

A NOTE ON THAILAND

The Student Rebellion and Political Change

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Introduction

In October 1973 Thailand took a single but possibly monumental step toward democracy, an unusual event in a region where political development has been increasingly towards military regimes or authoritarian civilian governments. But unlike South Korea, Indonesia, and the Philippines—where civil rights have suffered in recent years—civilians in Thailand are demanding greater political participation, a wider distribution of wealth, and a stronger voice in the international community. Before October 1973, wealth and power had been in the hands of a very small military, bureaucratic, and business elite in Bangkok. The massive student-inspired demonstrations in October, however, challenged this control, and led to the sudden and unexpected political collapse and exile of three of Thailand's most prominent and unpopular military leaders: Prime Minister General Thanom Kittikachorn, his Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Field Marshal Prapass Charusathira, and his ambitious son Colonel Narong Kittikachorn.

Whether second and subsequent steps will be taken towards real democratic rule is by no means assured, although students and civilian politicians pressing for change have not lost many initiatives since the fall of the Thanom regime. Despite their factional disputes and political differences, the "democratic forces," have led farmers' protest groups to Bangkok, demanded fewer military and more economic initiatives in the "sensitive," insurgent-dominated rural areas of Thailand, contacted insurgent leaders in the northeast, supported striking workers, and traveled through the countryside in an effort to politicize the peasantry in Thailand's traditionally apolitical society. Such activity has been rare in recent Thailand history.

In the immediate aftermath of Thailand's "October revolution," the focus of the political struggle has not been simply on drafting and promulgating a democratic constitution and establishing parliamentary government to replace Thanom's rule by executive decree. Rather, the central issues have concerned whether parliamentary government can function effectively at a time of growing economic uncertainty and confrontation, when political consciousness is growing, and when traditional, entrenched military interests are under threat. Thus the next steps towards democracy in Thailand can be expected to be even shakier than the first, and fewer people would be surprised by another coup d'état than were surprised by events last October.

Thailand's Political Legacies

Abrupt change of government is not unusual in Thailand. Since the abolition of the absolute monarchy in 1932, there have been 15 governments, most of which have been dominated by the military, eight constitutions, and eight coup d'états. The last constitutional government fell in 1971 when Field Marshal Thanom dismissed an elected national assembly and established a military controlled "National Executive Council." As President of the Council he and his Deputy President, General Prapass, governed Thailand. It was a bloodless and virtually undisputed seizure of power. Those who welcomed it—many of Bangkok's commercially active elite and middle class—saw it as preferable to government by an ineffective legislature. Those who would have opposed it—democrats, liberals, progressives—were so small in number and so politically unorganized that any resistance short of joining an insurgency was unthinkable.

Since 1932, political control in Thailand has characteristically resided almost exclusively with

those who have wealth and power. And political participation, or at least political awareness, has been confined to Bangkok's middle class. This has meant, with few exceptions, that Thailand has been governed by a small elite—perhaps 10-15 per cent of Thailand's 32 million people—drawn from the military brass, the upper echelons of the bureaucracy, and the super rich in the business community. These men have accumulated enormous wealth through power and achieved enormous power through wealth.

There are a number of fundamental economic and social reasons that have helped sustain elite domination of their politics. First, the peasantry has scarcely emerged from its pre-1932 feudal world, its physical and mental isolation from the commercial and political activity concentrated in Bangkok. And while administrative channels exist to carry directives to the peasantry via Bangkok-oriented and -controlled provincial authorities, there are no effective vehicles for the expression of peasant opinion in Bangkok. The peasantry's isolation, moreover, has been compounded by its impoverishment. While the commercialization of rice agriculture in the second half of the nineteenth century brought great wealth to Bangkok, it trapped Thailand's predominantly subsistence farmers in heavy indebtedness, perpetuating their subservience to merchants and landlords.

Second, industrialization has made slow progress in Thailand, and thus the creation of a nonagricultural work force is of recent origin. In 1953 only 3 to 4 per cent of the total work force were urban blue-collar workers, increasing rather rapidly to about 10 per cent by 1970. A substantial number of these are poorly paid female and even child laborers in Bangkok's burgeoning textile and light electronic factories. Combined with the almost total prohibition of any labor organization over the past 15 years, these factors have tended to inhibit the development of a politically conscious urban proletariat.

Third, the rebellions by the hill tribes in the north, the Lao and Vietnamese in the northeast, and the Malays in the south represent serious political threats to central government control of any type, and their persistence has long provided justification for a significant military role in politics. But the Thai military, with substantial American support, has been only partially successful in containing resistance to Bangkok authority in

more remote regions of the country. Not only does the government have difficulty in gaining access to large portions of entire provinces but the rebellions also challenge the professional credibility of the military. The latter is considered all the more serious because to an unknown degree communist cadres have had some role in organizing the rebellions.

Rural, ethnic Thais may have elected political passivity for reasons of economic expediency, but the minority groups often rebel for reasons of economic abuse and neglect. This is reflected in part in the nature of resistance activity. In the south, resistance has ranged from outright banditry to banditry à la Robin Hood to something close to a secessionist struggle. In the north and northeast the rebels style themselves "liberators" and have resorted to armed struggle against pacification efforts by the Thai. In all cases the resistance is reportedly against extortion by military and police officials. The Thai military, even considering security alone, might well be alarmed.

With the lower classes of Thais either having been left out or locked out of politics only the middle class, largely in Bangkok, has served even as a limited political constituency for the ruling elite. Its low level of participation may partly be due to the fact that life in Bangkok has been good since the mid 1950s. Artisans, tradesmen, businessmen, and government clerks have generally benefited from laissez-faire policies and a low rate of inflation. The domestic price of rice, for example, has been kept artificially low by means of a stiff export premium. The premium also keeps farm prices down, suggesting that the middle class lives well at the expense of the farmers. Politically, the rice premium symbolizes the domination of the rural majority by Bangkok's mainly middle class elite.

There have been few efforts to challenge the status quo. In the early 1950s the Chinese community, which makes up a good portion of the middle class, agitated for political reforms but the issues were ultimately communal and nationalist and often more related to developments in China than in Thailand. Other exceptions have occurred when constitutional government allowed for parliamentary politics. Then outspoken and strongly socialist politicians campaigned for the resolution of grievances in the northeast. There have also been a handful of courageous and persistent

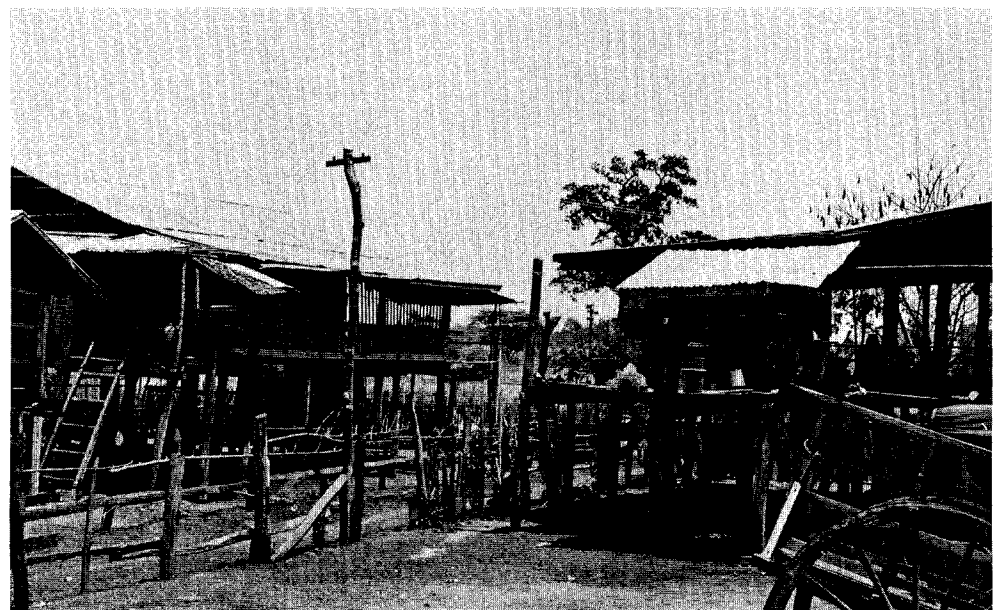
Children in a northeastern Thai village.



The implements used in northeast Thailand for pounding rice meal to make noodles.

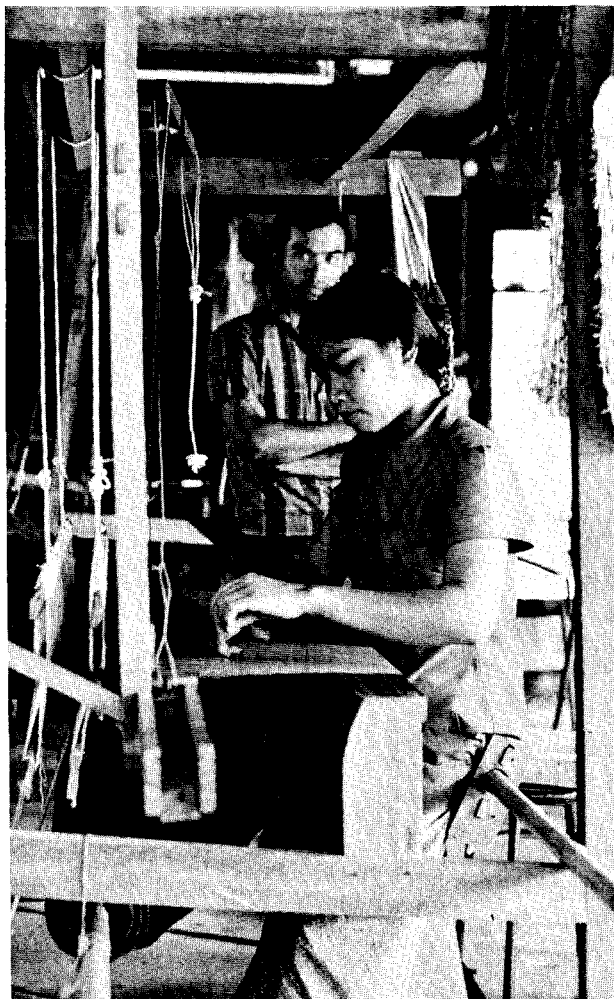


Houses on stilts in north-east Thailand.





Home industry in a north-east Thai village. At left woman weaves her own sarong.



Bangkok socialist politicians whose reformist causes and careers sometimes go back to the original constitutional government of 1932. Additionally, there have been a few intellectuals and journalists who have kept writing social and economic critiques for an admittedly limited audience of students and other intellectuals.

The student rebellion, of course, is the latest and perhaps most dramatic exception to middle class complacency. But whether it is a harbinger of fundamental change is a matter now for little more than speculation.

The Bureaucratic Monolith

Bangkok's bureaucracy has been the center of power ever since the Thai monarchy decided in the middle of the nineteenth century to establish a governmental administration to develop Thai agriculture. Its central pillar has been the Ministry of Interior, under whose authority have come all provincial officials—as far down as district chief. This vast array of civil servants is a network for communicating directives downward from the core of senior bureaucrats and transmitting expressions of respect, loyalty, and government revenue upward from the local level officials. Lower ranking bureaucrats traditionally avoid initiative at all costs. At the very bottom are the peasants whose

obedience to the bureaucratic behemoth has been a cultural norm and economic expediency.

Closely allied to the bureaucracy have been the predominantly Chinese commercial elite. Periodically subject to Thai nationalist attempts to exercise some control over their vast network of enterprises, the Chinese have had to allow the top government officials a piece of the action. Not to do so would endanger licensing agreements, favorable import and export quotas, and government contracts. A highly successful accommodation has evolved. Government officials sit on the boards of directors of private enterprises, and Chinese serve as management in the state enterprises and government monopolies originally established to keep some economic activity out of Chinese hands. On the boards of directors of these enterprises, of course, sit both senior government officials and leading businessmen, Thai and Chinese.

Control of Thai society and economy does not come for the asking. The military has seized it through coup d'états and the positioning of its most powerful officers as cabinet members, ministers, or senior civil servants. Their interests have combined the traditional interests of the military with that of profit making. The former is evident in one of the stated purposes of the 1947 army-led coup d'état: "to exonerate the honor of the Army which had been trampled underfoot."¹ The latter is evident in the enormous wealth military leaders have taken with them at the end of their political reigns: Sarit Thanarat's estimated personal wealth on his death in 1963 was around \$150,000,000 and Thanom, Prapass, and Narong left at least \$25,000,000 in known assets (and possibly twice as much) when fleeing Thailand in October 1973.

Civilian interests have also pursued power, sometimes contesting and sometimes cooperating with the military, but operating through political parties and sustaining pressures for constitutional democracy. The Democratic Party, for example, espouses liberal economic philosophies which coincidentally reflect the commercial interests of Bangkok's business elite. It has been closely aligned with the Throne. Its parliamentary opposition has been the Socialist Front. It has resisted royal power, tended toward a more progressive economic policy, and pressed for administrative reforms to eliminate economic abuses. Even this amount of political activity

has taken place within the power elite—military and commercial—and until the October 1973 student rebellion, there was no doubt that the military had kept the upper hand whether formally in or out of office. Its net effect has been predominantly economic, insuring that most of the gains and opportunities of postwar growth are reserved for a small portion of the population.

The Student Rebellion

The student rebellion which eventually focused on returning Thailand to constitutional democracy was in fact the outcome of dissent over a number of issues during the previous year. Military poaching in a national forest reserve, the expulsion of nine students at Ramkhamhaeng "open" University for publishing a sharp satire of Prapass—these and other events had brought students and the Thanom regime into progressively sharper confrontation. The regime's responses to student attacks were ambiguous. On the one hand Thanom promised a constitution; on the other he threatened to suppress further student political activism. During the year of Thanom's and Prapass's vaguely conciliatory policies, Thai students became increasingly politicized and developed considerable solidarity. Under the aegis of the National Student Center of Thailand (NSCT), students molded, in effect, a genuine movement and organization.

The day-to-day issues sustaining the student movement, however, were only the tip of the iceberg. Underneath Thailand's troubled political waters lay more fundamental sources of student unrest. First, higher education in Thailand in recent years has undergone massive change. Quantitatively this is symbolized in the development of Ramkhamhaeng University with its open classrooms allowing an enrollment of 50,000. In fact, all Thai universities have grown in size, although by no means as rapidly. This has produced demands for an expansion of employment opportunities appropriate for B.A.s and M.A.s. Some of these have been overtrained in specialized, sophisticated skills. While not much data are available on employment, it is apparent that the market has not kept up with the supply. Similarly, the increasingly higher quality of academic training seems to have given students a more perceptive and critical awareness of the weaknesses in various government policies. Thus the increase in both the quality and quantity of education has contributed to growing

1. As quoted in David Wilson, *Politics in Thailand*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 177.

frustrations as reality fails to conform to expectations.

When the moral and political corruption of Thanom, Prapass, and Narong are taken into account, student actions become even more understandable. In terms of sheer wealth, Prapass appears to have been the more guilty, or at least the more successful, of the two. Much of the \$25,000,000 he left in Thailand were in shares and investments in various enterprises. Even though he claims all of it was acquired legally, there will certainly be a strong tax suit against him, if the assets are not simply confiscated. Such wealth could only have come through collaboration with private businesses, as described above, and as a result of directors fees from state enterprises. Prapass was chairman of eight such enterprises from which he reputedly earned \$10,000 per month. Colonel Narong Kittikachorn, Thanom's son and Prapass's son-in-law, also left considerable funds behind. It is generally believed these were derived in part by plundering Thailand's timber reserves and, it is rumored, from Thailand's huge opium trade. All of this was known to the students and a source of genuine disgust, but open confrontation on these issues was unthinkable, as Thanom and Prapass had too much power.

It should also be noted that this abuse of the nation's wealth was, in the eyes of many students, adding insult to the perceived injury done to social justice by the continued concentration of wealth. A number of factors were at work in sharpening these perceptions. Not the least important was the growing number of Thai graduate students returning from the United States where they were influenced by the antiwar movement and the radical social critique it helped to stimulate and popularize. At the same time, student political consciousness elsewhere in the world has tended to shift to the left, with increased emphasis on inequalities between industrialized and Third World countries. It is not in the least surprising, therefore, that there should have emerged in Thailand over the past few years a politicized student leadership able to attract larger numbers of student activists. It would have been inconceivable for students not to enter the larger political arena at some point.

The students' "cause célèbre" came in October 1973 when the government arrested 13 student and faculty members of the "Movement Calling for a New Constitution" charging them with violating a

National Security Council decree forbidding the gathering of more than five persons for political purposes.² Prapass elevated the confrontation by asserting that the students had been involved in a subversive plot to overthrow the government. Faced with potential charges of treason, the National Student Center of Thailand immediately responded with a demonstration of about 150,000 students demanding the release of the "Bangkok 13" and a return to constitutional government. The Thanom-Prapass government ultimately agreed in an effort to get the students off the streets.

But tensions were as high as the number of students. Riot police made an as yet unexplained attack on a large group of demonstrators trying to disperse near the Royal Palace several hours after the release of the "Bangkok 13." The attack sparked violent reactions by the students and transformed the demonstration into a rebellion. The estimated 400,000 students and their sympathizers first smashed cars and buses, then focused on some of the more onerous symbols of Thanom-Prapass power and corruption: The Revenue Department, the National Lottery Board, the Board of Inspection and Follow-up of Government Operations (an immensely corrupt operation used extensively by Colonel Narong Kittikachorn), and several police stations.

Thanom, Prapass, and Narong called on the army to put down the rebellion. Some of the military simply failed to appear and others refused to fire on the students, lending credence to the impression that the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Kris Sivara, was involved. Along with officers from other branches of the service, he refused to intervene. Instead, General Kris is said to have remarked that the student demonstrators were the sons and daughters of the government elite. And, indeed, many were.

It will probably be long debated whether the refusal of the army to intervene was the fatal blow to Prapass and Thanom. Some argue that the King's support of the students was of at least equal influence, undermining the regime's legitimacy and authority. Certainly both King Bhumidol and General Kris and his supporters emerged as more

2. The student movement and demonstrations have been described at some length and need not be repeated here. See, for example, Robert Shaplen, "Letter from Thailand," *The New Yorker* (January 14, 1974), pp. 67-83.

powerful figures in the present political maneuvering.

But the student rebellion itself is the central fact of Thai politics today. It has established two dramatic and portentous precedents. For the first time in postwar Thailand a civilian movement has been the undoing of a government. Significantly, civilians acted *in spite of* Thanom's and Prapass's frequent and vociferous assertions that it was all a communist plot, a charge once sufficient to discredit any civilian political movement.

Second, the student success has created a power vacuum in Thai politics. The new Prime Minister appointed by the King, Sanya Dhammasak, a modest university professor, was acceptable to almost everyone. But ultimately he can only be a "caretaker," unable to undertake significant new initiatives to solve economic and social problems. Thus the government lingers in limbo awaiting the coalescence of new civilian politicians into viable units under a new constitution and elections. It is a dangerous moment for Thailand. Should the uncertainty prevail too long, economic and social deterioration might seriously jeopardize opportunities for reform reflecting the recently expressed aspirations for social justice.

Post-Rebellion Initiatives

The Draft Constitution. Prime Minister Sanya has a critical, if temporary, role. He must oversee the creation and promulgation of a new constitution, then turn over the reins to a duly elected government. Thus, a constitutional drafting committee was established almost immediately and has already submitted a draft to a newly created National Assembly which functions as an interim parliament.

But the draft is coming under criticism. Students and others charge that it avoids the fundamental political challenge of transferring substantial power away from the small Bangkok elite to the mostly rural Thai majority. Of its 221 clauses, for example, 79 are provisions for the National Parliament, 19 provide for the authority of the King, and 22 concern the cabinet. Only three are concerned with "local administration" and two others refer, in vague terms, to the responsibilities of the state to promote agricultural development. Furthermore, the draft stipulates that all members of the upper house, the Senate, will be appointed by the lower house from a list of names provided by

the Privy Council. The Privy Council is appointed by the King. This arrangement could conceivably allow for minority governments. Finally, there are no provisions for the supreme court to rule on the constitutionality of parliamentary enactments.

The draft constitution is a disappointment to progressive students. Other, more moderate students, however, maintain that such a constitution is necessary to ease the political transition from previous dictatorships to democracy. The fact remains that Thailand's ninth constitution is its most conservative. It does not concern itself directly with nor provide the machinery for the restructuring of economic opportunities. Rather, it is primarily a guide to the management and operations of a parliamentary government. The National Assembly which has responsibility for its final version and promulgation consists of 94 civil servants, 37 professors and teachers, 33 politicians, 36 military and police officers, 21 businessmen (one of them is a taxi driver), 8 lawyers, 13 journalists and writers, and only 11 village chiefs and two farmers.

The drafting of the constitution has only been one of several issues dividing moderate and militant students and threatening the unity built up by the NSCT before the rebellion. The Center's leader in the early demonstrations, Sombat Thamrongthanyawong, was replaced in the final stages by Saeksan Prasertkul. After the rebellion Saeksan found the NSCT to be lacking in commitment to reform Thailand's unequal social system and left to form his more militant Federation of Independent Students of Thailand (FIST). Thus recent student initiatives and expressions of an activist philosophy have come largely from FIST and its close ally the People for Democracy Movement under the leadership of Thirayuth Boonmee, one of "Bangkok 13" and also a former head of NSCT.

It is argued that student militancy makes Sanya's job as caretaker Prime Minister more difficult by exacerbating already unmanageable problems. The activists claim, however, that now is a critical time to dramatize and deepen political participation for fear that peasants and workers will be left out of the new political structure. In the process, Saeksan and Thirayuth have become increasingly hostile to Thailand's middle class.

The American Presence. Ironically but perhaps significantly, one of the first issues seized upon by the students after the rebellion was not how to get more people participating in politics but rather

how to get the United States out of Thai politics. The American presence has been well established and deeply felt in Thailand as a result of a number of large military bases linked to the Indochina war effort. These have not only symbolized close Thai adherence to American policies in the region but have also had, in the view of many Thais, a degrading cultural impact in the areas where they are located. This has been demonstrated most notably in the flourishing of prostitution.

Thailand has always jealously guarded and proudly asserted its independence. Thus the issue of American influence in Thailand is an extremely sensitive one. Moreover, it was inflamed shortly after the rebellion when a CIA agent was found to have forged a letter to the Thai government in the name of a Thai insurgent leader to propose a truce. Unfortunately for the United States, the incident took place at about the same time that William Kintner, a hawkish University of Pennsylvania political scientist with suspected CIA involvements, was settling in as the Ambassador to Thailand. Sensitivities aroused by Kintner's appointment and the CIA disclosure led to student-initiated protests in front of the United States embassy—a major “first” in Thai politics and challenge to pre-rebellion foreign policy.

The Thai Military. Another student initiative led to direct confrontation with well-established Thai military prerogatives. It was a dramatization of the destruction of Na Sai village in northeastern Thailand. The villagers claimed that Thai Border Patrol Police entered the village and levelled it: the police and military claimed that communist insurgents were responsible. Students, particularly the People for Democracy Group, sided with the villagers, brought a number to Bangkok to make representations to the Sanya government, and generally aroused as much public awareness of the event as possible. The issue is whether Thai military pacification programs are engaged in purely repressive military campaigns combined with extortion and abuse of villages or, on the contrary, merely carrying out necessary security functions in the face of externally derived insurgent activities. The Na Sai village incident is only one of a number of such events, although it has since been defused by official inquiries. Nevertheless, the significance of public challenge and debate on the methods, objectives and, indeed, appropriateness of internal military security campaigns is enormous. The mili-

tary is not accustomed to being on the defensive—especially with students.

Social and Economic Reform. Recent student initiatives relate more directly to fundamental issues of social and economic justice in Thailand, such as low farm incomes and low wages for urban workers. It is generally recognized that changing these conditions requires a long-term effort bringing workers and peasants into the political process. The extent to which Thai students will dedicate themselves to actions toward this end is the real test of their commitment to fundamental change.

The urban labor scene has never been good in Thailand and it is especially gloomy with current high rates of inflation. Living conditions are bad, salaries are low—at the end of 1973 the minimum wage was 60 cents a day—and overall inflation in 1973 was about 22 per cent. The wholesale price of rice, moreover, increased 70 per cent between January 1972 and May 1973. In spite of the long standing ban on trade union activity in Thailand, deteriorating economic conditions led to an increasing number of strikes in 1972 and 1973. With the fall of the Thanom government, the country was virtually besieged with strikes. Labor unrest reached its highest pitch to date in June 1974 when over 10,000 textile workers walked out over a demand for a 20 cents per day wage increase.

The NSCT, FIST, and the People for Democracy Group joined strategy sessions with the strike leaders while groups of several hundred students marched in support of strikers and student spokesmen addressed workers rallies on university campuses. In the end, the textile workers were given their wage increase and the promise of labor unions by the end of 1974. The student movement had demonstrated its ability to preserve a measure of unity and deal successfully with labor leaders and issues. Whether the student organizations could mobilize large numbers and sustain long campaigns remained uncertain.

The major and most heralded student efforts since October have been the democracy campaigns in rural areas. Initially conceived as tours through the countryside by teams of students to arouse political consciousness, the objective was broadened to include educating the students about rural problems. Utilizing a \$500,000 grant from the Sanya government, “The Return to the Countryside” campaign brought 4,000 students into vil-

lages for a period of one month each over a four-month period. The results are still being discussed and evaluated. While there is some doubt about the long-term educational value for the students, there is substantially more about what was accomplished by way of arousing peasant political consciousness.

Only 20 per cent of the 4,000 students who "returned to the countryside" came from universities while the bulk came from teacher training colleges and high schools outside Bangkok. It was difficult, in short, to arouse much interest on the part of the more highly educated students. Adding to doubts over the campaign was the paucity of evidence regarding student success in stimulating effective political initiative. When asked what to do by the villagers, the students too frequently had advised talking to local officials—the very action which has failed for decades.

More dramatic and potentially more significant results have been achieved by NSCT and FIST leadership in organizing peasant protests in Bangkok. Groups of up to 1,000 farmers have been brought into the city to lodge specific complaints with the government against land grabbing, unfair tenancy practices, and loan sharks, among other grievances. These direct action campaigns appear to have won quick results, and the government has promised to respond with funds and new policies making more land available, insuring security of tenure, and providing reasonable credit terms. The extent to which these promises will be implemented remains to be seen. But they represent, nonetheless, impulses in the right direction.

Conclusion

The struggle for political democracy is still engaged. And, if for no other reason than the reassertion of the King's influence and the unprecedented entry of students into politics, there is reason for optimism. Yet for Thailand to achieve true democratic government, political changes must be accompanied by genuine and far-reaching economic reforms. To do this will require unprecedented government initiatives, providing for labor unions and a firm administration of rural institutions, and a willingness to implement reforms. Promises have been made to these ends and have the strong support of the King as well as the students but they will not be easily achieved. Many reforms will challenge traditionally powerful landlord and industrial management interests in both

the public and private sector. Further, the demand for increased urban wages and agricultural incomes affect prices in general at a time of overall inflationary trends in Thailand and the world. "Anti-democratic" feelings could be a reaction.

There is the additional and thorny problem of conciliation with rebel minorities in the north, northeast, and south. Not only must special care be taken to determine and meet their economic grievances, but military and civilian administrations will have to be redesigned to end exploitation, extortion, and oppression. And ultimately, social and political policies will have to be devised to assure suitable integration of minorities without excluding the possibility of recognizing some semi-autonomous status. Not to do so suggests the specter of expensive military campaigns to suppress revolts and fight wars against liberation armies—now a rarely successful effort in Asia—and the tragic diversion of funds from overall development needs.

Whether a strong reformist administration will take power under the new constitution is hard to predict. Numerous new political parties are being organized, while some of the old parties are badly divided. Yet most of these are again Bangkok oriented and few, if any, can claim organized and extensive rural and worker support.

In all probability only successful efforts to cope with the foregoing can resolve the most fearsome problem of all—the military. General Kris and other senior officers claim no political ambitions under the new government. At the same time, however, it would be virtually impossible to confine the military to the barracks during long periods either of urban labor or rural unrest. In the north, northeast, and south, the military will not readily accept civilian curtailment of security operations if it results in defeat or anything other than genuine resolution of the conflict. In the south, for example, the Commander of the Fifth Military region, Major-General Sant Chitipatima, has sharply criticized the government for interfering with his effort to crush the Muslim revolt. To him it is a matter of fighting "common criminals."

The delicacy of military-civilian relations is clear. Reform there must be, but each step must assiduously avoid the toes of the military until that time when civilian politics and politicians are sufficiently unified and more broadly representative of Thai society to legislate bit by bit the military into a subservient role.

