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THAILAND: NEW SOCIAL FORCES AND RE-EMERGING SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES

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...It is my belief based on my careful and serious studies that Socialism, and Socialism alone, is the only way out for the people of Thailand ...

...The force of the masses has been growing very satisfactorily and in the end there will be no reactionary force sufficient enough to withstand us. (Dr. Boon-sanong, February 9, 1975)

The above quote, taken from a special interview with Dr. Boonsanong Pundyana, leader of the Socialist Party of Thailand, represents the opinion of a growing number of Thai intellectuals, students, workers, and farmers. Although the workers' and farmers' understanding of socialism as an economic and political system remains vague, the growing appeal of this ideological movement since October 1973, is unprecedented in the history of Thailand. Remarkably, the new Socialist Party of Thailand received considerable support in Bangkok and particularly in the Provinces. For the first time in Thai history, candidates openly declared themselves Socialists, ran on what many claimed to be a communist party platform, and achieved victory1. Socialist candidates committed themselves to policies which included:

1. All U.S. troops and business interests to leave Thailand and that all further "imperialistic" ventures of the U.S. and Japan in Thailand cease immediately.
2. The monopoly of oil, minerals and other vital industries by foreign companies to be discontinued.
3. Anti-communist Act should be abolished.
4. Exploitation of the masses by Thai capitalists such as bankers, be discontinued.
5. Monopolistic practices by Thai merchants, and industrialists, particularly for rice and textile products should be discontinued.

1 Bangkok Post, February 9, 1975, p. 13.
The growth in party membership was considered phenomenal considering the stigma attached to all Thai socialist groups as a front for communists. When questioned about his party's ties with the communists, Boonsanong replied ...

One has to understand that the word, "Communism", has been used by dictators in the past as a tool for so long, to oppose people who fight for their own interests against oppression, who fight for independence, for freedom and for democracy. This word has been used quite successfully for quite some time but we believe that at present lots of people in Thailand have become aware, and are politically conscious. They have come to understand the real meaning of this tactic used by military dictatorships in the past.

The Anti-Communist Act should be abolished but there is no sign that it would be abolished in the near future.

We have been accused of being Communists mainly by people who are afraid of us. They fear the growth of the people's power. Gradually, we will become more powerful, although the government and many reactionary groups, including the Democrat Party, have been against us.

The fact that spokesmen for many of the other political parties, including the Prachatipat, publicly accused Boonsanong of being a "Communist", did not stop voters from casting their votes for him or his party. Boonsanong received over 10,000 votes in his losing bid for a House seat in Bangkok, while his party gained 15 seats in provinces. It is interesting to note that most of the original "100 constitutionalists" who precipitated the student revolt of 1973, were among the new members of the Socialist Party of Thailand. Moreover, all except one of the 13 "political prisoners" who were arrested on charges of being communists in October 1973, joined the new Socialist Party of Thailand.

In explaining the difference between his party and that of the Thai Communist Party, Boonsanong emphasized tactics. Apparently the Socialist Party agreed in principle with most of the Communist Party Platform and empathized with the peoples' struggle in the provinces. However, the Socialist Party, according to Boonsanong, was not yet prepared to engage in a violent confrontation with the forces of oppression and were, for the present time, content to work through the political processes of the new democratic institutions to achieve their goals. When responding to a question about the "insurgency", Boon-

\[1\] Ibid.
sanong implied that the United States penetration of the Thai political system had complicated the problem for the Thai. Curiously enough, he cited the U.S. as the originator of the term and further claimed that:

The word “insurgency,” again has been imported into this country by the United States, by military people who have cooperated with the Americans in the past. In fact, very rarely would you see any real evidence that people who have been arrested as Communists are really Communists.

Many people in Thailand find the lack of opportunity, exploitation by capitalists and other problems unbearable. These people cannot afford to stand still and be indifferent to all these very inhuman problems. Although we are not a Communist party and do not choose to fight with arms, we can understand why people in many parts of Thailand have decided to take that route for the betterment of the poor.

It was ironic that four months after he gave this explanation as to why some Thai “choose to fight” and work through the Communist Party — Boonsanong himself, was linked to an abortive attempt to smuggle guns to “Communists fighting units” in the northern province of Chiang Mai. Insorn Buakliaw, the SPT’s (Socialist Party of Thailand) Chiang Mai MP and Pirat Nakvijit, and SPT member, were arrested while driving Boonsanong’s Citroen from Lampang Province to Chiang Mai. Apparently, the police had stopped the car on a “routine impsection” and discovered six M2 cabines and a shotgun hidden in the boot of the Citroen auto. According to police reports, MP Insorn and Rawat Nualvilai, a Chiang Mai university student, who was also in the Citrogen, were released after Pirat confessed that he alone knew of the weapons in the car — and he alone planned to smuggle the illegal weapons to the rural based “fighting units” in the North. In his statement to the police, Pirat reportedly confessed that Insorn and Rawat had merely “hitched a ride” from Lampang to Chiang Mai — and knew nothing of the plans to smuggle the arms. Moreover, Pirat stated that Boonsanong knew nothing of the arms smuggling plan — and that he (Pirat) had only borrowed Boonsanong’s car to make the trip to Chiang Mai. Immediately after the incident, Mr. Virat Sakchirapapapong, the Secretary-General of the Socialist Party, held a press conference and stated emphatically that “our party emphasizes political struggle but not through violent means ... we would never resort to weapons to fight”.

3 Ibid
There was considerable speculation on the part of many Thai officials at the time, that either Boonsanong had "gone off the deep end" to directly support the communist fighting units in the north or he was "being framed" by his opposition. Boonsanong was in the midst of his political campaign for Mayor of Chaeng Rai, when the incident occurred. Moreover, he was considered a strong second to the favorite who was a candidate of the popular Prachatipat Party. Many of Boonsanong's supporters expressed the belief that the incident was hatched by opposition members to publically discredit him in view of his surprisingly strong candidacy and popularity among voters.

The following section, which details the development of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) from a historical perspective, explains further the changing role and goals of the "fighting units" in the north and other areas of Thailand.

The Thai Communist Party — Historical Background

Although relatively little has been written about Communism in Thailand prior to the formation of The Liberation Army of Thailand in 1969, the development of the Thai Communist Party can be traced as far back as 1925, when a Chinese Communist was sent from China to work with the overseas Chinese in Thailand. The Kuomintang had already set up many organizations among the Chinese workers in Bangkok. In 1927, after the split between the Chinese Communists and the Kuomintang in China, similar ideological disagreements developed among the overseas Chinese in Thailand. Chinese communists in Thailand began to break away from the various overseas Chinese organizations formed by the Kuomintang. At about the same time, many Marxist oriented university students from China went to Thailand. Many of these students had been introduced to Marxism by European instructors at Chinese universities. When serious differences arose between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party in China, many of the Marxist oriented university students were arrested by order of the Kuomintang officials. To escape, many of the students fled to Thailand where they helped to organize the Communist movement. Their guidance and leadership helped to initiate various new organizations. The most important was The Association of Communist Youth of Siam, which sought to spread the ideas of Marx and Lenin, increase party membership, and raise funds to support the Communists' struggle against the Kuomintang in China. From 1928-
1931, the Communist movement in Thailand gained momentum from the Vietnamese Communist Party under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. According to a biography of Ho Chi Minh written by Jean Lacouture, Ho worked with the Vietnamese community in Thailand to strengthen the struggle for independence from France. Lacouture maintains that Ho Chi Minh had considerable influence in the eventual development of Communism in Northeastern Thailand and resistance to the Saigon government by Buddhist monks:

The following Autumn Ho sailed for Siam with a triple objective: to set up cells among the substantial Vietnamese colony there; to foment trouble at the expense of the administration in nearby Indochina; and to reorganise the Comintern's networks in South-East Asia. In November 1928, there began to be talk of a certain "Old Chin" in the north-eastern provinces of Siam. He was rumoured to have come from China. But the Vietnamese in Siam saw quickly that he was one of their own people. In Udong, and subsequently in Sakon Nakhon, he founded a newspaper called Thanh-Ai (Friendship), opened a school where Vietnamese and Thai were taught side by side, and set up a forest cooperative. The villagers worshipped "The Lord High Genie Tran" — the departed spirits of Tran Hung Dao, the legendary sovereign who had defeated the Mongols; so "Old Chin" composed a song of praise to the 'guardian spirit of the mountains and waters of Vietnam': requirements of the 'nationalist phase' were leading him into strange ground. But in the eyes of Nguyen Ai Quoc, or Vuong, or Chin (the various names of Ho Chi Minh), anything that extolled the country's merits was paving the way for revolution.

Clad in the robes of a Buddhist monk, he afterwards lived for a while in Bangkok, studying and preaching and at the same time setting up cells within the pagodas, training the young monks in a comprehensive social philosophy which embraced everything except the foreign invader and his hirelings. Traces of the networks which he then established, and of the watchwords which he imparted, came to light years afterwards in south and south-eastern Cochin China (1945), and perhaps even in 1963-66, when the Buddhists rose against the authorities in Saigon. After all, Buddhism is rooted in attachment to the land of one's fathers. It attaches importance to the real, the immediate, the given, the experienced. It is a happy hunting-ground for a skilled Marxist like Ho.

By 1931, the Vietnamese Communist Party had moved their headquarters from Vietnam to Northeastern Thailand to seek the cooperation of the Vietnamese living there. The VCP workers were particularly effective in finding sympathizers among the Thai Vietnamese, Overseas Chinese

and Thai students. After the 1932 Revolution, in which the absolute monarchy was overthrown in a bloodless coup organized by the military and Pridi Phanomyong, the Thai Communists began increasing their propaganda under the name The Siam Communist Committee. This group claimed some credit for the change in government and removal of the absolute powers of the monarchy. About this time, three newspapers emerged which supported the claims of the Siam Communist Committee. The names of the newspapers carried customary symbolic revolutionary meanings namely Satja (truth), 24 Mithuna (24th June — the date of the revolution) and Muanchon Raisapda (Mass weekly), all of which gave Marxist-Leninist interpretations to international events. However, the liberal political atmosphere which was so prevalent in 1932, soon disappeared and in 1933, the Thai government passed the first anti-communist law. Apparently, the law did not deter several young advocates of socialism. The very next year leaflets advocating the establishment of a Russian style government in Thailand, were distributed in the Northeast by University students under the name of Khonanoom Thai (Thai Youth Group). In 1935, the Thai government strengthened their anti-communist stand and amended the anti-communist statute of 1933 to suppress the new communist groups which emerged under non-communist organizational names.

The invasion of China by Japan caused many anti-communist leaders in China and Southeast Asia to seek the aid of indigenous communists. From 1935-1941, there began a general trend of anti-Japanese alliances in Southeast Asia among nationalists and communists. After 1941, many Chinese Communists entered Thailand to fight the common enemy, Japan.

It was at this time that the Thai Communist Party was officially established and in the name “Thai patriotism”, announced their support of the Free Thai Movement. The Free Thai Movement was a group of Thai patriots who continued to resist Japanese occupation after the Thai government under Prime Minister Phibun, declared war against the United States in collaboration with Japanese goals in Southeast Asia. The Free Thai Movement was not a fighting force, and its primary purpose was to supply information on Japanese plans and installations in Thailand to the United States and the British. It was originally organized by Pridi Phanomyong in collaboration with the U.S.A’s allied
intelligence unit, The Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.)\textsuperscript{6}. However, the Thai government and the Japanese administrators were aware of the existence of the Free Thai Movement and often tolerated its activities. A case in point is Dr. Puay Ungphakorn, who was parachuted by the O.S.S. into Northern Thailand to support the Free Thai Movement. Although captured and imprisoned for his activities, Puay was released from jail every night in order to continue his work.

During this period (1941-1945), the Thai Communist Party became more successful in recruiting members as part of the anti-Japanese alliance. The TCP expanded its activities and divided the party organization into two independent branches, a Chinese Executive Committee, primarily comprised of Thai Chinese, and a Thai Executive Committee made up of indigenous Thais.

The favorable political climate for activities of the TCP was sustained even after the war. Some political observers attributed this situation to the need of the Thai government to court the U.S.S.R. to obtain approval for membership into the U.N. Thus, in 1946, when the Thai government abolished all anti-communist acts, the Chinese Branch of the TCP separated itself completely from the parent organization under the name The Chinese Communist Party of Thailand, and began recruiting left-leaning Chinese from the overseas Chinese communities in Bangkok and Thonburi. The primary concern of the CCPT was still to support the Chinese Communist Party's struggle in Mainland China. Under the new organizational name and a more effective party apparatus, the CCPT gained considerable influence over the Thai Chinese community. The weekly publication of Mahachon (The Great Mass), greatly assisted the CCPT in its efforts to increase membership in the rural areas among students and laborers. However, by 1947, the Thai government, having obtained membership in the U.N., with considerable support from the U.S., began once again to suppress the communist movement, and overseas Chinese became the target of government harassment, deportation, school closings and press censorship. After the successful coup d'etat by Phibun Songkram, the Communists were forced to move underground. In 1949, after the victory by the Communists in China, The Chinese Communist Party of Thailand ceased most of its activities. Most of the mem-

\textsuperscript{6} The Vietnamese had an effective resistance organization under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, who also collaborated with the allies O.S.S.
bers of the CCPT went to China while others joined the Thai Communist Party. In the meantime, United States' programs for aid and defense support began to move in and consolidate positions with the Thai military leaders. In 1950, the Thai Communists attempted to cooperate with various civilian leaders and politicians in hopes of mounting a successful counter-coup. The attempt failed, and it was apparently the last time to Thai Communist Party tried to achieve its aims through Parliamentary means. Thereafter, the TCP leadership advocated “armed struggle” and a “people’s war”. A clandestine organization, the Thai liberation Organization, was formed and its members were sent to Communist controlled areas of Vietnam and Laos for training. The next year (1951) at a meeting of all Communist representatives, the Party’s name was officially changed from The Thai Communist Party to the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), and the official party policy was formulated. Generally, the party’s policy was a carbon copy of the strategy put forth by Mao Tse-tung. Members of the CPT were called upon to support a revolution by violent means or by protracted warfare via a strategy which would first liberate the masses in the rural areas and thereby enable them to surround the cities. By December of 1952, this proclamation of policy by the CPT began to be put into action by the Party’s front organization, The Thai Liberation Organization. The TLO organized what later came to be called a “Peace Revolt”. This initial attempt at open confrontation with the government was a complete failure and most of the TLO leaders were arrested. Thereafter, the Thai government revitalized their efforts against the Communist movement and enacted an anti-communist law calling for more severe punishment for members of communist organizations. The CPT was forced to disband the TLO and curtail all plans for expansion as the government began arresting CPT members and sympathizers in considerable numbers. It was during this time that the famous socialist author, Kulab Saipradit, was arrested. Rather than attempt further expansion in Thailand, the CPT then began sending most of the remaining members to China for training. In 1953, the CPT set up three organizations for general assistance, infiltration, and recruitment. Although these organizations had names designated by the CPT, they came to be known by the names given them by the Thai government’s Communists Operation Command (CSOC). The new groups became known as the Grey Organization, the Yellow Organization and the Red Organization. The nature and objectives of each of the three organizations is described below:
The Grey Organization: a front organization of the semi-legal status and included groups for helping labourers, the Temple Committee, the Household Medicine's Committee (First Aid), the organization of various musical bands, sports teams and student tutorial units.

The Yellow Organization: This organization was for infiltration into various government-sponsored groups and for working among and with all persons opposed to the Government, such as the Thai Labour Association.

The Red Organization: This was the unit for politicization and Party recruitment which, in turn, formed such groups as The United Professional Workers' Union, the Thai Liberation Organization, the Farmers' Liberation Organization and the Thai Youth Organization.

These organizations continued their clandestine activities until the general election of 1957, when the CPT was able to make contact with many of the more progressive Thai politicians who won seats in the new Parliament. Since many of these politicians were in agreement with policies of socialism and anti-imperialism, the CPT grasped the opportunity to use these contacts to transfer a considerable number of their operatives from the rural areas to the cities. The CPT strategy was based on the hope that vital political contacts in Bangkok would assist their overall efforts in increasing financial and political support for their bases in the rural areas. These plans by the CPT were aborted in 1958, when the notorious anti-communist Sarit Thanarat, led a successful coup and assumed control over the newly formed government. With the help of various U.S. supported agencies, Sarit initiated a series of counter-insurgency operations. Faced with this new anti-communist push many of the socialist oriented politicans in Bangkok disassociated themselves from the CPT, while others found refuge as professors at universities in the provinces. The University of Chiang Mai became a popular haven for the students of Pridi and supporters of socialist reform. There were a few intellectuals who remained quietly at their posts in the faculty of economics at Thammasat University, while several other professors

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7 Sarit became particularly well-known for his repressive regime which included such measures as public executions of suspected arsonists and communists. He jailed Kularb Saipradit for his writings, and even had the popular Kukrit Promoj arrested for criticizing the American Ambassador to Thailand in his newspaper, *Siam Rath*. Sarit also gained notoriety for his social life which included the maintenance of over 130 wives and mistresses. It was rumored that Sarit enjoyed forcibly seducing Thai beauty contestants while they were fully dressed and he wore only a red Thai sarong (pakamaa daeng). To avoid confrontation with the feared "pakamaa daeng" — beauty contests in Thailand were discontinued until Sarit died.
sought refuge abroad. It was during this time that Kulab Saipradit, after spending over five years in confinement as a political prisoner, requested and was granted political asylum in Peking.

In view of the sudden change in the political situation, the CPT was forced to revert back to its initial objectives of working primarily in the provinces. With Sarit in power and U.S. military assistance increasingly at an unprecedented rate, the CPT apparently realized that the situation was still unsuitable for a real people's war. The CPT subsequently discarded many of the strategies employed before the Sarit coup, and concentrated on building an infrastructure of highly qualified cadres in the provincial and village administrations. However, as might be expected, many problems arose in the early stages of the implementing of this because many of the provincial party members were not well versed in the CPT principles and consequently their effectiveness was minimal.

By 1961, the CPT altered their strategy to once again accommodate the use of armed resistance. To this end a new front organization was established — the Democratic Patriotic Front. This new organization sought territorial acquisition through protracted warfare in suitable areas of provincial Thailand. From 1961-1964, the Democratic Patriotic Front concentrated their efforts in Northeastern Thailand, and were eventually successful in seizing remote parts of Nakhon Phanom and Sakoh Nakhon provinces, which were utilized as support bases. These bases supported the overall strategy of the CPT, which was to avoid direct confrontation with government troops and provincial officers, while concentrating their resources exclusively upon the formation and training of effective fighting units.

In 1964, the CPT formed a new organization to recruit and train members which came to be known as the Volunteer Liberation Organization. At about the same time the Movement for the Independence of Thailand was established by the CPT. After the establishment of the MIT, the leaders of this movement announced a return to a previously used strategy — that being, to use the cities as a means for supporting CPT activities in the rural areas. Having been able to establish several fighting units in Northeastern Thailand, the CPT also adjusted their strategy on confrontation with the government forces, and began to encourage expansion through armed struggles in the provinces. Thereafter, localized and limited warfare frequently occurred between various communist fighting units and government forces in the remote villages of the provinces throughout the countryside. On August 7th 1965, the Thai Patriotic Front engaged the government forces in a fierce
battle at Baan Na Bua Village in the province of Nakhon Phanom. Though the Communists suffered serious losses in this battle, further clashes continued at Phuksed Mountain in Ubonratthathuri Province and various villages in the northern provinces of Nan, Pitsanulok, Phetchabun, Uttaradit, Tak, and Chiangrai. The “armed struggle” spread as fighting broke out in the southern provinces of Suratthani, Nakhonsriratthamorn and Pattalung, and eventually penetrated areas just south of Bangkok in the provinces of Ratchaburi, Phetchaburi, and Prachuabkirikhan. It was also during this period beginning in 1964 that the PRC’s (People’s Republic of China) official statements began lending support to the CPT.

**China and the CPT**

Although the People’s Republic of China (PRC) played a role in the training of cadres for the CPT, and provided a haven for an ideological assortment of Thai exiles, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was relatively silent in giving official recognition to the CPT. This official PRC position changed somewhat in 1964, when the CCP published the National Day Congratulatory message of the CPT. Without mentioning the Soviet Union by name, the message implied an allegiance to revolution in the CCP image, and not by the means of “revisionist forces” who had “betrayed the meaning of revolution” 8. Moreover, the CPT message promised that “the relationships between the peoples of the two countries will grow closer and closer” 9. The message also attacked the Royal Thai Government's “hostile policy toward China”, and maintained that the Thanom Government was nothing more than a “slavish tool” of the U.S. imperialists 10.

It became apparent that the CPT had chosen alliance with the CCP and had adopted a Maoist approach to revolution. This was not really surprising since the so-called “philosophers” for Thai socialism were exiled in China during this time. However, Pridi’s “Impermanence of Society” 11 and Kulab Saipradit’s “Till We Meet Again” 12 reflected

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 "The Impermanence of Society" was written while Pridi was in China. It was published in Thai (i.e., Kwam Pen Annicang Khong Sangkhom) in 1957, and generally reflects Pridi’s attempts to synthesize Buddhist theological precepts and Marxist dialectics.
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some of the Russian Progressivist philosophy which allowed for cultural adaptations and gradual change of the system. The CPT's 1964 message was uncompromising and called for a united front to be formed "from below" to overthrow the Thai government.

There were other, and perhaps more basic, reasons why the "grass roots" Mao-oriented approach to revolution seemed more appropriate for Thailand. First of all, political parties were outlawed during this period (1959-1967), and forms of overt political participations was precluded for most Thai. Moreover, the leadership and cadre levels of the CPT was still primarily comprised of Thai-Chinese, and northeastern Thai of Laotian and Vietnamese origin. Pridi, though respected, was basically an ethic Thai, and it is generally believed that while Pridi was in Peking, he interacted very little with the Thai-Chinese CPT representatives. Although Pridi reportedly authored several articles for the CCP newspaper "Jen-min-jih-Pao" in the 1950's, other Thai exiles such as Monkorn Nonakon, who was imprisoned for subversion, emerged to lead the MIT. Pridi apparently played only a ceremonial, if sometimes obscure, leadership role. Even Kularb Saipradit, though quite old, was more active than Pridi in the CPT while in China. Kularb was often mentioned, as a Thai delegate to various CCP sponsored international front conferences, and was generally more involved in CPT international activities than was Pridi. Another exile, Phayom Chulanond, also emerged in a role of leadership to the MIT, and the Thai Patriotic Front (TPF), but he is often described by some Thai as being more "opportunist than Communist". Phayom was an MP from Phat Buri to the Thai Parliament from 1948-1950. He failed at re-election in 1950, so he re-entered the Thai army where he achieved the rank of lieutenant-colonel, until he was stripped of it by the Thai government in 1964. Regardless of the image of Phayom as a "frustrated opportunist" projected by several Thai officials (e.g., Thanat Khoman, etc.), Mr. Chulamond, as of 1971, was scholars (i.e., "Jong kwaa ja pop kan mai") because of Kularb's common use of ideomatic expressions of the Thai market place. Other Thai intellects, however, regard Kularb's adaptations to the language of the "phuu noi" humanistic and appropriate. Because of his writings and firm commitment to the Socialist cause, Kularb is generally more highly regarded than Pridi by intellectual leaders of socialist movements. (e.g., Dr. Chaianan, Dr. Boonsanong, etc.).

believed to have remained a member of the TPF's central committee and this organization official "overseas representative". In 1965, several Thai delegations representing these newly formed front organization (e.g., Thai Patriotic Front) began to surface at various conferences in Peking. These included, a Thailand Federation of Patriotic Workers, a Thai Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, and a Thailand Federation of Trade Unions.

According to some sources the training of Thai leftists for political indoctrination at the Marxist-Leninist Institute in Peking began to increase during this period (1964-1965). However, it is generally believed that even with the increased activities in Peking and at the cadre training school in K'un-ming (Yunnan Province), the total number of Thai trainees in China was small compared to the number trained in North Vietnam.

North Vietnam and the CPT

While China was training relatively few senior Thai cadres (i.e., approximately 700 between 1952-1969), North Vietnam, beginning around 1962, began "graduating" over 100 Thai and Thai-Lao each year from the Hoa Binh School near Hanoi. Apparently, China and North Vietnam had established a division of labor for training programs. The Chinese provided indoctrination and training to "prepare" the higher ranking members of the CPT while the North Vietnamese provided training and equipment in preparing ordinary soldiers and low-level cadres for the revolution. Due to the fact that most of the Thai trainees in North Vietnam were either Thai-Lao or Thai-Vietnamese, there is considerable speculation, that many of these "graduates" were sent to Laos to assist the Communist Pathet Lao, and not back to Thailand to join the CPT.

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 17.
17 Ibid.
18 However, after the Pathet Lao assumed a dominant role in the coalition government of Laos (1971-1974) and the complete take-over by the Communist Lao in 1975, it was generally believed that most of the Thai-Lao had already begun to assist the CPT directly.
The year 1965, marked an important milestone for the CPT. This was evidenced as the overall CPT objectives for the people's revolution became more apparent. The shift in CPT policy in directing all fighting units to engage in “armed struggle” was combined with a well-defined 12-point program drawn up by the CPT’s Revolutionary People’s Council. The various points were enumerated as follows:

1. To destroy the Thai government and throw out the U.S. imperialists.
2. To change the country’s policy of reliance upon the U.S.A. and to withdraw from SEATO (South-East Asian Treaty Organisation).
3. To set up a new parliament, with representatives drawn from the differing patriotic groups and to formulate a new constitution.
4. To guarantee basic freedoms of speech, writing, communications, religious belief, meeting and assembly, association and political parties.
5. Every nationality and race is to have equal rights.
6. Men and women shall have equality in political, legal, economic and social terms.
7. To improve the living conditions of labouring classes.
8. To initiate a land reform and improve farmers' living conditions.
9. To improve the situation of low-ranking government officials.
10. To suppress all forms of corruption and abolish every financial pressure group.
11. To abolish the system of monopolistic practises and accelerate the nation’s economic development.
12. To protect and promote education and native customs.

The program carried with it a propaganda offensive with stated objectives to destroy all forms of exploitation by imperialists, landlords, and capitalists. The CPT maintained in its message to the Thai people, that Thailand had remained under a system of feudalism for the last 100 years. Spokesmen for the CPT argued that:

Those who have power have always controlled the land while those who produce — the farmers — are exploited by the landlords. Since farmers have little political knowledge or education, attempts at rebellion or demonstration have so far failed, for they did not have the Communist Party and the proletariat as their leaders. When Western capitalist influence penetrated Thailand, the country became a semi-feudal quasi-colony. Following the Second World War,
all the big powers tried to destroy the emerging national economy through imperialism; the capitalists with their financial powers exploit the people whose only power lies in their own labour. The USA, particularly, tried very hard to promote this form of bandage; the Americans sent USOM to advise and manage all matters of development and technical advance; they sent JUSMAG to control Thailand's military; and they sent USIS and the Peace Corps to supervise and control Thailand's educational and cultural development. The Thai Government thus became a puppet of the USA and the Thai people, slaves. As Thais we have no freedoms, the Thai government has no stable economic policy for crises in the national economy which will continue to constantly recur, causing a great deal of suffering and injustice to the common, ordinary people.

The CPT solution to the above scenario is a revolution to eliminate all class distinctions in the Thai society. According to the CPT, the Thai society can be divided into four classes: Laborers, farmers, small capitalists, and national capitalists. The CPT defined each group as follows:

1. The Labor class: although still a small group, the laborers are the most exploited and have nothing to lose in supporting revolutionary change. Labor is the most progressive and important group in the Revolution.

2. Farmers can be divided into 3 groups:
   - **Poor Farmers**: those who have to rent all their land. They can be treated in the same manner as the labor class. They are exploited in every way and can be relied upon as much as laborers in promoting the revolution.
   - **Middle Farmers**: They have slightly better economic conditions than the poor farmers but they are also exploited by the landlords and capitalists, feudalists and aristocracy. Although their ideas and potential is not necessarily as progressive as the poor farmers, they can be considered as good friends and allies.
   - **Rich Farmers**: although they are capitalists within the rural area, often building up their fortunes by exploiting middle and poor farmers, yet they, in turn, are under the power and control of the feudalists, capitalists and aristocracy. This group also wants independence from its oppressors and may give some support to the revolution.

3. Small Capitalists: The small capitalists or petty-bourgeoisie are teachers, instructors, university teachers, university students, scholars, teacher-trainers. They are also being exploited and oppressed
and are also potential revolutionaries, but lack the capabilities of conducting and leading the Revolution. Although well-connected to the present system of economic structures, they can nevertheless be allies under the leadership of the proletariat.

4. National Capitalists: No matter how rich these are, they are still being exploited by taxation and corruption from the U.S. imperialists. All these groups can be used only when the Revolution has progressed already to some extent.

To operationalize the CPT policy as it pertained to class distinctions, the Party proposed organization of different groups to oppose imperialism, feudalism, landlords, and capitalists. The CPT maintained that these oppositional groups would ferment the growth of socialism and eventually communism.

In 1965, the CPT firmly established the principle that force must be used to achieve the ultimate victory for the revolution, because "no ruling class in the world will give up its powers willingly and voluntarily". Moreover, the CPT, in 1965 reemphasized that Parliamentary government will never be able to create equality or promote the interests of the working class, because "Parliament is itself but a reflection of the interests of the ruling class". Therefore, the CPT maintained in their 1965 manifesto that: "The struggle must involve the use of armed fighting units and political campaigns simultaneously ... the fight must be waged both in towns and in the countryside ... that the cities can be surrounded". Moreover, the CPT proposed that the cities should no longer be ignored by the cadres because "much work must be done within the cities to mobilize the laboring classes and organizations need to be created to provide training and political education". Even the various fron organizations of the CPT (e.g., Democratic Patrioted Front, etc.) established in the early 1960's were in need of training, and were largely ineffective prior to 1965. In an attempt to remedy the rather weak condition of the front organization, the Thai Patriot Front announced a 6-point program on January 23rd, 1965. The program urged all true Thai patriots ...

1. To fight for the independence of the nation and to terminate the US connection.
2. To fight for political freedoms and the announcement of a new constitution.
3. To initiate a policy of peace and independence and withdraw from SEATO.
4. To promote the economic development, especially of farmers.
5. To improve the methods of punishing corrupt officials and initiate land-reform.
6. To improve the health and education services and to put a stop to the debilitating culture of imperialism.

Also in 1965, the Farmers’ Liberation Association put forth their objectives in a six-point program. These objectives were as follows:

1. To gather the collective powers of the farmers.
2. To wipe out all traces of US imperialism and that of other Western countries.
3. To set up a government with members drawn from among the farmers.
4. To protect the rights and benefits of all the people.
5. To improve the techniques used in agriculture.
6. To struggle to eradicate all class distinctions from society.

To operationalize the CPT manefesto and propaganda statements of the various Front Organizations, the CPT proposed in 1965, a specific plan for recruitment. The CPT maintained that to accomplish the goals of the revolution cadres must become the true friends of the people. To this end a program of assistance was established which called upon cadres to assist villagers in building their houses, harvesting their crops and in plowing the land. According to the CPT, this rural people-oriented approach would aid the overall program of recruitment. The CPT also reemphasized the three guiding principles on recruitment.* These were:

1. Since it takes a long time to mobilize people, the cadres must use great patience, for the poor have been oppressed for so long that they no longer possess any self-confidence.
2. Cadres must believe firmly that the Revolution is for and of the people.

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*As pointed out by one astute observer of CPT efforts in recruitment, CPT cadres when assessing the situation in localities in order to mobilize the masses, must survey all the social structures of the village and evaluate all changes in order to better reach the people, they must study the connections between the people and the government; they must know the attitudes of the people to both the government and insurgents; they must know the history, the living conditions and the economic status of the people. Only after such an exhaustive survey can cadres start to look for suitable recruits and adapt their propaganda to the realities of the particular village situation.
people; it is their revolution. This revolution must occur from con­
tradictions within each village, not from outside means.
3. Propaganda efforts must be adapted to suit the particular localities.
The Revolution and struggle will only occur if there is some special
problem.

1965-1973 Centralization and Expansion of the CPT

It was during the period of 1965-1968, that all organizations were
unified under the Patriotic Front of Thailand, and a clandestine
"people's network" was established and directed against Americans in
Thailand. However, on February 25th, 1968, leaders of the Party an­
nounced that all fronts and organizations would come under the direct
control of the CPT. The CPT apparently saw the need to consolidate the
proliferation of front groups and fighting units which had carried the
struggle to all regions of the country. The following year, on January
4th, 1969, the CPT announced the formation of The People's Liberation
Army of Thailand.

After the establishment of the PLAT, all phases of the armed struggle
was expanded. Clandestine radio stations monitored from Southern
China and Communist controlled areas of Laos continued to denounce
Thanom and Prapass daily as "reactionaries and running dogs of
American imperialism" in the local northern dialect, English, and Thai.
However, from 1968-1972, there was a general de-emphasis of the
psychological and propaganda warfare and the CPT began to concentrate
its efforts on more violent acts against the government. Incidents of in­
surgency increased at a rapid rate with the most significant rise involving
sabotage of government and U.S. installations, assassinations of provin­
cial officials, ambushes of local militia, and direct attacks on government
positions in the provinces. The following table shows the extent of the
increase in communist activities during the period 1966-1972.

20 The source of the Table is Com Ti Rak ("Communist Darling"), a book published
in Thai in 1974 by Colonel Han Phongsitanon, Colonel Wicharn Songhaprawan, Police
Captain Manas Satayarak, Police Major Anand Senakhan, Wirun Tanchareon, Police
Captain Varasith Sumon, and Police Sargent Wichit Sirikun ... all officers of the CSOC
(Communist Suppressive Operations Command). Most of these persons were sub­
sequently indicted for printing almost verbatim secret reports of the CSOC.
INCIDENCE OF INSURGENCY (1966-1972)

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>680</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attacks</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambushes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>111</td>
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<td>Provocations</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>487</td>
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<td>Psychological &amp; Propaganda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warfare</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>88</td>
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<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>332</td>
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<td>411</td>
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<td>Sabotage</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shooting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>108</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forced Logistic Support</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Communists killed</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>362</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Communists Arrested</td>
<td>1,440</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>1,132</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Communists Surrendered</td>
<td>1,458</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>899</td>
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</table>

The insurgents success in the armed struggle for remote areas of Northern Thailand increased at an unprecedented rate and the "statistics of death" began to favor the communists fighting units throughout the country. As shown in the table below, the ratio of government officials killed to insurgents killed dropped from 1:2.8 in 1967 to 1:0.7 in 1972.21

STATISTICS OF DEATHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. Government officials killed</th>
<th>No. Insurgents killed</th>
<th>Ratio government : insurgents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1 : 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>1 : 2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>1 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>1 : 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1 : 0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1 : 0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972 (Jan. to Sept.)</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>1 : 0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 Ibid.
The sharp increase in the incidence of insurgency was combined with a CPT effort to intensify the armed struggle in support of the expansion of local fighting units throughout the country. The map shows the extent of Communist controlled territory in Thailand, and the known infiltration routes

The Communist Movement Since the Student Revolution of October 1973

The student revolution proved to be a catalyst in the birth of protest movements among several sectors of the Thai society. This significant event also aided in the rebirth of other previously established social movements. The Communist Movement was no exception. Incidents of insurgency and overall insurgent strength increased at a dramatic rate in the aftermath of the student revolt. Insurgents under arms increased from an estimated 3,500 in 1973, to 5,000 in 1974, and by February 1975, the number was placed at over 8,000. The CPT was particularly successful in increasing its strength in North and Northeastern Thailand, but significant increases were also registered in the rice-rich Central Plain just above Bangkok and the southern provinces adjacent to Burma and Malaysia. Even more significant, the dramatic increase in number of insurgents was apparently combined with a new sophistication of weapons. By mid 1975, almost all insurgents were armed with the latest model of the AK-47 or M-16 rifles, while some units possessed mortars and B-40 rockets, similar to those used by the insurgents in Vietnam. Moreover, the attacking "fighting units" of the insurgent forces also increased in size, and assaults which previously lasted for only a few minutes, now began to last hours and even longer. Government casualties continued to be more than 50% higher than insurgent losses in most of these skirmishes. A case in point is a battle which raged for several days, seven miles from the Thai-Laotian border in April 1975. On the first day of battle, Communist-oriented Meo tribesmen, armed with automatic weapons, killed 16 government soldiers and wounded 20, while suffering no casualties themselves. As the battle entered its third day, the Thai army was forced to send in reinforcements. However, several helicopters bringing in reinforcements to the battle were shot down, killing 17 more government troops.

According to government sources, the battle began when about 200 guerillas attacked a cavalry division guarding workers building a road

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22 Ibid
across several communists infiltration routes. The attack was apparently well planned in advance, and was one of the worst set-backs in history for Thai counter-insurgency forces. Some political observers even speculated that this battle was the beginning of a general dry-season offensive along the Thai-Laotian border. Sources from the Ministry of Defense claimed that North Vietnamese regulars were among the guerilla force. However, this claim was refuted by sources close to the scene of battle.

The Meo tribal insurgency is reported to be led right down to the platoon level by Thais and Chinese-Thai cadres who were trained in North Vietnam, China, and Laos. Throughout 1974 and 1975, these insurgents managed to halt three major road building projects in areas along the Thai-Laotian border. The areas designated for road construction by Thai government ran adjacent to the Communists’ “liberated zones” in Thailand and the major support bases in Laos. The official purpose of the road construction projects was ostensively to further the Thai government’s efforts for rural development. However, the CPT apparently saw that the major purpose was actually to provide increased logistic support to the government’s counter-insurgency programs.

The CPT’s statements after the October 1973 revolution maintained that the old regime of Thanom and Prapas were still in power, and that the new civilian regime was little different from the military dictatorship. Moreover, the official statement marking the 32nd anniversary of the CPT which was broadcasted in February of 1975 from a clandestine radio station in China, reemphasized the party’s determination to follow the violent path to power. Since the 1973 overthrow of the Thai military regime, the CPT cadres displayed considerable flexibility in adjusting to the government’s counter-insurgency plans almost as quickly as they were conceived. The leaders of the various “fighting units” shifted the thrust of their activities in response to each new directive from Bangkok.

As of May of 1975, a variety of successive counter-insurgency plans by the military failed to stem the growth of the insurgency — and the extensive rural development effort seemed to have made little difference in stemming the tide of communism in sensitive areas of the outer provinces. Studies conducted by U.S.I.S. (United States Information Service) and many agencies of the Thai government in 1974-1975, provided evidence which only supported the prospects for further government failure in the provinces. More specifically, results of studies showed a widening of the gap between rural and urban populations, and revealed
that the road building programs in the Northeast apparently did not accelerate rural development as planned, and has, instead, caused greater economic inequity.

In 1975, in response to the apparent failure of government programs for rural development and counter-insurgency, some more far sighted local commanders proposed a complete shift in government strategy. The new plan which was named "Volunteer Self Development and Protection", called for a massive five year expansion of the local militia. The plan also called for a non-military component which involved an expansion of the village government and a multiplication of resources flowing directly to the villages. This general plan of decentralization at the village level actually was encouraged as early as 1967, through legislation, but the military government of Thanom and Prapass had little interest in supporting local home rule. The proposed plan was designed to increase the size of the village government, by providing three locally elected villagers to assist the traditional village headman (Phu yai baan). Also, the plan allowed for more opportunities for participation in community development.

The growing insurgency in Thailand seemed to have received an impetus from the successful communists offensives in the Spring of 1975, which completely engulfed Cambodia and most of South Vietnam. Some Thai leaders expressed the view that the North Vietnamese leaders would seek revenge against the Thai military for collaborating with the U.S. in the bombing of North Vietnam. Moreover, there was considerable apprehension on the part of many Thai officials that even new improved plans for the rural areas such as the "Volunteer Self Development and Protection" program might well be too little, too late. Other more optimistic Thai views placed considerable faith in the new parliamentary government "to guide the various extremes to compromise and accommodation".