taxation, communications, and fire prevention.

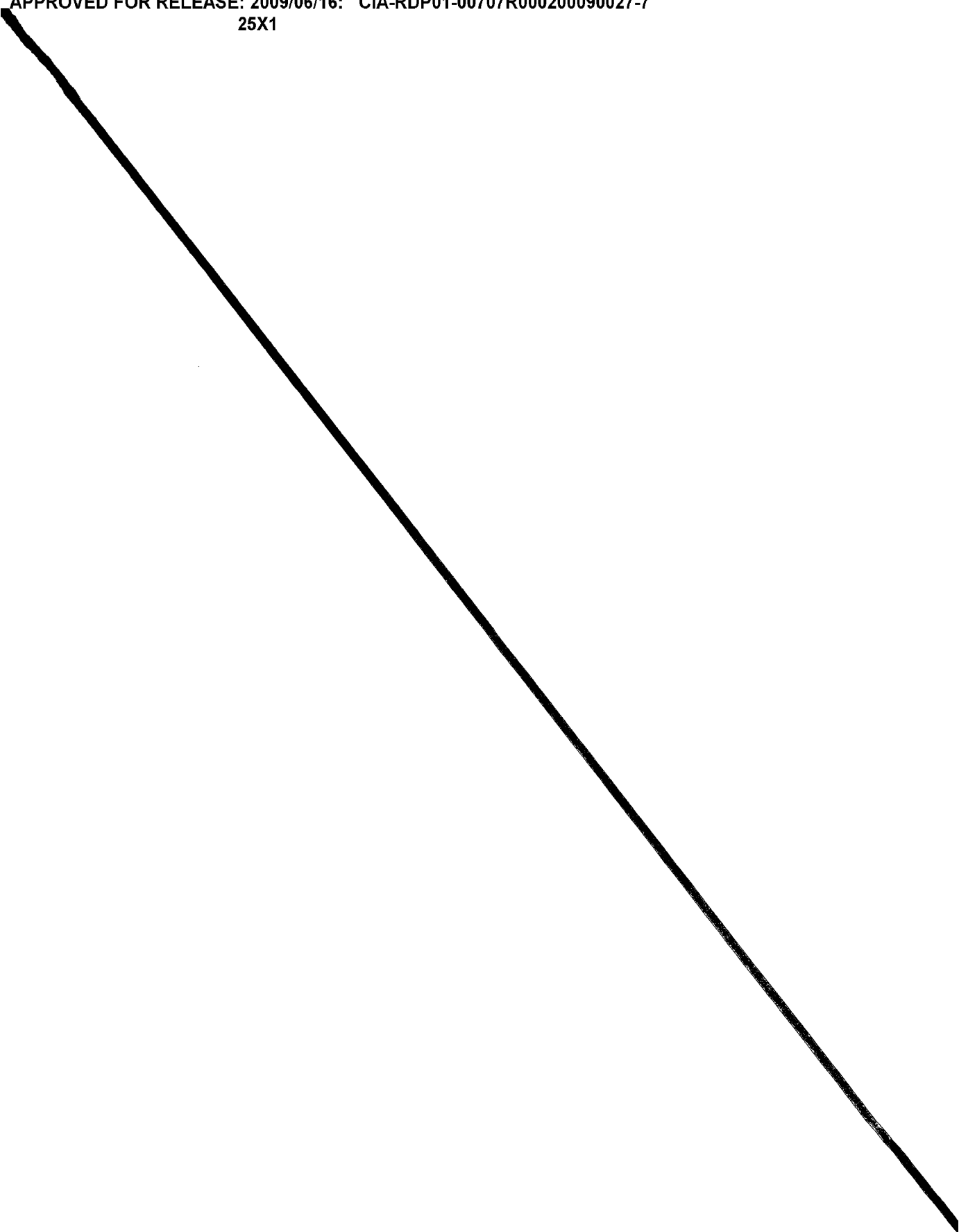
The 14,600-man Border Patrol Police (BPP) is organized, equipped, and trained as a paramilitary force able to undertake counterinsurgency operations, and as such it represents Thailand's first line of defense

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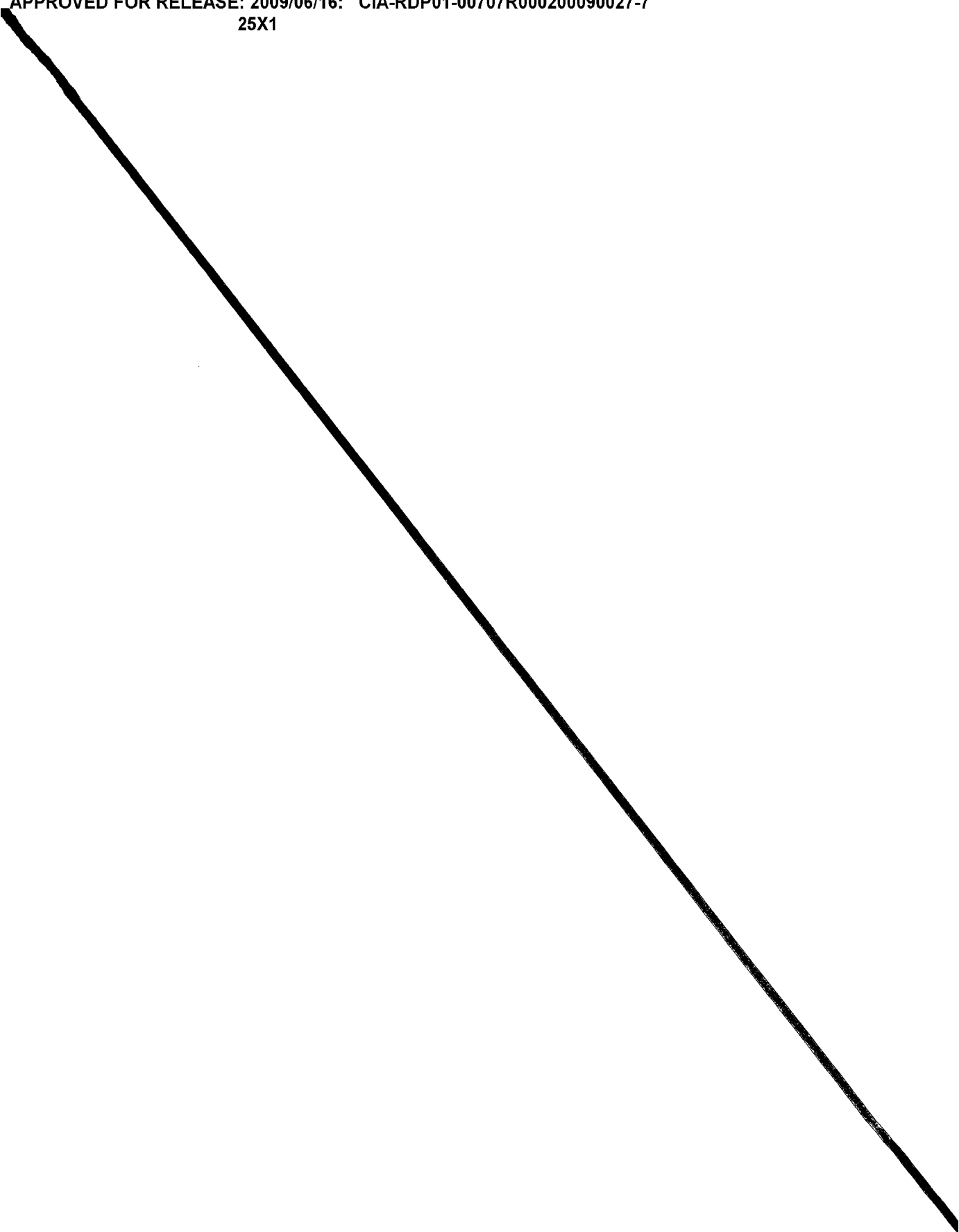
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Chronology (u/ou)

1851-58

During reign of Mongkut (Rama IV), Siam embarks on modernization program to avoid colonization by Western powers.

1855

April

Siam concludes Bowring Treaty with Great Britain which grants extraterritoriality and trading privileges to British citizens; treaty sets pattern for agreements with United States, France, Denmark, and Portugal, and opens Siam to Western influence.

1868-1910

During reign of Chulalongkorn (Rama V), Siam abolishes slavery, creates modern civil service, and founds Western-type university.

1917

July

Siam enters World War I on side of Allies and sends small military detachment to Europe.

1919

At Paris Peace Conference, Siam asks for abolition of extraterritoriality clauses in its treaties.

1922

United States signs new treaty with Siam renouncing all extraterritorial privileges; by 1926 new treaties with European nations only provisionally curtail Siam's sovereignty; by 1930 all treaties with foreign nations renegotiated to eliminate remaining extraterritoriality and fiscal privileges.

1932

June

Absolute monarchy ended in coup d'etat by civilian and military groups headed by Pridi Phanomyong and Phahon Phonphayuhasena, respectively.

1938

December

Phahon retires; Phibun Songkhram becomes Prime Minister.

1941

December

Japan occupies Thailand, forcing limited collaboration during World War II; Phibun declares war on United Kingdom and United States in January 1942.

1944

July

Phibun resigns in face of impending Japanese defeat; Khuang Achaiwong, backed by Pridi, heads new government.

1946

January

Relations with United Kingdom and United States reestablished.

March

Pridi assumes premiership.

August

Pridi forced out of office for suspected complicity in mysterious death of King Ananda Mahidol (Rama VIII).

October

Government lifts 1933 ban on Communist Party, after which U.S.S.R. does not veto Thailand's application for United Nations membership.

1947

November

Pridi-supported government ousted in coup by Phibun supporters; Pridi flees to Singapore and Khuang again becomes Prime Minister but under military dominance.

1948

April

Military clique consolidates power by coup, replacing Khuang with Phibun.

1949

February

Pridi returns and fails in coup attempt; flees to Singapore and later to People's Republic of China.

1950

May

King Phumiphon Adunet (Rama IX) crowned, ending regency and marking upturn in prestige of monarchy.

June

Government announces support of U.N. intervention in Korea; later sends about 2,000 troops.

September

U.S. Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement signed.

October

U.S. Military Assistance Agreement signed.

1951

June

Coup by navy thwarted by army and police, but Phibun is weakened; rule assumed by triumvirate consisting of Phibun, Sarit Thanarat, and Phao Sriyoon.

1952

November

Ban reimposed on Communist Party.

1954

September

Thailand signs Manila Pact creating Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

1955

Phibun inaugurates democratization program; free public discussion and new parties permitted.

1957

February

Regime narrowly wins general elections but is accused of election rigging; Sarit disassociates himself from Phibun and Phao.

September

Sarit stages bloodless coup; Phibun and Phao flee into exile; National Assembly dissolved and new elections proclaimed.

December

Sarit clique wins elections; turns government over to acting Prime Minister as he goes abroad for medical treatment.

1958

October

Sarit returns to take personal control of government; proclaims revolutionary government and martial law, dissolves National Assembly, and bans political parties and labor unions.

1959

January

Interim constitution promulgated.

1961

July

Thailand, Malaya, and the Philippines form Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), whose activities are later suspended in 1963 over Malaya-Philippines differences.

1962

March

United States pledges to defend Thailand in event of direct Communist aggression, interpreting SEATO obligations as both bilateral and unilateral (Rusk-Thanut agreement).

May

United States sends troops to northeast Thailand when Pathet Lao forces move toward Thailand-Laos border.

1963

December

Sarit dies; Thanom Kittikachorn becomes Prime Minister.

1964

November

Establishment of "Thailand Independence Movement" (TIM) announced by clandestine Communist radio station, *Voice of the People of Thailand*.

1965

January

Formation of "Thailand Patriotic Front" (TPF) similarly announced; Peking gives TIM and TPF strong propaganda support, and Thai Communists intensify propaganda and organizational efforts.

June

Communists begin to escalate subversion into active insurgency; guerrilla forces increase terrorist acts and clash with government patrols, primarily in northeast.

1967

August

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) formed by Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore. ASA members agree to gradual phaseout and transfer of programs to ASEAN.

September

Contingent of Thai troops sent to South Vietnam.

1968

June

Constitution promulgated; provides for elections within 8 months for lower house of bicameral legislature.

September

Municipal elections held in Bangkok; opposition Democrat Party overwhelmingly defeats government party.

1969

January

Voice of the People of Thailand announces formation of "Thai People's Liberation Armed Forces."

February

National elections held; government party wins slim plurality.

March

New government formed under Prime Minister Thanom with no changes in key power positions.

1970

March

Bangkok agrees to let Malaysian forces conduct antiguerrilla operations in south Thailand near Malaysia border.

1971

November

Military takes full control of government; Thanom heads new National Executive Council which annuls 1968 constitution, dissolves parliament and cabinet, and declares martial law.

1972

February

Thai troops withdrawn from South Vietnam.

March

Formation of labor "associations" allowed for first time since 1958 ban.

SECRET

1972

August

Thailand launches "pingpong diplomacy" with People's Republic of China when high economic official Prasit Kanchanawat accompanies Thai team to Peking as "adviser."

December

Interim constitution promulgated; Thanom still heads government as new cabinet and all-appointed parliament named.

1973

October

Military government falls after violent student demonstrations. King appoints Sanya Thammasak as interim Prime Minister.

December

King dissolves parliament, and convenes large group of citizens who elect new interim legislature.