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Ideologies, 1940s to 1970s

The era of development incorporated more people more firmly into the national market economy. The era of 'national security' brought more people more firmly under the direction of the nation-state. Armed with new funds and technologies, the nation-state extended its power deeper into society, and farther into the villages and hills. Struggles to control and direct the nation-state now affected the lives and commanded the interest of larger numbers of the nation's citizens.

In the late 1950s, the USA brought together the military, businesspeople, and royalists – the three forces that had tussled since 1932 – in a powerful alliance. Together they resurrected and embellished the vision of a dictatorial strong state, demanding unity in order to achieve development and to fight off an external enemy – in this era, communism. But the alliance's strength was undermined by the generals' abuse of power and their obvious subordination to American policy. Opposition to the intensity of capitalist exploitation grew. Protests emerged against American domination. Communists launched a guerrilla war, which attracted the support of old intellectuals, young activists, and exploited peasants. Students became the channel through which radical, liberal, nationalist, Buddhist, and other discourses were focused against militarism, dictatorship, and unrestrained capitalism.

MILITARY POLITY

Sarit Thanarat was typical of the military strongmen who flourished under US patronage all over the world during the Cold War (Figure 14). He came from an ordinary family in the provincial northeast, and had his education and career entirely within the army. He made himself prime minister, supreme commander, head of the army, director of the police, and minister of development. He espoused the military virtues of discipline,

Figure 14: Sarit on tour in the hill villages of Mae Hong Son, c. 1962.

unity, and strong leadership – including summary executions of arsonists and other criminals.

His rise realigned the military against the constitutional project begun in 1932. He argued that constitutions had failed because they were a western import and unsuited to Thai conditions. He justified rule by soldiers on the precise grounds that soldiers had no need to court popular favour: 'We work with honesty, scholastic competence, and just decision-making which is not under the influence of any private party and does not have to demonstrate personal heroism for purpose of future elections'.[1] He projected himself as a *pho khun*, a paternal ruler in the legendary mode of the Sukhothai kings. He argued that this was 'Thai-style democracy', sanctioned by tradition. He suppressed all opposition on grounds of the threat of 'communism'. When he died in 1963 (cirrhosis of the liver brought on by heavy drinking), his subordinates from the First Army took over as if by military promotion. Thanom Kittikhachon became prime minister and defence minister, with Praphat Charusathian as deputy prime minister and minister of interior.

The generals focused on dividing up the spoils of the massive dollar inflows and the resulting increase in government budgets and business profits. They formed companies to supply goods and services to government agencies, particularly construction, insurance, and import. They participated in the exploitation of natural resources, particularly logging, which began with clearances for dams and roads, and climaxed in schemes to level whole forests to deny base areas to communist guerrillas. They shared out land opened up by new roads; when he died, Sarit's estate included over 22 000 rai. They took cuts on arms purchases. They exploited the US presence: an air vice-marshal ran the travel agency handling the R&R programme for US servicemen, and an airforce general ran the transport company ferrying military cargo. They continued to patronize major business families in return for shares and directorships. Sarit sat on 22 company boards and Praphat on 44.

The military officer elite became somewhat like a ruling caste, distinguished by its unique dress and rituals, vaunting its own purity, and claiming extensive privileges. Generals took over executive posts in state enterprises, and honorary posts in sports and social organizations. By their own machismo and corruption, they relegitimized old-fashioned male privileges and habits of exploiting political power for personal gain. Sarit appropriated women as kings once had, with a special interest in beauty queens. After his death, his assets were estimated at 2.8 billion baht. Virtually all had been accumulated while he was prime minister, and the amount

represented around 30 per cent of the total capital budget for that period. The government eventually seized 604 million as illegally acquired. Over 50 consorts and their children emerged to claim part of the remainder. Journalists gleefully paraded their numbers, their photographs, and their life stories. The collapse of his successors' regime in 1973 also resulted in the seizure of 600 million baht of illegally acquired assets. The behaviour of this ruling caste was echoed through society. Beauty contests proliferated. The sex industry boomed. Corruption increased. Poh Intharapalit and other authors wrote hugely popular serialized fiction about swaggering bandit chiefs and superheroic crimebusters.

Military rule reproduced 'strongmen' at other levels of society. In the provincial areas, such figures had begun to emerge since the early 20th century with the growth of a market economy without strong administration or the rule of law. From the 1950s, these *nakleng* (tough guys) or *pho liang* (patrons) became more prominent. They made money from the expanding cash-crop trade, from logging, from government construction contracts, and from local monopolies, such as liquor distribution concessions. Particularly around the US bases, they made fortunes from the businesses that flourish on the margins of a war – drugs, gambling, girls, gun-running, and smuggling. The new wave of officials appointed into the provinces often found they had to work with these figures rather than against them. In return, the generals made the officials their local partners in logging, construction, and other ventures. Occasionally, Sarit and his successors vowed to eliminate these tall poppies, but truly only those unwilling to cooperate.

EXTENDING THE NATION-STATE

Justified by 'national security', US aid funds and rising tax revenues underwrote a major expansion in the bureaucracy. The number of civilian officials increased. Many new 'development' departments appeared. Spurred by the US patrons' need to understand the country, the government increased its investment in data-gathering of all kinds.

All these new activities were built around the old colonial-style, centralized system of provincial governors and district officers under the Interior Ministry. New clusters of government officers dominated the landscape of the provincial towns. Their size and distinctive, standardized style signified both the centralized unity of the government and its difference from local culture. The uniforms of local officials emphasized the same features. Many new administrative districts were created, pushing the government deeper

into the countryside. Some provincial areas, particularly on the expanding uplands agrarian frontier, had previously been run by the local mafia rather than the government. In 1959, Sarit established control over Chonburi by a virtual military invasion, arresting hundreds of gunmen and local bosses.

The government loomed much larger in the life of ordinary citizens, especially beyond the provincial centres where the government had previously been virtually non-existent. The government supplied more public goods, including health services, seeds and fertilizer, birth control devices, irrigation, household water supplies, and all-weather roads. It imposed more restrictions on citizens, such as rights of access to forests and other natural resources. The personal ID card and house registration document became increasingly important as the basic documents of citizenship required for any transaction with officialdom.

The increased funding from the USA made possible some of the projects of national discipline that had been conceived, but never fully realized, during the Chulalongkorn reforms. Primary schooling was now pushed out beyond the district towns into the villages and hills. New school buildings, again in a distinctive and standardized style, stood out among village houses as much as the government complexes in the towns. To enter these special places, schoolchildren donned a uniform, again a mark of difference and standardization. Primary education focused first and foremost on the Thai language, which for most children outside the central region was different from the language spoken at home. Other primary subjects were history and social studies, which meant indoctrination in the national ideology of nation, religion, and king. School texts encouraged children to 'buy Thai goods; love Thailand and love to be a Thai; live a Thai life, speak Thai, and esteem Thai culture'.[2]

Buddhism became more closely associated with this extension of the scope and reach of the government. Renewed efforts were made to replace *wat* texts written in local scripts and embodying local traditions with documents issued from the centre. Particularly in the northeast, which was becoming identified as most susceptible to communism because of its poverty and its proximity to Indochina, renewed efforts were made to recruit villagers into the monkhood. In 1964, the government's religious affairs department, headed by an army colonel, launched the *thammathut* (ambassadors of *thamma*) programme to send monks to tour the remote northeast. They were instructed not only to preach Buddhism, but also to organize villagers in development projects, explain about laws, and discourage communism. Locally famous monks were absorbed into the Thammayut sect.

These programmes went much further in trying to realize the Chulalongkorn-era ambition to create the 'unity' of a 'Thai nation'. In particular, they tried to impose 'unity' on parts of Thailand where linguistic, religious, and cultural traditions differed from the imagined national standard. These differences had been present ever since diverse areas were collected within the first national boundaries, but they became more apparent as the government intruded more deeply. Resistance to the spread of government was often expressed in terms of the defence of local identity and practice. The government perceived such resistance as a special threat to 'national security' because these remote communities had historical and cultural links that flowed across the borders drawn at the turn of the 20th century, and often into areas already engaged in communist revolt. Three regions were critical.

The northeast or Isan contained a third of Thailand's population. Most spoke a dialect of Lao, while many along the southern border spoke Khmer or Kui. Poor soil, a harsh climate, and the nature of its agrarian colonization meant the region had far more people living in poverty than other areas. Since 1932, political leaders of the region had opposed the increasing centralization of power in Bangkok, and petitioned for resources to counter the region's disadvantages. In the late 1940s, some northeastern leaders hoped that national borders would be redrawn as part of the process of decolonization, uniting Isan with other Lao-speaking areas. Northeastern leaders were regularly jailed or killed in the bouts of repression that followed each advance of military power. In 1959, Sila Wongsin, a religious adept and traditional healer, set up an independent village 'realm' in Khorat. Troops attacked the village and Sila was publicly executed. Two former MPs formed a Northeastern Party committed to socialism and demanded more development funds for the region. Sarit accused the leaders of advocating communism and separatism. Khrong Chandawong, a peasant turned teacher who gained a large following for his ideas on socialism and self-reliance, was jailed for five years and then publicly executed in his home province of Sakon Nakhon (Figure 15).

In the four southernmost provinces, a majority of people practised Islam and spoke a Malay dialect. Since the 1930s, the Phibun governments had tried to impose Thai language and Thai dress, and to close down local community schools and Islamic courts. Resistance was led by religious leaders who took their inspiration from contemporary anti-colonial movements in the Islamic world. Some appealed to the colonial British in Malaya for help. Some petitioned for a federal structure that would allow them to preserve the area's distinctive culture within Thailand. The most prominent

Figure 15: The execution of Khrong Chandawong and Thongphan Suthimat, by Sarit's personal order, on 31 May 1961 at an airfield in Sakon Nakhon.

of these leaders, Haji Sulong Tomina, was charged with treason in 1948, prompting a revolt in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat in which hundreds died over six months. Haji Sulong was jailed and then probably assassinated by Phao's police in 1954. Teachers led resistance by founding *pondok* schools, which taught in local dialect and according to Islamic principles, while community leaders, such as Haji Sulong's son, were elected MPs and raised Muslim demands in parliament. As in the northeast, Sarit accused

them of plotting a separatist revolt and threw the leaders into jail. After release, they and many others fled into Malaysia. Underground organizations were formed to support Islam and socialism. In Pattani, which had been the centre of a Muslim Sultanate for over three centuries before 1900, a movement appeared in 1968, headed by a former local aristocrat educated in south Asia, and dedicated to creating an independent Islamic state.

The northern hills were inhabited by around a quarter of a million hill peoples, mostly practising shifting cultivation in the forests. Since the 1940s, several villages had begun growing opium for international trade. In 1959, the government set out a plan to stop opium growing, stabilize shifting farmers, recruit hill peoples 'to maintain the security of national frontiers', and in other ways make them 'contribute to national development'.[3] Teachers were posted into the hills to transform them into Thai-speaking loyal citizens, and monks were sent under a *thammajarik* (teaching the *thamma*) programme to convert them to Buddhism. In parallel with these efforts, millenarian ideas spread about the coming of a 'Hmong King' who would bring prosperity and justice. In 1967–68, a full-scale Hmong rebellion spread across four provinces of the north. The army reacted by bombing and napalming hill villages.

Equipped with bigger budgets and better means of communication, the militarized nation-state believed it could realize the imagined unity of a homogenous nation of Thai-speaking, loyal, development-pursuing Buddhist peasants throughout the area enclosed within the national borders. Many communities in areas only recently annexed to the Bangkok heartland, and even more recently subject to government control, felt they belonged to a different world from that imagined by the Thai state. They were provoked into re-examining and re-emphasizing their own very different identities.

MONARCHY RESURGENT

Sarit and the USA oversaw a revival of the monarchy following its partial eclipse since 1932. Both the generals and their US patrons believed the monarchy would serve as a focus of unity, and a force for stability, while remaining susceptible to their control. The process began in earnest once Phibun was removed from power in 1957. But the roots of the revival were laid in the late 1940s.

In December 1945, Prince Dhani Nivat, former royalist minister and now one of the senior palace advisers, delivered a lecture on Siamese kingship attended by the young King Ananda Mahidol and his family. Dhani

constructed a Sukhothai model of a naturally elected king who follows the 10 royal virtues and 'justifies himself as the King of Righteousness'.[4] He emphasized the monarch as the protector of the people and of Buddhism. This represented a departure from the idea of the king as embodiment of the nation, as promoted from the Fifth to Seventh Reigns, and a return to the theory popular at the start of the Bangkok era.

Dhani also slated constitutions as 'a pure foreign conception', with no place in Thai tradition because the king's inherent morality and wisdom were the true source of law. He summed up: 'Our national prosperity and independence in the first 150 years of the Bangkok era (1782–1932) was the result of the wisdom and statecraft of our kings. And I cannot see how we can maintain such a state of affairs without good kings'. Another returned royalist asserted that 'representatives of the people are elected individually by certain groups of people and they do not, in fact, represent the whole people' as only the king could.[5]

Dhani noted that traditionally the monarchy was 'ever kept before the public eye in literature, in sermons, and in every other channel of publicity'. He and the other senior royalist (and regent), Prince Rangsit, orchestrated a new ritual dramatization of monarchy and a further extension of Damrong's project of public exposure of the royal body. The first days of Ananda Mahidol's temporary return from exile were crammed with ritual performances. The remainder was peppered with staged interactions with groups of subjects – receptions for high officials, visits to military camps, meetings with Muslim and Chinese leaders, a talk on radio, and forays into the countryside to meet the people. The short visit was a prelude to the new version of monarchy, steeped in ritual but tinged with populism, sharply different from the pre-1932 model of modernity, westernization, and distance.

After Ananda Mahidol's unexplained death in 1946, the succession passed to his younger brother, Bhumibol Adulyadej, who returned to Switzerland to complete his education. He visited Thailand briefly during March–May 1950 for another flurry of ritual, including his coronation and marriage. But after Bhumibol's permanent return in 1951, the royal revival was temporarily slowed. Phibun blocked the royalist politicians' attempt to reinstate royal power through the constitution, and through the 1950s restricted the king's public duties to the rituals that established the essential specialness of the monarchy. Outside that, the king dabbled in painting, sailing, photography, and jazz.

All that changed with Sarit's coup in 1957. Initially, the king, like the Americans, had reportedly considered Sarit 'corrupt and uncouth'.[6] But Sarit belonged to a later military generation with no involvement in the

revolution of 1932. During the mid-1950s, he had quietly distanced himself from Phibun's antagonism to the throne. On the eve of both his 1957 and 1958 coups, Sarit visited the king. On the day of the 1957 coup, the king named Sarit as 'Defender of the Capital', and Sarit displayed this decree as legitimation. On the following day, Sarit visited the palace and the king issued a message of support and encouragement. After the 1958 coup, Sarit declared, 'In this revolution, certain institutions must be changed, but one institution which the Revolutionary Council will never allow to be changed is the institution of the monarchy.'[7]

Sarit scrapped Phibun's land Act, which the king had opposed, and switched National Day from the day of the 1932 revolution to the king's birthday. He showed he believed that power radiated downwards from the monarch, rather than upwards from the people: 'The ruler is none other than the head of that big family who must regard all the people as his own children and grandchildren'.[8] Thanat Khoman, later Sarit's foreign minister, explained:

> The fundamental cause of our political instability in the past lies in the sudden transplantation of alien institutions on to our soil . . . If we look at our national history, we can see very well that this country works better and prospers under an authority, not a tyrannical authority, but a unifying authority around which all elements of the nation can rally.[9]

Sarit encouraged expansion of the royal role. In 1955, Phibun had allowed the king to make a tour to the northeast, which attracted large crowds. From 1958, these tours became a regular event and took in all regions of the country. He also travelled overseas on state visits that advertised Thailand as a traditional but modernizing country cleaving to the 'free world'. The king's attention to the ritual foundations of kingship also became more public and more widely spread. He resumed the custom of presenting *kathin* robes to monks in the capital, and later beyond. He revived the glittering royal barge procession that dramatized this event. He presented Buddha images, tablets, and amulets to *wat* and offices during his provincial tours. Later, he appointed royal representatives to convey the royal *kathin* robes and the Buddha images to a wider range of places. The USA contributed by reproducing pictures of the king for distribution all over the country.

In 1962, Sarit amended the *Sangha Act*, overthrowing Phibun's 1944 reform, returning roughly to Chulalongkorn's 1902 organization of the Sangha, and restoring Mongkut's Thammayut sect to a privileged position. Sarit had Phra Phimontham, a Mahanikai (that is, mainstream) monk who

advocated a more democratic Sangha, arraigned as a communist, forcibly disrobed, and thrown into jail. The Ministry of Education was entrusted to Pin Malakun, a royal family member and enthusiastic royalist who had returned from exile in the post-war era. School textbooks were revised to emphasize the king as the focal point of the nation.

The king cultivated an interest in rural development. After his return from Europe in 1951, Prince Dhani had arranged for Phya Anuman Rajadhon to tutor him on Thai culture. Anuman was a tax official and remarkable amateur scholar who had collected folk tales, written a detailed account of the annual rural cycle of cultivation and ritual, and studied the blending of animism and Buddhism in everyday rural life. Against a background of urban growth and great rural changes, Anuman imagined a 'self-contained' village life only superficially changed by modernity:

> The important thing for all humans is the desire for happiness, fun, and comfort. To speak only of farmers, if they are not addicted to evil ways, such as gambling, they have not a little happiness, because they have few needs. It is happiness deriving from their surroundings, namely nature. When they have enough to eat and enough to use they are happy . . . I have told the life of the farmers, which is a simple, smooth life, not adventurous, not progressive, not wealthy, and not powerful. However things are, they go on like that.[10]

Around 1960, the king set up a fishery, an experimental farm, and a dairy project inside the Bangkok palace. He planned an irrigation project close to his beachfront palace in Hua Hin, and became enthusiastic about the potential for irrigation to transform small-scale farming. He recruited technical help inside the Irrigation Department, and began to identify and promote projects during his provincial tours. On trips to the north in the 1960s, he developed another interest in the hill peoples and in projects to replace opium growing by new crops (Figure 16). The queen promoted hill peoples' handicrafts.

The king's own home movies from these trips were shown on the new medium of television. Pin Malakun, who also oversaw broadcasting, recognized the potential of this material, and soon film of the king visiting villages was regularly shown. In an axis stretching from Phya Anuman's folklore to Pin Malakun's television features, Bhumibol had become the paternal, activist king of a childlike, quiescent peasantry.

The king established a new range of gifting relationships with various social groups. In the late 1950s, he led several appeals for relief of disasters, including a major cholera epidemic. Over the following years, he also began to accept donations for funding his rural projects and other charities.

Figure 16: The king (shown here wearing glasses) as developer, visiting villages in the 1970s, discussing opium replacement and water projects.

Donating to the royal charities soon became a way to make merit, especially for rising businesspeople keen to convert some of their new wealth into social recognition. The king had already revived royal decorations, mainly for presentation to officials. Now he multiplied the classes of decorations, and extended the catchment to include charity donors and others who performed valuable services. Similarly, the circle of people who merited royal sponsorship for weddings and funerals was widened to include a broader elite. The number of functions, ceremonies, and audiences attended by the king rose from around 100 a year in the mid-1950s to 400 a year during the Sarit regime, and 600 in the early 1970s. The royal family paid special attention to their relations with the army, the senior bureaucracy, and the Buddhist establishment. But they also found occasions to interact with the business community and the growing professional middle class.

Although the king's rural projects were in line with the Sarit government's theme of development, they pointedly focused on the small peasants and marginal peoples who were being crushed, confused, and by-passed by development in practice. Although the generals and the USA sponsored the royal revival, the results differed somewhat from these patrons' intentions. The lurch to Americanization turned the monarchy into an alternative symbol of nation and tradition; the corruption of the generals and their cronies created an opportunity for the monarchy to assert a revived and modernized form of moral leadership; and the harsh results of rapid development gave the king a role as defender of the weak.

The alignment of army, palace, and business concluded by Sarit under US patronage during 1957–58 benefited all parties. The USA secured a base. The monarchy revived. The generals enjoyed power and profit. Business boomed. But these gains did not come without costs, and without releasing new social forces.

THE LEFT

Before the Second World War, communist activity in Siam had been confined to Chinese groups (mainly in Bangkok) and Vietnamese groups (mainly in the northeast) acting as émigré bases promoting revolution in their home countries. A party branch was founded in the early 1930s, but only a handful of Thais were recruited. The government was relatively successful at rounding up and deporting the activists, and considered them unthreatening.

Over the 1940s, the leftist movement was transformed into something much more powerful. Many more second-generation *lukjin* Chinese

were recruited through teachers in the Chinese schools, especially Xinmin school. They became more involved in radicalizing Thailand, rather than supporting a revolution in China. Anti-Japanese activists arrested in 1938 spent several years ensconced in jail in the company of royalists arrested after the failed Boworadet rebellion. In this 'jail university', the leftists taught the aristocrats political strategy, and in return were tutored in Thai language and culture.

The Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) was refounded in December 1942, and committed to a policy to drive out the 'Japanese bandits' and promote democracy. During the war, the communists organized 'welfare associations' in shipping, railways, docks, timber mills, and rice mills. Some groups carried out disruption and sabotage. In 1944, the CPT organized a volunteer force to lead a rising against the Japanese, cooperated with the parallel movement of the Seri Thai, and engaged in a few skirmishes before the war ended. Through such activities, Kasian Tejapira argues, in the 'dimension of cultural political imagination . . . a radical anti-Japanese Chinese nationalist could possibly turn into a radical anti-Japanese Thai nationalist'.[11] By the war's end, Thailand had a communist movement dedicated to overthrowing the local political order.

The two years following the armistice allowed the party to work in the open. Using their links with the Seri Thai, and the influence of Russia at the peace negotiations, the movement succeeded in gaining repeal of the Anti-Communist Law in October 1946. The party foreswore insurrection in favour of working through parliament and trade unions. Prasoet Sapsunthon, a Surat Thani MP who promoted the repeal, joined the party and openly proclaimed his affiliation. Against the background of post-war economic disruption, the party helped to organize labour, coordinate two large-scale strikes by rice-mill workers in 1945 and 1947, form the umbrella Association of United Workers of Thailand in April 1947, and hold the largest mass rallies to date on May Day in 1946 and 1947. The party newspaper, *Mahachon* (The Masses), which had circulated underground intermittently since 1942, began to appear openly as a weekly in 1944. A communist newspaper in Chinese, *Chua-Min Pao*, appeared in October 1945.

Some early party members who had gone to China to fight in the revolution returned to Thailand, including Udom Srisuwan, a Christian-educated Chinese-Shan who became *Mahachon*'s leading columnist and the party's main theoretician. Some bright provincial students, both *lukjin* and Thai, who travelled to the capital for higher education were attracted to leftist ideas. Jit Phumisak, son of an excise clerk from Prachinburi,

enrolled at Chulalongkorn University in 1950 and wrote a Marxist critique of Buddhism soon after. A student committee was formed at Thammasat University in 1953, and some of its members joined the party after Sarit's 1957 coup.

Several members of the new commoner middle class of the 1920s were drawn leftwards in this era. Supha Sirimanon, who figured among the pro-nationalist journalists from the late 1920s, became an intermittent aide to Pridi over the next 15 years and used foreign trips to acquire leftist literature. He evolved into a self-taught socialist who published one of the first Thai analyses of Marxism in 1951. The journalist and writer Kulap Saipradit, whose fiction in the late 1920s speared the aristocracy, visited Japan in the late 1930s, took a Thammasat University law degree during the war, and began translating texts from European socialism. After spending 1948–49 in Australia, he published a flurry of short stories on class divisions in Thai society. 'Lend us a hand' illustrates the Marxist labour theory of value: 'Who builds everything? Is it money, or is it damn well labour that does the job?'[12] Some of these convert intellectuals kept aloof from the CPT. In 1949, Supha and Kulap, in cooperation with several followers of Pridi, started a journal, *Aksonsan* (The Adviser), that 'did not lead people by the nose'.[13] But others went the whole way. Atsani Pholajan, member of an aristocratic family, took a law degree from Thammasat, worked as an official, wrote poems and stories for *Mahachon*, and joined the party in 1950.

From 1947 the CPT, influenced by those returning from China, began to adopt a Maoist line of rural-based revolution. In 1950, this was defined in Udom Srisuwan's *Thailand: A Semi-Colony*, which rewrote Thai history in the Marxist framework, condemned the 1932 revolution as a failure because it lacked mass support, and concluded that Thailand was a 'semi-feudal semi-colonial' state, similar to pre-revolutionary China. It argued that the revolution had to be pursued, as in China, by a broad coalition spearheaded by both workers and peasants.

Within this left milieu there was a strand that tried to build a bridge between Buddhism and Marxism on a common platform of social justice. Many activists were attracted by the ideas of a Buddhist thinker, Buddhadasa, who had distanced himself from the Sangha authorities at a forest temple, Wat Suan Mokh in Surat Thani, and who in the 1940s began to publish booklets arguing for a more democratic and this-worldly interpretation of the fundamental Buddhist texts. Kulap Saipradit attended Suan Mokh, wrote in Buddhadasa's journal, and summarized Buddhadasa's ideas in the left-wing Bangkok press. Samak Burawat, a London-educated

geologist who translated Stalin, also taught philosophy at a Buddhist academy, attended Suan Mokh, and wrote comparisons of Buddhadasa's Buddhism and Marxism. Pridi considered forming a branch of Suan Mokh in Ayutthaya, and later, from exile in China, wrote a blend of Buddhism and Marxism, serialized in the Bangkok press as *The Impermanence of Society*. One of Pridi's followers returned from Beijing to found a party named after Sri Arya Mettraya, the future Buddha who ushers in a utopian age metaphorically similar to the ultimate goal of Marxism.

GUERRILLAS

In late 1948, inspired by the Chinese revolutionary movement, the CPT resolved to pursue a Maoist-style revolution by organizing the peasantry. Cadres began working in villages, particularly in the northeast where they had earlier organized anti-Japanese cells. A party congress, held secretly in Bangkok from February 1952, confirmed the strategy was 'mobilize the masses in thousands and millions, go to the countryside'.[14] But there were some dissenters, including Prasoet Sapsunthon. However, the Peace Movement sweep in November 1952 jailed several party activists and some of the early rural recruits in the northeast and south. Many remaining party members escaped to attend training at the Marxist-Leninist Institute in Beijing. For five years, party activity lapsed. In Beijing, Prasoet Sapsunthon argued that the rural strategy was misguided and proposed that the party seek power through the ballot box. He was expelled from the party and after the 1957 coup he offered his services to Sarit.

Other trainees returned from Beijing in the late 1950s. A third party congress in 1961 confirmed the rural strategy ('encircling the cities from the rural areas'), adopted armed struggle, and moved the party headquarters out of the city. Several, including the ideologist Udom Srisuwan and the poet and historian Jit Phumisak, moved to the forests of the northeast.

The party began to harvest not only the urban intellectuals' increasingly bitter frustration against military dictatorship, but also the peasants' reaction against the market, and the outer regions' opposition to the imposition of the nation-state with its intrusive bureaucracy and demands for linguistic and cultural uniformity. The party formed its first base in the Phuphan area of the northeast where Khrong Chandawong had recently been executed. His daughter became a leading cadre. A second base was formed in the hills of the south, and linked with the separatism in the Muslim far south and the communist rebellion in Malaysia. A third major

area formed in the north and garnered support from many hill villages, including Hmong, Yao, and Lua. With Chinese cooperation, the Voice of the People of Thailand (VOPT) radio began to broadcast from Kunming. Supply routes were created through Laos.

The rebellion spread widely in a peasant society disrupted by the intrusion of teachers, bureaucrats, police officers, and primitive capitalism backed by a mighty foreign power. A chance encounter between a police patrol and a guerrilla band in Nakhon Phanom on 7 August 1965 began armed confrontation (the 'first shot' or 'gun firing day'). The number of clashes between guerrillas and government forces rose from around one per day in the late 1960s to a peak of around three per day in 1977. The Thai army treated communism as a foreign invasion. The USA was interested in Thailand as a base for its war in Indochina and initially paid little attention to the roots of the local rebellion. The armed forces relied on military sweeps, bombing and napalming villages, and deliberate atrocities, such as burning captured guerrillas alive. There was little attempt to understand the principles of Maoist guerrilla warfare, with the result that major armed assaults on CPT bases, such as at Phu Hin Rongkla and Thoeng in 1972, were military disasters. Attempts to garrison villages and organize village defence forces often failed because soldiers used the power of their uniform and guns to dominate, loot, and rape.

By 1969, the armed forces counted 'communist-infested sensitive areas' in 35 of the 71 provinces. By the mid-1970s, it estimated there were some 8000 armed guerrillas, 412 villages totally under CPT control, and 6000 villages with a total population of 4 million under some degree of CPT influence.

In 1967, the police captured some CPT members who had opposed the rural strategy, including Prasoet Sapsunthon. The Communist Suppression Operations Command, set up in 1964 by the USA to coordinate counter-insurgency and later renamed as the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), recruited their help to plan a more effective strategy. The organization began to work at the village level, forming village defence organizations, and lavishing money on local development under the Accelerated Rural Development programme. But the army command resisted widespread adoption of this strategy, and used every setback as an argument for more firepower and more violence. Between 1973 and 1978, almost 6 million rai of forest was destroyed each year as the army attempted to deny the guerrillas access to forest bases. Even so, a military expert concluded: 'The inescapable reality is the insurgents and communist

revolutionaries . . . have grown steadily, virtually untouched, for as much as ten years . . . they are largely secure in their jungle and forest base areas where the government forces, police or military, rarely care to venture'.[15] By 1976, government estimated that 2173 guerrillas and 2642 government troops had died in 3992 clashes since 1965.

STUDENTS

The guerrilla war was just one form of opposition to military dictatorship and its US backing. Other forms of dissent developed in urban society. They too were influenced by the Cold War's worldwide polarization into left and right, and its accompanying vocabulary (communism, revolution, free world, and so on). But they were also tinged with nationalism, Buddhism, cultural defence, and the aspirations of maturing groups of businesspeople and urban middle class.

The enthusiasm to 'develop' Thailand rapidly increased the numbers in higher education. Tertiary students increased from 18 000 to 100 000 between 1961 and 1972, while growing numbers also went overseas, especially to the USA. The catchment area for higher education extended beyond the old elite. Many were drawn from the provinces to the colleges in Bangkok. In the short stories through which this generation shared their experience, the central character is often a provincial boy or girl who escapes from poverty through education, but remains angry at the exploitation of others less fortunate. Any overt political activity on the campuses was rigorously suppressed. According to Sulak Sivaraksa, 'By 1957, there were no intellectuals left . . . The universities were controlled entirely by the military'.[16] But from the early 1960s, student publications began to articulate dissatisfaction. The journal, *Sangkhomsat Parithat* (Social Science Review), founded by Sulak in 1963, leaned to the school that tried to merge socialism and this-worldly Buddhism. Its writers, including Sulak and Sujit Wongthet, criticized the Americanization of Thailand because of its crass materialism and its destruction of Thai culture.

By the late 1960s, this and other journals also began to carry articles from overseas students describing the intensity of the movement against the Vietnam war and the rise of leftist ideologies in the USA and Europe. In the early 1970s, Thai students began to discover and translate New Left writings from Europe and the USA. Young academics produced political economy analyses of modern Thai society that highlighted the poverty and exploitation of the peasantry, the dismal conditions of urban labour,

and the roots of social injustice in the traditional social order. Writers from the post-war period were rediscovered and republished, including Kulap Saipradit, who had lived in exile in China since Sarit's coup, and Jit Phumisak, who had joined the CPT's rural movement in 1965 and been shot dead in Phuphan a year later. Literary circles and discussion groups mushroomed. In 1972, Thammasat students printed a pamphlet, *Phai khao* (White Peril), attacking US imperialism in Thailand.

This growing readiness to criticize military dictatorship was not confined to the students. From the late 1960s, the king began to make public comment on political matters, often specifically directed at the emergent student activism. He wondered aloud about the army's use of violence, which sometimes seemed to drive villagers into the hands of the guerrillas. He criticized the army's attempts to remove settlers from the forests. He recognized that farmers were angry because they wanted to be left alone. He noted that 'foreign' communists 'incite the people into thinking that they must fight for freedom and economic liberty. This, however, may be partly true since many in Thailand are poor'.[17] He began allusively to criticize capitalism for encouraging values destructive of the humanitarian empathy in Buddhism. He urged students to campaign against the corruption that flourished under dictatorship. At the same time, he advocated gradual change and denigrated the growing enthusiasm for revolutionary methods. Privately, he told the British ambassador that 'students must be controlled' and that student demonstrations were 'very wrong'.[18]

In 1968, the king nudged the military government to complete the constitution promised a decade earlier and to restore an elective parliament. The 1968 constitution copied earlier military models of a parliament dominated by an appointed Senate. Despite the charter's restrictions, MPs were bolder than ever before in using parliament as a forum to critique and qualify military rule. They blocked the military budget, demanded more funds for provincial development, and exposed corruption scandals. The prime minister, Thanom Kittikhachon, seemed deeply shocked by these intrusions on the generals' power and privilege: 'Never, in my long political career, have MPs caused such trouble to government administration as in these recent times. Some of them even attacked me over my private affairs'.[19] In November 1971, Thanom executed a coup against his own government, revoked the constitution, and dissolved parliament.

Student demonstrations about the war, corruption, and other issues began tentatively in 1968. In 1972, they became better organized and more

forceful. The CPT recognized the potential and began to publish leftist literature and to recruit student leaders. But leftist ideas were only one element in an ideological swirl that included democratic liberalism, Buddhist notions of justice, and nationalist opposition to exploitation by both the USA and Japan. Many of the student activists came from a provincial background (especially the south), were the first members of their lower-class or lower-middle-class families to gain higher education, and were among the brightest. Thirayuth Boonmi was the son of an army sergeant and had been placed first in the nationwide secondary school examinations. Seksan Prasertkun was the son of a fishing-boat builder and a brilliant political science student.

In November 1972, Thirayuth organized a 10-day protest against Japanese goods. In June 1973, the demonstrations began to focus on the issue of restoring the constitution and democracy. The generals refused to negotiate and arrested the student leaders. Meeting in the Interior Ministry, they agreed that '2 per cent of the student population' should be 'sacrificed for the survival of the country'.[20] Publicly they claimed that the students were manipulated by 'communists'.

The press cautiously supported the students. On 13 October 1973, half a million people joined a Bangkok demonstration to demand a constitution (Figure 17), and parallel gatherings formed in major provincial towns. The generals backed down and released the student leaders, but the protest now had a momentum of its own. In the afternoon, the crowd moved towards the palace to avoid military harassment, and appealed to the king to mediate.

The student leaders extracted a promise from the generals to reintroduce a constitution within a year, and were granted an audience with the king. But the dispersal of the demonstration on the morning of 14 October 1973 deteriorated into violence. Soldiers fired into the crowd, killing 77 and wounding 857. The shedding of young blood on Bangkok streets undermined any remaining authority of the junta, and allowed the king and other military factions to demand that the 'three tyrants' (Thanom, Praphat, and Narong, Thanom's son married to Praphat's daughter) go into exile.

The king took the unprecedented step of nominating a new prime minister (Sanya Thammasak, a judge and privy councillor) and laying down the process for writing a new constitution to re-establish parliament. The final collapse of military rule catapulted students into a historic role, and elevated the king as a supra-constitutional force arbitrating the conflicts of a deeply divided nation.

Figure 17: The people arrive in Thai politics. The mass demonstration on the eve of 14 October 1973 around Democracy Monument. In the distance can be seen the landmark 'dome' of Thammasat University, where the protest began.

RADICALS

The events of 14 October 1973 began an extraordinary period of debate, conflict, experiment, and change. The immediate aftermath of the generals' fall saw a complex interplay between students and other radical forces on the one hand, and a much more moderate agenda to found a post-military state and social order on the other.

For the next year, street protests were almost daily events. They maintained pressure on the government's procedure to restore constitutional democracy. They campaigned for ending the American use of Thailand as a base. They widened the agenda to issues of social and economic justice. The university campuses, especially Thammasat, were converted into open debating halls. Writing on Thai history, society, and culture mushroomed. Jit Phumisak's writings were republished and revered, especially his call for a politically committed literature and art, and his challenge to traditional Thai historiography, which identified Siam as a feudal society and the monarchy as 'great landlords'.[21] The CPT helped to nudge the student movement leftwards.

The student protests catalysed resentments that had developed but been suppressed over the past two decades of 'development'. Labour disputes and labour resentment against institutionalized repression had increased in the late 1960s and broke out in a wave of strikes in 1972. The years 1973 and 1974 saw more strikes (501 and 357, respectively) than at any previous time, mostly for improved wages and working conditions. In mid-1974, when some 6000 textile workers in the Bangkok industrial suburbs went on strike against attempts to lay off workers in the face of a market downturn, students helped to organize the strike, form a new coordinating body for the labour movement, and pressure the government for labour reforms. The government responded by raising the minimum wage, arbitrating strikes, and passing a new labour law that legalized unions and created the machinery for disputes.

Starting in early 1974, peasants in the north and the upper central region agitated for higher paddy prices, controls on rents, and allocation of land to the landless. In June, some 2000 people travelled to Bangkok to rally. Again, the government reacted positively by establishing a price support scheme and introducing a rent control Act. But it did not have the machinery to implement these schemes. Local offices were deluged with petitions from farmers detailing how moneylenders had cheated them of their land. Farmers complained that local officials sided with the local landed and

monied elite. In late 1974, they created the Peasants Federation of Thailand (PFT), which within months grew to have branches in 41 provinces and a membership of 1.5 million. PFT leaders travelled around villages educating farmers about their rights. At a PFT rally in Bangkok in November 1974, young monks occupied the front rank. One explained, 'We take pity on the farmers who are the backbone of the country . . . Being the children of farmers, we cannot turn our backs on them when they need help'.[22] In May 1975, students, workers, and peasants announced a 'tripartite alliance' to fight for social justice, beginning with the farmers' issues.

REFORMERS

Students felled the military dictatorship, but other forces in urban society emerged to shape the successor regime. Over the prior quarter-century, business had grown richer, more sophisticated, and more self-confident. The leading conglomerates no longer wanted to kowtow to the generals and share their profits with them. They sought more power to influence policy. A small but influential elite of technocrats wanted to divert resources away from the military towards development. Many businesspeople and professionals were frightened by the polarizing logic of militarism and radicalism.

Kukrit Pramoj emerged as the representative of this reformist agenda. He was a minor member of the royal family and an enthusiastic practitioner of traditional high culture. He had been educated at Oxford and was thoroughly westernized in the style of the early 20th-century court. But he quit a bureaucratic career to enter banking and then journalism. He moved among the new businesspeople and boasted about a Chinese element in his heritage. His business took him upcountry and he claimed to know and understand the peasants. In 1974, he left his business career to found the Social Action Party, which attracted many big business people.

He was strongly attached to the traditional social order and horrified at attempts to re-engineer society through state power from above. He was horrified too by the levelling implications of Buddhadasa's this-worldly Buddhism and engaged the thinker in public debate on radio. He wrote a Thai adaptation of the Don Camillo stories, pitting traditional folkish Buddhism against communism. He supported a classic division of powers (executive, legislative, judicial) to act as a check on the abuse of

authority, and saw the monarchy, equipped with both moral and constitutional power, as the surest bulwark against dictatorship. He believed the government had to redistribute income to remove the poverty that allowed communism to take root. He and his brother Seni both wrote essays idealizing the Sukhothai era as a liberal society under a paternal king. Kukrit represented a marriage of free-market capitalism, elitist democracy, exemplary monarchy, and paternalistic government which appealed to many businesspeople and urban middle class as a route beyond military rule.

In late 1973, the king hand-picked a National Convention that in turn elected a National Assembly to serve as an interim parliament and constitutional convention. The constitution completed in 1974 was modelled on Pridi's 1946 version, but with an appointed Senate and other checks. At elections in 1975, socialist parties won a third of the seats in the northeast but very few elsewhere. Military figures backed conservative parties like Chat Thai (Thai Nation) but had to stay in the background. Businesspeople and professionals each supplied around a third of the MPs. No party dominated and forming a coalition proved difficult. Kukrit eventually succeeded because of his personal popularity, even though his party had won only 18 seats.

Kukrit sought to moderate the radical demands for social change and create space for the old social elite and new business elite to negotiate a mutually acceptable accommodation, free from the polarized logic of the Cold War, the predatory designs of the generals, and the revolutionary ambitions of the radicals. Since 1968–69, the USA had effectively faced defeat in Vietnam and begun to wind down its operations. Nixon had visited Beijing and committed to removing US troops from Vietnam. Initially, this increased Thailand's importance as a base for guarding the withdrawal. US troops and aircraft were moved from Vietnam to Thailand. Thai troops joined operations in Laos and Cambodia. But resentment against the USA inside Thailand increased. Kukrit opened negotiations with the USA to withdraw troops. He travelled to Beijing to meet Mao Zedong and restore relations with China. He quietly withheld support from the students' attempts to build labour and peasant organizations. He launched a scheme to distribute development funds directly to the grassroots level as a way to relieve poverty and hence halt the spread of communism.

In the fledgling democratic politics, this centrist agenda commanded large support. But it was undermined by a campaign of right-wing terror.

RIGHTISTS

A right-wing reaction began in late 1974 and built over two years. Hardliners in the military, raised on Cold War ideology and US patronage, could not accept any solution other than a military defeat of the guerrilla forces. They tried to quash alternative political solutions, and branded even the military officers who supported such strategies as communist. They were increasingly alarmed by the spread of ideas and organizations that challenged the military's ideal of a controlled, orderly society – especially the PFT's ability to build a widespread peasant organization, the success of strikers in winning wage and other concessions, the possibility of monks lending legitimacy to popular movements, and students' adoption of Marxist ideas and vocabulary. They feared that urban protest would link with rural guerrilla forces and Indochinese revolution. They campaigned for the US troops to stay longer or hand over key weaponry. During 1975–76, business, the palace, and a broader urban middle class abandoned the project to found parliamentary democracy and lent tacit or open support to a military solution.

In late 1974, the ISOC and the Interior Ministry supported the formation of *Nawaphon* (New force *or* Ninth force), a propagandist campaign to rally support for the army around the symbols of nation and monarchy. The organization convened meetings of businesspeople and officials in the provincial towns and asked them, 'Do you love your king? Do you love Thailand? Do you hate communism?' By late 1975, *Nawaphon* claimed a million members. Two ISOC officers formed the *Krathing daeng* (Red Gaurs), a vigilante movement that, from early 1975, recruited vocational students and disaffected urban youth to break up demonstrations with sticks, guns, and grenades. Between April and August, 17 leaders of the PFT were murdered (three others had been killed earlier), resulting in the collapse of the organization. After Kukrit's government quietly stepped back from earlier attempts to arbitrate industrial disputes, strikes were broken up by bombs, gunfire, gangs wielding chains, and even a fire engine driven into a crowd (Figure 18). Over nine months, 8100 workers were dismissed, mostly for strike activity, and several leaders were arrested as 'communists'.

The Village Scouts Movement had been founded in 1971 by the Border Patrol Police to combat communism through rural organization and propaganda. It conducted camps in which villagers listened to nationalist lectures, played team games, sang patriotic songs, joined in emotional

Figure 18: In 1974, women workers at the Hara factory resisted being laid off by seizing control and running the plant as a cooperative. This poster from June 1975, amid rising right-wing violence, is headlined 'Hara workers need help'.

pledging rituals, and were rewarded with a neckscarf and pin from the king. In early 1976, it moved its activities into Bangkok and other urban areas. In the previous April, Saigon and Phnom Penh had fallen to the communist forces, and on 2 December 1975 the Laotian monarchy had been abolished, increasing the sense of panic in the Thai elite and middle class. Over 1976, around 2 million people – including businesspeople, officials, and society wives – attended the Village Scouts recruitment sessions. It had become 'an urban-based movement funded by economically and politically nervous fractions of the middle and upper classes', which 'increasingly took on a fascist character'.[23]

From early 1976, the military propaganda and street violence were directed against the stumbling attempts to establish democracy. Army-controlled newspapers and radio stations condemned parliament as another route to communist victory. The army chief forced Kukrit to dissolve parliament rather than take a socialist party into the coalition. A television programme fronted by an anti-communist judge, Thanin Kraivixien, attacked the 'inseparable trio of communism, student activism and progressive politics'.[24] In January, Phra Kittiwuttho, a monk associated with *Nawaphon*, proposed that the government resign and make way for a National Reform Council – essentially a coup proposed from within the monkhood. In February 1976, a US-educated lecturer heading the Socialist Party was shot dead. At the April elections, the pro-military Chat Thai Party campaigned on the slogan 'Right Kill Left'. Thirty people were killed and one leftist party office was firebombed. Kukrit was defeated at the polls, but his brother Seni became premier as head of the Democrat Party and followed a similar reformist agenda. The military and its political friends promptly manoeuvred to split Seni's party. In June, Phra Kittiwuttho said it was not sinful to kill communists: 'It is the duty of all Thai . . . It is like when we kill a fish to make curry to place in the alms bowl for a monk. There is certainly demerit in killing the fish, but when we place it in the alms bowl of a monk, we gain much greater merit.'[25] Under challenge he repeated that it was legitimate 'to kill some 50 000 people to secure and ensure the happiness of 42 million Thais'.

The military-orchestrated campaign portrayed any advocates of political or social change as 'communist', 'un-Thai', and treasonous 'enemies of nation, religion, and king'. Those trying to find a middle ground, including the Democrat government and several senior soldiers and officials, were condemned as 'communists' and often threatened with violence.

The finale only needed a trigger. In August 1976, Praphat, one of the 'three tyrants' exiled after 14 October 1973, returned to Thailand but left

Figure 19: A wounded student inside Thammasat University after it was invaded by armed forces on 6 October 1976.

after students protested and two died from Red Gaur attacks. On 19 September, Thanom, the former premier, returned in monk's robes and was ordained in Wat Boworniwet, the *wat* most closely associated with the palace. The king and queen visited him. Some days later, two workers putting up posters protesting at Thanom's return were lynched. A rightist newspaper carried pictures of a student dramatization of the event, and claimed one actor had been made up to look like the crown prince. An army radio station broadcast a repeated call for people to kill students in Thammasat University. Units of the Border Patrol Police were brought into the city, along with several Village Scouts and Red Gaurs. Early on 6 October 1976 they began firing rockets, handguns, and anti-tank missiles into Thammasat University (Figure 19). A handful of students who tried to escape were brutally lynched, raped, or burnt alive outside the university. Officially, 43 students were killed, and two policemen. Over 3000 were arrested on the day, and some 5000 later. That evening an army faction took power by coup. The television presenter and anti-communist judge, Thanin Kraivixien, became prime minister and announced a 12-year hiatus before the return of constitutional democracy. Books were banned

and burned, journals closed, publishers harassed, and political meetings outlawed.

As the violence had grown over the previous 18 months, several student, worker, and peasant activists had already left the city for the CPT camps in the jungle. Now another 3000 joined them for mixed reasons of political conviction and self-preservation. Others fled abroad.

RESOLUTION

With 6 October 1976, the military and its allies had shot and bombed urban radicalism into submission. But the awfulness of the Thammasat massacre was a profound social shock that ensured it marked a new beginning as well as a terrible conclusion.

The USA had lost the wars in Indochina – both to the guerrillas on the ground, and to the protesters at home and around the world. During 1975–76, its troops left Thailand. As a parting present, the USA gave a large dollop of military aid and continued smaller subsidies for several years. But the Thai army was now on its own. Through its control over the state, it was able to triple the defence budget over the next six years and never faced the anticipated retaliation from the Indochinese states. But the Thai army had been swollen, corrupted, factionalized, and politicized by its massive US patronage and its involvement in an ideological war. Over the next decade, military factions fought over both the spoils of power and the direction of policy. Between 1977 and 1980, there were three more coups, one unsuccessful (in 1977) and the two others resulting in successive generals becoming prime minister. For all its own propaganda, the military was no basis for political stability.

The flight from urban repression swelled the number of armed guerrillas to a peak of 10 000 in 1979. The number of clashes also rose, with deaths rising over 1000 a year between 1977 and 1979. But the students who entered the jungle chafed under CPT discipline. Seksan Prasertkun complained that they 'had to fight for democracy all over again in the jungle'.[26] After their experience against military power and middle-class panic in the city, they doubted whether the CPT's Maoist strategy of 'village surrounding city' would ever succeed in Thailand. Emerging awareness of Cambodia's bloody experience under the Khmer Rouge further undermined enthusiasm for rural-based revolution. Moreover, during 1978–79, the communist states fell to fighting among themselves. Vietnam invaded Cambodia, and China responded by attacking Vietnam. The CPT split

Figure 20: Supporters of the CPT surrender their weapons to the army in a ceremony at Umphang in December 1982.

into pro-China and pro-Vietnam factions. The support and supply routes for the CPT's jungle campaign were undermined. The VOPT radio station in Kunming was closed.

In these circumstances, the centrist agenda, which had failed during 1974–76, re-emerged with both civilian and military support. The suffocatingly anti-communist regime installed in October 1976 was overthrown by the army after one year, and the timetable for restoring constitutional democracy shortened. The new government under General Kriangsak Chomanand returned to Kukrit's policy of normalizing relations with China and bargaining for the withdrawal of Chinese support for the CPT. Advocates of a combined military and political strategy against the local guerrillas gained influence within the army. General Prem Tinsulanond, who applied the methods in the northeast, rose to army head and defence minister in 1979, and prime minister in 1980. With continued help from USAID, money was poured into schemes of rural development, while the army battered the remaining communist bases and offered amnesty to defectors. Most of the students left the jungle between 1979 and 1981. Orphaned by their former international patrons, most CPT armed units emerged from the jungles and surrendered their arms during 1982–83 (Figure 20). The remnants of the CPT were

arrested when they attempted to hold a congress in 1987. The people's war was over.

CONCLUSION

By the late 1940s, the aspirations for the nation-state held by the old aristocrats, officials, generals, and new businesspeople in Thailand's narrow political elite were divided into two broad camps. One side upheld the ideal of a diverse, liberal, fair, and egalitarian nation achieved by the rule of law, a constitutional framework, and democratic representation. The other upheld the ideal of a strong and paternal state with the duty to protect, discipline, and educate its citizens within a hierarchic social order.

Over the next three decades, this division was absorbed within and eclipsed by the worldwide division of the Cold War. The US patronage of Thailand accelerated the development of a capitalist economy, strengthened military dictatorship, revived the role of the monarchy, and extended the reach of the state deeper into society. The resulting disruption combined with the spread of Marxist ideology to create an opposition of intellectuals, students, peasants, workers, and peripheral communities opposed to capitalism, US imperialism, and military dictatorship.

By the early 1970s, some businesspeople and technocrats began to seek an escape from the polarization of dictatorship and communism. Kukrit represented a new formula of liberal capitalism, limited democracy, and state paternalism, held together by the moral leadership of the monarchy and dispensing with both US patronage and military rule. This vision was suppressed in the polarization of 1975–76, but re-emerged in the shocked reaction to the 1976 massacre and guided a future course.

Although the student idealism of 1973 was crushed – Seksan left the jungle in 1981 with the declaration, 'I am a historical ruin' – the activists of 1973–76 went on to have a profound effect on following decades. After felling a dictatorship and taking part in a guerrilla war, they were neither victorious nor annihilated, but allowed to return to the mainstream and resume their ascent to elite positions throughout society. Along the way they broke the moulds for academic study and creative arts, challenging the American academic portrayal of Thailand, and generating a legacy of songs, short stories, critical social science, and other cultural forms that spread ideas of democracy, social justice, and Buddhist compassion more widely through society. Among the *phleng phua chiwit* (songs for life), with which bands like Caravan and Kammachon stirred the student demonstrations

and then the guerrilla camps, the most famous was Caravan's *Khon kap khwai* (Man and Buffalo):

> Man and man work the fields as men; man and buffalo work the fields as buffalo.
> Man and buffalo, the meaning is so deep, so long they have worked the fields,
> So long they have grappled with the toil, to their happiness and satisfaction.
> Let's go, let's all go, we carry the firewood and the plough to the field.
> We endure, become heavy-hearted, and inwardly the tears fall.
> Our hearts ache and our minds burn, but we are not afraid.
> This song is about dying, about the loss of being human.
> The bourgeois take our labour, divide up the classes, push the peasants down,
> Despise them as jungly. The effect is surely dying.