

Institut de Sociologie
(Fondé par Ernest Solvay)
Université Libre de Bruxelles

Centre d'Etude du
Sud-Est Asiatique
et de l'Extrême-Orient

ASIA QUARTERLY

A JOURNAL FROM EUROPE

OFFPRINT: 1975/1

EVOLUTION OF THE THAI STUDENT MOVEMENT (1940-1974)

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Historical Background

In resisting colonialism (particularly from 1873-1910), Thai history was characterized by a domestic policy designed to completely reorganize the basic government structure, and a foreign policy construed to reluctantly appease the more immediate appetites of Western innovators through maximum appearances and minimal concessions¹. Hence, Thailand, unlike India, lacks any real tradition of student activism. In the early 1900's while Indian students protested political issues (e.g., partition of Bengal — 1905), the relatively few existing Thai university students remained detached from political matters, which were left entirely to the King and the Royal Council until 1932. This was due primarily to the fact that Thai university students as such were non-existent until 1916, when by Royal Command the status of the Civil Servants School was elevated to that of a university and named Chulalongkorn University, in memory of King Chulalongkorn the Great. It was not until June, 1932, that the absolute monarchy was abolished in a bloodless coup and the reigns of government transferred to a military and civilian elite. The liberal ideals of new ruling clique were reflected in the area of higher education and in 1933, just one year after the coup, the "University of Moral and Political Science" was founded. This name was later changed to "The University of Moral Science" (i.e., Thammasat University) in 1952, but the curriculum continued to emphasize the humanities, particularly political science and law. In 1942, the

¹ Rosario PRIZZIA, "King Chulalongkorn and the Reorganization of Thailand's Provincial Administration", *East-West Center Review*, LV, 3 (March 1968), p. 49.

Faculty of Medicine was separated from Chulalongkorn University and became "Mahidol University", named after the father of Bhumibhol, the present king of Thailand. In 1943, the School of Agriculture and the School of Forestry were combined to establish the first agricultural institution of higher learning, Kasetsart University. Also, in 1943, Silapakorn University, specializing primarily in architecture and the fine arts, was founded. In 1954, the College of Education was established and granted university status, with its prime objectives to train teachers, school administrators, and educational research workers. Since its conception, various other educational programs have been added, and the College of Education now is comprised of several campuses in Bangkok with other campuses spread throughout the outer provinces of Thailand. It should be noted that the first five universities mentioned above, though all institutions of higher learning, were not all administered by the Ministry of Education. Only Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, and Silapakorn Universities were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education while Kasetsart University was administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Mahidol University by the Ministry of Public Health. However, in 1959, all five universities were placed under the Prime Minister's Office and in 1963, as a result of the Prime Minister's Office Organization Act, each university gained the legal status of a ministry's department. Soon thereafter, the National Council of Education was established to function as a coordinating committee whose primary concern still is the activities of all universities.

Of these five universities, only Chulalongkorn maintained a broad curriculum offering degrees in several areas of study. Kasetsart University offered courses only in agriculture ; Mahipol provided instruction only in medicine ; Thammasart University in jurisprudence ; and Silapakorn in various areas of art. However, since 1965, each of these universities has expanded the scope of its curriculum by adding new faculties and new fields of studies, particularly in the area of the humanities. Moreover, several recently established universities include a broad base of academic fields of study, and provide educational opportunities to the residents of outer provinces. In 1964, Chiang Mai University was established in the ancient northern capital of Chiang Mai province, and in the same year Khonkaen University was created to afford higher educational opportunities to the residents of the northeastern province of Thailand. In 1967, the University of Songkla Nakarin was opened to residents of southern Thailand. This eventually included a

Faculty of Education located at a campus at Pattani and also a campus at Haayai specializing in engineering and the medical sciences. Before the establishment of these universities in the provinces, Bangkok was, and to a large extent still remains, the primary residence of university students, and the universities in Bangkok still provide more than ninety percent (90 %) of the graduates ². More recently, this percentage was somewhat increased with the establishment of Ramkamhaeng University in 1971. Located in Bangkok and named in memory of the famous King of the Sukothai era, this university was created through the efforts of liberal parliament members only months before martial law was declared in 1971. Beginning with primarily a Liberal Arts Curriculum and an open-admissions policy, Ramkamhaeng has had to adjust and expand its programs to the demands of an ever-increasing rate of enrollment. Precise enrollment figures and other relevant characteristics of the Thai universities are present in the following table :

*Enrollment, Year of Foundation and
Location of Thai Universities*

Name of University	Number of Enrollment in 1972	Year of Foundation	Location
Chulalongkorn	12,450	1916	Bangkok
Thammasat	9,148	1933	Bangkok
Mahidol	3,901	1942	Bangkok
Kasetsart	6,007	1943	Bangkok
Silpakorn	262	1943	Bangkok
College of Education	15,979	1954	Three campuses in Bangkok and five campuses in the provinces
Chieng Mai	7,236	1964	Chieng Mai
Khonkaen	1,649	1964	Khonkaen
Songkla	788	1967	Songkla and Pattani
Ramkamhaeng	28,611	1970	Bangkok
Total	86,031		

The figures were obtained from the Office of the National Education Council.

² This does not include the police and military academics of N.I.D.A., all of which represent institutions of higher learning that have as their specific purpose the training of prospective military and civilian government officials.

Location of Universities in Bangkok

University students protest marches always take place in Bangkok. The locations of the universities in Bangkok are of prime importance to the further understanding of student activism in Thailand.

Thammasat University may be used as the starting point to visualize the geographical implications of student activism. Thammasat University is located near the old palace where all kings of Bangkok preceeding Rama V have resided³. Silpakorn University lies between Thammasat and the Palace.

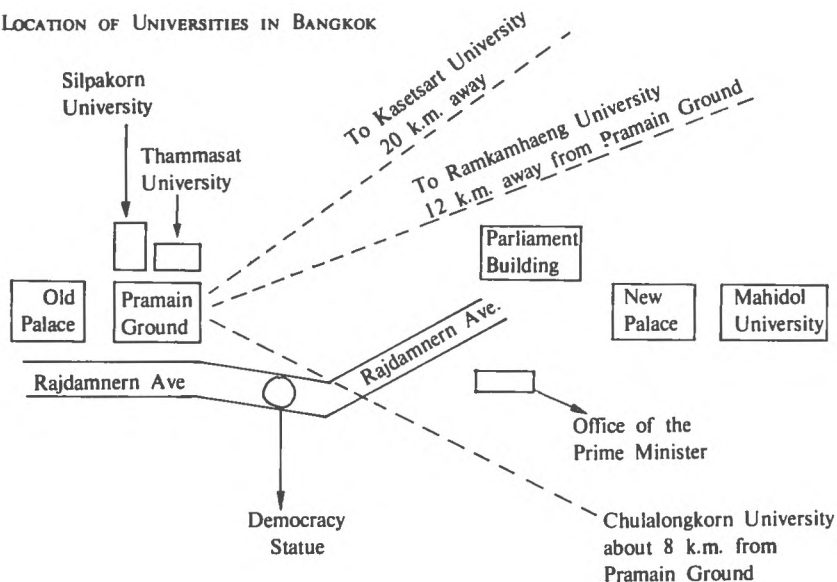
In front of these two universities there is a large open field called Pramain Ground. Its size is comparable to two stadiums combined. In ancient times it served as the cremation site for those in the royal family. Now it is used for the New Year Day Festival, the Water Festival, the Ploughing Ceremony, kite fighting, and an open market where goods from the provinces are sold each weekend. On one side of this Pramain Ground there begins one of the widest, and most beautiful, streets of Bangkok called Rajdamnern Avenue. Located on the other end of this avenue is the Parliament Building with the office of the Prime Minister nearby. Along this avenue, about one kilometer from Pramain Ground, lies the Democracy Monument erected by the 1932 revolutionaries. Protest marches by the students almost always start from Pramain Ground and move along Rajdamnern Avenue to the Parliament Building or the office of the Prime Minister. Being both wide and not very long, this avenue is ideal in accommodating the huge throngs of students who participate in the protest marches.

Chulalongkorn University is about eight kilometers southeast of Pramain Ground. The main campus of the College of Education is about 14 kilometers east of Pramain Ground, while Mahidol University is located only about one-half kilometer from the Parliament Building. Kasetsart University is somewhat farther from this site, located about 20kilometers north of the Parliament Building.

The map in the following figure depicts the approximate locations of the various universities as to their relative proximity to Pramain Ground and to each other.

³ The present king resides in the New Palace about 3.5 kilometers from the locations of the Old Palace.

LOCATION OF UNIVERSITIES IN BANGKOK



As can be visualized, the location of the universities has significant implications not only for the strategy of the student protests but also for government attempts to stop the demonstrators. The openness of the area of Rajdamnern Avenue lends itself to tempered responses by the government, who hesitate to display force in an arena like atmosphere.

The discussion which follows describes the major Thai student demonstrations in sequence of occurrence. It is interesting to note that all of these major demonstrations followed the path to the Pramain Ground, before launching their demands directly on the government administrators.

Anti-French Demonstration in 1940

The first incidence of student activism occurred in November, 1940. The root of that demonstration can be traced back almost 40 years earlier when Thailand was forced to cede sections of her eastern territory to France in 1903 and 1970⁴. The Thais had always desired to reclaim this

⁴ This Territory is now part of Cambodia and Laos.

territory. When the war broke out in Europe in 1939, the Thai government declared Thailand as a neutral state. When France surrendered in June, 1940, the Thai government saw it as an opportunity to regain the lost territory. Hence, the government staged an extensive anti-French propaganda campaign. In November, 1940, there were many anti-French demonstrations by the Thais throughout the country⁵. Chulalongkorn and Thammasat University students joined the demonstrations which were being promoted by various organizations in Bangkok.

Conflict Between Thammasat Students and the Army

After World War II the reigns of government were briefly in the hands of Pridi Panomyong, one of the most powerful and respected civilian leaders. As the leader of the "Free Thai Movement", a volunteer underground army which opposed Japanese occupation, Pridi claimed a great following among the civilian population. Pridi, as one of the 1932 revolutionaries was also the founder and an instructor of Thammasat University⁶. In November 1947, a military coup forced him to leave the country. His followers, most of them civilians who graduated from Thammasat University, were driven out of politics. With the support of a group of his most loyal followers, Pridi attempted a coup in February, 1949⁷.

Pridi received the support from some navy men and several civilian leaders, many of whom used to be his students. He sneaked into Thammasat University one night and held a meeting among his followers in one of the campus buildings. Many of the university lecturers and administrators were also his old students and admirers. After the meeting, Pridi and his followers went on to seize the Old Palace nearby. Some of his men took over the government radio station and announced the news of the coup. However, within two days Pridi's forces were crushed by the army and Pridi had to flee the country again⁸.

⁵ *Bangkok Chronicle*. November 1940. The estimate of the number of participants in one such demonstration was placed at 400,000.

⁶ Pridi returned after having received a law degree from France, and became the highest ranking civilian in the 1932 bloodless revolution and group which usurped the power of the monarchy.

⁷ Prayat SITIPHAN, *History of Thai Politics*, Dhonburi, 1968, pp. 596-599. (Nakor Dhon Publisher).

⁸ Thereafter, Pridi resided in the Peoples Republic of China, and was rumored to be

Many university administrators were detained for questioning. However, there was little effect on the Thammasat University students at that time. After the coup the army took over part of the main university campus and occupied it. However, the students still continued to study in the other parts of the campus.

In June 1959, there was another bloody coup led by a group of navy men. During the fight some of the ground troops occupied the Thammasat campus to fortify their position in combating the rebellion nearby. A few days after its beginning the rebellion was crushed by the government forces. However, the army remained at Thammasat University, claiming that the situation made it necessary to use Thammasat campus, because it was located in a strategic area. Moreover, the government claimed that since the campus had been used by the army before, they were justified in their occupation of the campus. Thammasat University was then closed for about one month.

In late August 1959, some Thammasat students were directed to attend Chulalongkorn University while others were told to go and study at the auditorium of the Ministry of Justice. Thammasat students at that time wanted to come back to Thammasat, but they were confused as to what course of action, if any, they should take. About two months later and after much debate the students decided to do something about the situation, and on October 11th about 2,000 students went to attend a session of the Parliament at the Parliament Building. They asked one of the M.P.'s to request the government to withdraw its troops from Thammasat University. The government representatives replied that it was necessary for the army to occupy this "strategic area" to maintain law and order, and refused to give specific dates as to when the government would withdraw its troops. At the end of the session the students asked to see the Prime Minister, Field Marshall Pibunsongkram. It should be pointed out that Pibunsongkram was once a friend but later became the arch rival of Pridi Panomyong, the founder of Thammasat University. The students avoided ridiculing Pibun for what he did, and instead praised him in unison, "Long live Field Marshall Pibunsongkram". Then they talked with him asking him to withdraw the troops from the campus⁹. Pibun assured the students that the troops would move out but he

the voice of the "Free Thai", a group of insurgents who have proclaimed a government in exile and vowed to return to liberate Thailand.

⁹ *Phimthai*, October 12, 1951, p. 1.

also did not give the specific date. In November about 3,000 Thammasat students went for a trip to Nakornsawan, a northern town about 250 kilometers from Bangkok. They came back on a train and arrived in Bangkok on November 5, 1951. Then, instead of going home, went together in busses to Thammasat University. They marched on the campus and walked in to "inspect" buildings. The soldiers were quite unprepared to receive the unarmed, though apparently angry students. After a few hours of badgering the soldiers and questioning them on why they were occupying the university, the students left peacefully. A few days later the government withdrew troops from the campus, and Thammasat University was reopened to the students again ¹⁰. It should be pointed out here that there was a constant rumor and some evidence, at this time that the government had specific plans for closing the university permanently, seeing it as an undesirable stronghold for Pridi Panomyong and his followers. However, pressure from the students finally forced the government to abandon this plan.

Demonstration Protesting the "Dirty" Election of 1957

In February 1957, there was a general election throughout the country. In Bangkok, Field Marshall Pibunsongkram and eight members of his party were candidates for the Bangkok seats. After the results were in, there was evidence to suggest that the Pibun followers had used dirty tactics to get the candidates of Pibun's party elected ¹¹. Public dissatisfaction with the conduct of the election in February, 1957, which was vigorously expressed in the press and among students, caused the government to declare a national emergency. However, this move by the government only fanned the flames of anger among the civilian population of Bangkok and they began to gather regularly at the Pramain Ground and were joined by increasing numbers of students from Chulalongkorn and Thammasat University to publicly criticize the government for the fraudulent election. In the meantime, students on the Chulalongkorn University campus displayed protest signs accusing Pibun of destroying democracy ¹².

¹⁰ Most of this information was obtained through a personal interview with a former Thammasat student who lived through and participated in the entire affair.

¹¹ In some provinces (e.g., Uttaradit) the votes for government partly exceeded the number of eligible voters.

¹² Some Chulalongkorn students hung the Flag on campus at half-mast designating the "death of democracy" in Thailand.

Several days later, the Chulalongkorn students marched from their campus to join with the people and the students of other universities at the Pramain Ground. They then marched to the office of the Prime Minister breaking police barriers along the way. The police attempted unsuccessfully to force the demonstrators to stop the march without using guns. Many eye-witness reports from the demonstrations indicated that when the demonstrators were asked to stop at the bridge near the office of the Prime Minister, the soldiers and police were about to use their guns. However, at the last moment the police in charge finally ordered his men to let the demonstrators pass by without incident. This marked the only time that confrontation with police almost led to violence. This remained the situation throughout all future Thai demonstrations up until the violent overthrow of the Thanom government in October 1973.

When the protesters finally got to the government building of the office of the Prime Minister they broke down the gate and forced themselves inside demanding to meet with Pibun. The Prime Minister eventually came out and spoke to the protesters promising to remedy the situation. However, the person most responsible for calming the hostile atmosphere which was still evident among the student demonstrators was Field Marshall Sarit Tanarat. In September, 1957, Sarit, riding the tide of widespread oppositional sentiment among the Bangkok populace and with tacit student support, successfully lead a coup against the Pibun government and drove him and his most powerful allies out of the country.

A point that should be made here is that the general population of Bangkok including workers, professionals, and politicians all took part in the massive protest movement against the Pibun government, for their handling of the election and the subsequent declaration of the "national emergency".

Anti-World Court Demonstration

In October, 1958, Sarit carried out another bloodless coup and made himself the Prime Minister. He abrogated the constitution, proclaimed martial law and appointed a committee to draft a new constitution. Martial law remained in effect until 1968 when the new constitution was completed. During this ten year period when Thailand was under martial law there was a major demonstration against the World Court. The

Court had come to the verdict that Khao Praviharn, an ancient temple along the border of Thailand and Cambodia was rightfully under Cambodian sovereignty. In 1959, Cambodia requested the World Court to rule on the withdrawal of Thai police forces from the temple grounds which they occupied since 1954. The case remained unsolved with the World Court for the next four years, until June 15, 1962 when the court ruled in favor of Cambodia. This decision by the Court ignited demonstrations throughout Thailand. University students did not initiate the demonstrations, but after a few days of general public demonstrations in Bangkok and other cities, students joined in one of the largest student organized demonstrations ever to be staged in Thailand up to that time. On June 21, 1962, over 50,000 students marched from the Pramain Ground to the Parliament building shouting slogans and carrying placards denouncing the World Court verdict. The students represented all the major universities of Bangkok including Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, and the Medical, Fine Arts, and Agriculture universities¹³. In front of the Parliament Building hundreds of students of the various universities took turns in making speeches denouncing both the World Court verdict and the Cambodian leaders.

The students met with little government opposition due to the fact that the government position on this particular issue was similar to their own. In fact, some of the public demonstrations which occurred were not only supported by the government, but also promoted by government backed politicians.

Demonstrations Against Martial Law and Bus Fare

The drafting of the new constitution which began in 1958, was finally completed in 1968. During this ten-year span Thailand remained under martial law as it was declared and set forth by Sarit in 1958. Specific statutes of the constitution provided for such civil liberties as freedom of speech and assembly. However, the Thai government still retained martial law in Bangkok and other parts of the country claiming that it was a necessity to "protect the national security". The constitution provided for an election which was to be held within 240 days of the date the constitution went into effect. Thammasat students together with the public

¹³ *Bangkok Post*, June 22, 1962, p. 1.

and some politicians began requesting that the government lift martial law to insure a fair campaign and election, and to show good faith in supporting the constitutional provisions for protection of certain civil liberties which were denied by several decrees under martial law. The students organized and marched from the Pramain Ground to the Parliament Building to press for the adoption of their proposals. The government responded at that time by declaring that even though the 1968 constitution had been promulgated the population of Thailand was still under a law which prohibited public assembly without government approval. Though this demonstration was relatively small it could have been ruled as an act of illegal assembly by the government. However, the government, rather than engage in an unpopular confrontation just before the election, complied with the demand of the demonstrators and lifted martial law in Bangkok, but retained it in the "threatened areas" of the outer provinces¹⁴.

In February 1969, immediately following the general election, there occurred another student demonstration against the increase of bus fare. Thai students rely almost exclusively on the crowded bus system for transportation to and from the university. When the government supported and operated bus companies raised the bus fare 30 per cent, many students felt this undue financial hardship to be directed at them for their agitation before the election. Hence, a well-organized protest demonstration was directed toward the government to lower bus fare back to its original price. Instead of confronting the students over what was considered a rather minor issue by top government officials, the Prime Minister ordered the bus fare back to its original price. Soon after this successful demonstration student representatives from Thammasat, Chulalongkorn, and Chengmai universities, and later other universities formed a council which they named "National Student Council". This council was to play a great role in all of the major movements by Thai students up through the student revolution which overthrew the military government in 1973.

¹⁴ The announcement by the military government to lift martial law in Bangkok was designed to reduce the pressure from opposition politicians who also were testing the free speech clause of the new constitution. For further details see R. PRIZZIA, *Student Activism in a Comparative Perspective: The Political Participation of Thai University Students*, Chapter III, Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1971.

The Demonstration Against Corruption in Chulalongkorn University

Of all the Thai universities, Chulalongkorn University has the largest campus. Some of its land which is not used for educational purposes is rented to the public. As the metropolitan area of Bangkok continues to expand, the land value of Chulalongkorn continues to increase accordingly. One of its areas rented to a private firm was later developed into a huge shopping center in the late 1960's. When the contract for the construction of the shopping center expired, it was rumored that some university administrators were bribed when negotiating with the construction company. Moreover, it became evident that the university received much less money than it should have from the private construction firm. On September 8, 1970, the students held a rally on the campus and demanded to see the deputy director and the secretary general of the university, but both administrators refused to appear. Thereafter, students marched to the office of the Prime Minister. Along the way students from other universities joined the demonstration procession. As they marched some of the demonstrators stopped to talk to the onlookers and explained that "there is a case of corruption at Chulalongkorn University. If not suppressed it will mean disaster for Chulalongkorn University and other universities in the future"¹⁵.

At the office of the Prime Minister ten student representatives went to meet with Thanom and requested that he fire the three administrators of the university that were involved in corruption. The students were specifically seeking the removal of the deputy director, the secretary general and the dean of architecture. They explained to the Prime Minister that if these three corrupt individuals were not fired the students would resort to violent means to rid the university of them. The students alleged that these three persons took part in a sleazy deal from which they gained great personal profit with an overall loss to the university. Thanom assured the students that he would talk to these administrators about the charges, in the university auditorium. The following morning the students began another march to the office of the Prime Minister. After meeting with other members of the National Student Council the students decided that Thanom should take a much stronger stand against the three administrators than just to have a discussion with students in

¹⁵ *Thai Rath*, September 9, 1973, p. 1.

the auditorium. At the office of the Prime Minister, students again demanded to see Thanom but this time Thanom refused to come out to meet with them. This students then marched to the Parliament building nearby and forced their way in the building and sat in seats reserved for members of the Parliament, claiming that they would not leave until they received a definite answer from the Prime Minister on the dismissal of the three administrators. Finally, Thanom came to see them and explained that he had talked to the authorities of Chulalongkorn University the previous evening until 1 a.m., and also, that he had called an urgent meeting of the University Council to consider the matter. He further explained that the Council made two important decisions. First, that a special committee would be set up to investigate the allegations of corruption ; and second, that the three persons would be removed from their administrative positions but would remain on the university staff with professor status. Furthermore, Thanom explained that the three could not be fired yet because there was no conclusive evidence of their guilt, and their case was legally still pending. The students expressed satisfaction with the results of the University Council meeting and finally abandoned the Parliament Building discontinuing the protest.

The following morning there was a counter demonstration by a small group of students of the Architecture Faculty which was staged on the Chulalongkorn campus. The students requested that their dean, who had been removed the previous day, be reinstated. Claiming that the dean was like their father, the students maintained that even if he was guilty of corruption they would be willing to forgive him. However, the decision to remove the dean was sustained, and it is very unlikely that this particular administrator will ever get his position back again.

All major demonstrations after the described above involved the National Student Center of Thailand, a newly formed student organization with nation-wide membership. The formation and growth of this student organization was to become one of the most significant developments in Thai student activism.

The Foundation of the National Student Center of Thailand

Before the founding of the National Student Center, students at most Thai universities were organized through student unions. A strong student union at each university was usually well organized for such social functions as moral support in cheering sections for their own sec-

cer team, but these student unions were characteristically non-political and for the most part, not inter-university organizations. It was not until 1969 that some of the student union leaders from the various universities began co-operating on social and political issues. The first occasion for inter-university co-operation was the national elections of 1969, at which time students of all universities informally organized to supervise the voting at all polling places in Bangkok. Ostensively, students were to assure an honest election and prevent the many irregularities which occurred in the previous national election of 1957.

After the national election of 1969, a meeting of a student organization called the World University Service, was planned for in Chiangmai. The representatives of all Thai universities attended this meeting and jointly proposed that Thai students should have an inter-universities organization. This was followed by a meeting at Kampansan district, Nakhonpathom ; one at Kasetsart University in August, 1969 ; at Chulalongkorn University of September 1969 ; and Prasammitra Teacher College in December, 1969. A resolution at the last meeting called for students of all undergraduate institutions to organize a student center which became known as the "National Student Center of Thailand". A committee to draft the constitution for this organization was also appointed at this meeting. There would be two members from each of the eleven institutions which included : Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University, Kasetsart University, Silpakorn University, Mahidol University, Chiang mai University, Kohkhean University, Songkla University, Prasammitra Teacher College, Bangsean Teacher College and Patumwan Teacher College.

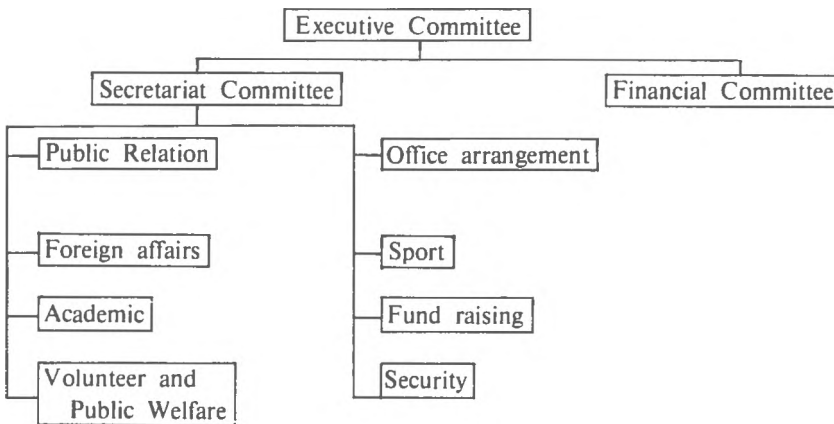
The Goals and Policies of the NSCT :

The constitution drafting committee set up the following 7 goals for the Center :

1. To promote a good relationship among the students of all Thai universities, and between Thai students and students of other countries.
2. To serve and promote the welfare of the students.
3. To promote the students' freedom and to protect student benefits.
4. To further the educational standards and academic cooperation.
5. To promote a good understanding between students and the people.
6. To preserve and promote Thai culture.
7. To render services for the welfare of the society.

Though the constitutional drafting committee began its work in 1970, the final constitution was not disclosed to the public until February, 1973. It provided for the various separation of functions and responsibilities as described below.

The NSCT's organization has 3 main executive organs : the executive committee, the secretariat committee and the financial committee. The diagram on the next page indicates the organizational arrangement of the NSCT.



The Executive committee consists of the chairman of the student union of each university. The main duties of the executive committee are (1) to formulate policy for the NSCT, and (2) to select the leaders of all units working under the secretariat committee.

The Secretariat committee consists of one secretary-general and three deputies, all of whom are directly responsible to the executive committee. The Secretariat committee acts as the spokesman of all the universities leaders. The many functionally-oriented sub-committees under the secretariat committee include : public relations, foreign affairs, academic, volunteer and public welfare, office arrangement, sports, fund-raising, and security (see diagram above).

The financial committee takes care of the financial affairs of the center and consists of a representative from each university. This committee is also directly responsible to the executive committee.

The secretary-general is the most powerful person in the organizational hierarchy and is ultimately responsible for all NSCT activities. The first secretary-general was chosen from Thammasat University as was the second for the academic year 1970-1971. During this period, the NSCT did very little concerning political matters and concentrated their efforts in such social services as fundraising for the flood victims, organization of a T.V. program blessing the King, and providing various counseling services to graduating high school students.

For the academic year 1971-1972, and 1972-1973, Therayudh Boonmee, an engineering student of Chulalongkorn University, was elected secretary-general. Therayudh, a brilliant student, who when graduated at the top of his class from one of Thailand's most famous and oldest high schools, Suankularb, also achieved the highest score of all high school graduates in Thailand on the nation-wide university entrance examination. It was under Therayudh's leadership that the activities of the National Student Center of Thailand turned toward major political issues. Therayudh started the NSCT on its path toward national recognition and political orientation with a nation-wide anti-Japanese goods campaign in November, 1972.

The First Demonstration After the 1971 Declaration of Martial Law : Anti-Japanese Goods Campaign

Before the government elected in 1969 completed its term of office, the military carried out a successful coup. In November 1971, Thanom led a coup against his own government, and subsequently dissolved the Parliament, abrogated the 1968 Constitution, and declared martial law. Thereafter, Thanom formed a government ruled by the National Executive Council, and proclaimed himself the leader of this council.

The first incidence of student activism after the 1971 declaration of martial law occurred about a year later in November 1972. For over 10 years Thailand faced a deficit in the balance of trade with Japan. This deficit was increasing at an alarming rate for the fiscal years of 1970, 1971, 1972. By the end of 1972, the trade deficit with Japan was placed at approximately \$215 million dollars ¹⁶. In November 1972, the

¹⁶ *Bangkok Post*, November 17, 1972, p. 1.

students started a campaign against the purchase of Japanese goods by distributing leaflets to the public. Student leaders then proclaimed November 20th-30th as "anti-Japanese Goods Week". During this period they requested the cooperation of the public in refraining from buying Japanese goods. The students of various universities acted together under the name of the National Student Center. The following passage represents parts of the text of the leaflet that was prepared and distributed by the members of the National Student Center ¹⁷.

Dear Thai Citizen,

We, the students, who are also your children are cooperating with one another to refrain from buying Japanese products during "anti-Japanese Goods Week". The reason for this is that Japan is taking advantage of us by using various business ploys to cheat us and also because the trade dominance by the Japanese in Thailand has increased alarmingly during the past 10 years, putting Thailand gradually into a position as Japan's economic slave.

What we are stating here is not far from reality, and if you study carefully the actions of Japan or look around and see Japanese dominance in trade and cultural spheres, you will see that what we say is true.

We would not have been in trouble at all if the Japanese role was to help to develop our country's economy as they often claim.

If we have a look at the numerous Japanese goods which have glutted Thai markets and become a part of the everyday life of the Thais, and influence by advertising (made by Japanese firms), you will realize that a large number of these products are not essential at all. Furthermore, they will cause more damage to the national economy.

We do not want violence because we realize the need for international relations. But if robbers come to our house we have to seriously fight them until they flee or stop being what they are.

This movement may be only an insignificant starting point, but it needs cooperation from every sector of the population as it is a fight for righteousness and national progress.

The National Student Council therefore has asked you to sacrifice your happiness and conveniences, and to save the money you may spend from buying and using Japanese goods and services during anti-Japanese Goods Week, November 20-30th, to show that the Thai blood runs thick and cannot be looked down on by anyone.

National Student Center
November 16, 1972.

¹⁷ *Bangkok Post*, November 18, 1972, p. 1.

The students also proposed a 10-point plan for economic revival and presented it to the government on November 20, 1972¹⁸. Some of the major points included the following proposals:

— The government should urgently enforce laws preventing aliens from taking jobs from local residents.

— The foreign owned department stores are not necessary to the country and the National Executive Council should prohibit the expansion of the existing ones and the establishment of any new ones.

— The government should consider controlling or prohibiting the importation of unnecessary goods and investment.

Even though martial law was in existence the Prime Minister did not attempt to stop this student movement. However, he warned the students that "there must be no violence, not even demonstrations outside the Japanese embassy"¹⁹. Thanom and the Deputy Prime Minister, General Prapas unofficially expressed admiration for this peaceful student movement against the unpopular Japanese by remarking at one point that the demonstration was a "masterpiece"²⁰.

King Bhumibol also said that the idea of the movement was "excellent" and should receive support because the purchase of luxury goods needed to be decreased. However, the King also stated "careful considerations must be given to what demands are made or the goals of the movement might be defeated"²¹.

The movement got the general support from the public, and the sale of Japanese goods was greatly decreased during that week. Moreover, in the midst of the anti-Japanese Goods Week the government issued a decree designed to control and protect the Thai economy against Japanese products and investments. The text of the government decree reflected most of the concerns which were stated in the 10-point plan prepared by the National Student Center.

On the last day of the anti-Japanese Goods Week, the students organized a protest march from Pramain Ground to the headquarters of the National Executive Council²². Chulalongkorn students tried to go by bus to Pramain Ground but the police stopped the bus driver and ordered

¹⁸ *Bangkok Post*, November 20, 1972, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁰ *Thai Rath*, December 2, 1972, p. 1.

²¹ *Bangkok Post*, December 1, 1972, p. 1.

²² *Bangkok Post*, December 1, 1972, p. 1.

them not to transport the students. The students then had to walk to meet other students from other universities who had marched from Pramain Ground to the headquarters of the NEC. They attempted to get inside the building to see the Prime Minister but they were stopped by the police and security guards. Reporters at the scene of the demonstration gave the following account: "Thousands of shouting students carried their anti-Japanese Goods protest to the gates of the National Executive Council headquarters last night, but were prevented from forcing their way in by reinforced police and security teams"²³.

Student leaders successfully calmed the demonstrators who at many points nearly clashed with the police and security guards. The Prime Minister did not come out to meet all the students but did send his representatives to meet with six student representatives. The Prime Minister's representatives told the students that Thanom supported them and would attempt to enforce feasible sections of the 10-point plan presented to the government one week earlier.

Demonstration Against the Control of the Judiciary by the Executive

On December 12, 1973, the National Executive Council issued Decree 299, which in effect gave the power to control the judges to the Minister of Justice. The Minister of Justice, as a political appointee of the Prime Minister, was put in a position to seriously undermine the power of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. According to the Justice Act of 1952, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court held the highest position of the judicial system and presided over all judges in Thailand. In this position the Chief Justice also served as the Chairman of the Official Judiciary Committee. Decree 299 was designed to transfer the chairmanship of this committee to the Minister of Justice. In addition to assuming all duties of this chairmanship, the Minister of Justice who was directly responsible to the Prime Minister was also given expansive power including the power to retire any judge to other ministries if the judge in question agreed to the transfer.

The law students of Thammasat University were quickly made aware

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

of the political implications of Decree 299 as it applied both to their own career goals and that of the future of the Thai judicial system. The very next day the law students organized and began a protest movement against this Decree. On December 15, 1972, the law students, joined by about 2,000 students of other faculties of Thammasat, marched from their campus to Chulalongkorn University. They carried signs, banners, and placards exclaiming ideals and demands such as "Give us back the court", "Dedicated to judiciary power", and "Justice supports the world"²⁴. Student representatives at Chulalongkorn agreed to support the protest movement and the demands of the Thammasat law students. Soon thereafter, representatives from other universities also declared support for the movement, and on December 17th, representatives from all universities except Prince of Songkla University presented a letter to the Prime Minister urging him to retract Decree 299 and order a continuance of the Justice Act of 1952. On the evening of December 19th, thousands of students began a protest rally and a sit-in at the Pramain Ground. They remained at this popular protest sight throughout the evening and did not disperse until 8:00 a.m. the following day. In the meantime students at the largest and most prestigious university in the provinces, Chengmai University, held a protest rally on their campus with students giving speeches denouncing Decree 299. Almost simultaneously the newly formed cabinet met hurriedly and came to a unanimous decision retracting Decree 299. At 2:27 p.m. the national Thai radio station broadcasted the news that the government was going to attempt to approach the demonstrators at the sit-in protest that evening. One government official of the cabinet personally carried the decision and a special message to Thammasat students who were planning to return to the sit-in. However, the students decided to go on with the second stage of the sit-in as planned because the newly appointed Legislative Council had the final authority in the matter, and the students wanted decisive action and not just promises from government officials. On December 22nd, the Legislative Council convened for the first time and Decree 299 was placed first on the agenda. Before their first recess of the day the Council voted to retract Decree 299, and reenact the Justice Act of 1952.

²⁴ *Thai Rath*, December 15, 1973, p. 15.

Demonstration Against the Expulsion of Nine Students at Ramkamhaeng University

Though Ramkamhaeng University was the last major university founded, it has the largest enrollment ²⁵. This is due primarily to the fact that Ramkamhaeng University unlike all other major universities does not require students to take an entrance examination. Ramkamhaeng is required to consider any student with a high school diploma for admissions. The government had hoped that Ramkamhaeng University would help solve the problem of finding a place in the educational system for the many students who failed the entrance examinations of other universities. Moreover, the establishment of this university was in keeping with the goals of the five-year plan for higher education, which was to make a college education available to all those who had met the minimum requirements. Because of the limited facilities and the enormous enrollment, university policy allowed and even encouraged students to study at home, and classroom attendance is generally not required. Many students came to the university only at the end of the semester to take the final exams. It must be pointed out here, such liberal policies on admissions and attendance do not exist in the other established universities.

The setting for one of the largest protest in the history of Thai student activism began in June 1973, when 9 students were expelled from Ramkamhaeng University by order of Rector, Dr. Sakdi Phasooknirand. These students were accused of issuing an illegal magazine attacking the government and personally criticizing the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister depicting them as "beasts" in the cartoons and editorials. When classes commenced during the first semester on June 20, 1973, students began to distribute leaflets decrying the expulsion of the "Ramkamhaeng Nine" ²⁶.

In one particular incident as students were distributing leaflets at the gate of the university campus, some men drove up in a car and began beating the students. Other students who were in the immediate vicinity rushed to the aid of those students being assaulted. In the melee that followed one of the attackers pulled out a gun and forced the students to retreat while he and his fellow assailants fled in a waiting car.

²⁵ See Table I.

²⁶ *Bangkok Post*, June 21, 1973, p. 1.

The following day ten bus loads of Ramkamhaeng students were on their way to Chulalongkorn to gather support for their cause, when the busses were stopped by the police and the drivers forced to relinquish their license. This government tactic provided an impetus to the movement because the Chulalongkorn students joined the protest, and after meeting with the stranded Ramkamhaeng students marched together to the Ministry of Government Universities and demanded to see the minister, Dr. Bunpod Bintason. The minister refused to meet with the throngs of students whose number had grown to an estimated 10,000 strong. The students then changed their strategy and decided to congregate at the traditional rallying point, the Pramain Ground. Upon arrival at the Pramain Ground there were hundreds of students and onlookers who greeted them. At the Pramain Ground the students held a huge protest rally with speeches from the various student leaders, and thereafter proceeded to march to the Democracy Monument. As they marched they sang a marching song written by some of the students. The lyrics reflected their determination and idealism and translated, went as follows :

"Fight without retreat, for the masses are waiting for us ... we have joined together to fight for democracy ...".

The students carried placards and huge banners, some of which expressed the immediacy of the crisis at hand. The banners proclaimed to the onlookers that "absolutism is taking over higher education", and that "Ramkamhaeng is hot with power", and asked the general population to "Help us escape this danger". On the same day, the official student organization of Chengmai University "The Student Front", threw their support behind the student protesters in Bangkok, though a communique.

A group of lecturers from various Bangkok Universities issued an open letter protesting Ramkamhaeng's dismissal of the nine students. This letter was signed by 82 professors, who were later referred to as "young turks", from Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, Silpakorn, Kantsart, and the National Institute of Development Administration (N.I.D.A.).

At the Democracy Monument, the students staged a protest rally and heard speeches from various leaders. The topics of the speeches were not confined only to the case of the nine students at Ramkamhaeng. The students addressed the many problems caused by the power and profit mongers in high government positions. They called for a new constitution to replace the one that had been abrogated through a military coup in 1971, an end to corruption, and measures to deal with the in-

creasing price of rice, and the sagging Thai economy. The students remained, and camped near the monument overnight. Late the same evening, the government ordered that all the major universities in Bangkok be closed, including Kasetsart, Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, Mahidol, Ramkamhaeng, Silapakorn, and Prasamite. The order carried with it a penalty of arrest for any student who tried to enter any of these universities' campuses. Simultaneously, the government sent about 500 metropolitan police of the Crime Suppression Division to surround the student camp-in. This "commando" police force proceeded to form a human barricade, blocking all routes leading to the Democracy Monument (refer Figure p. 7). The students armed only with their idealism and their cause sought support from the general civilian population by distributing leaflets to publicize their dilemma. The following is an excerpt taken from one of the leaflets (translated from Thai) :

"To fathers, mothers and fellow citizens ... Now these incidents have indicated that we are ruled by the tyrants. They oppress us. They want us to starve because the rice is so expensive. No one up there paid any attention to our distress. Our peaceful begging for help did not mean anything to them. Last night students all over the country joined this movement in peace to ask for the rights and freedom which are part of all humanity. We were hungry and cold, but we stayed here until the morning. However, the police surrounded us. They are now saying that they will let your children starve and walk voluntarily to the barrels of their guns"²⁷.

The government's move to close the universities proved to be a great mistake. With the universities closed many students who would have gone to class decided to join the sit-in at Democracy Monument. Kasetsart and Thammasat University came in groups to the scene of the rally. About 4,000 Kasetsart students thwarted by police when attempting to take the bus, walked about 20 kilometers to the Democracy Monument. Before leaving the area around the campus these students held a short rally by the National Museum. Several thousand Thammasat students were the first group to arrive. The police, who had joined to form a human barricade around the area of Democracy Monument almost clashed with the arriving throngs of students. However, after some minor

²⁷ Translated from a leaflet entitled, *The Voice of the Students and the People*, June 21, 1973.

skirmishes of pushing and shoving along the barricade line, the police finally decided that they had no choice but to allow the thousands of arriving students to go through the line and join the other protesters peacefully.

After the arrival of Kasetsart University students the number of the protesters swelled to around 30,000²⁸, and by mid-day the figure was placed at about 50,000²⁹. Almost as impressive as the unity of support by students of all the major universities, was the favorable response of the civilian population, who generously donated money, food, and drink to the protesters throughout their ordeal. One report of the incident noted :

“During the long hours of protest, a large amount of food, drink and money was donated from sympathetic citizens from all walks of life, ranging from street-vendors to well-known personalities ... The amount of money collected was more than 40,000 baht (about \$2,000 U.S.)³⁰.

Periodically, during the protest, the demonstrators would turn and face the King's palace and sing the King's Song, as if to emphasize that even though they were hostile to the government, they still admired and respected the King.

In the meantime, the government attempted to deal with the changing and expanding dimensions of the protest. The cabinet members held an urgent meeting that morning to discuss the matter. After a long debate the cabinet members invited the representatives of the students, including the nine expelled students, to see the Prime Minister and other high officials of the government. The meeting resulted in the following points to which the government agreed to carry through on :

1. The case of nine students who were expelled from Ramkhamhaeng University would be reconsidered by the Council of Universities.
2. The student demand for the removal of the rector of Ramkhamhaeng University would be reviewed and taken under consideration by the government.
3. The person who assaulted the students who were distributing leaflets

²⁸ *Bangkok Post*, June 23, 1973, p. 1.

²⁹ Teerayut BUNMEE, 'The Students Start to Find Their Target', *Society of Students in Thailand*, July 1973, p. 3.

³⁰ *Bangkok Post*, June 23, 1973, p. 2.

during the first day of the movement would be tried and the matter would be taken up by the police department.

4. The government would declare the reopening of all closed universities and all restrictions pertaining to the shut-down would be retracted.

After the meeting the student leaders reported back to the awaiting protesters, explaining that the government, while not conceding to all the demands, did agree to most of what the students wanted³¹. Thereafter, the leaders advised the students to disperse and go home. However, the next morning the rector of Ramkhamhaeng University announced his decision to change expulsion of the nine students to suspension for one semester. Moreover, one of the nine students, who had been reprimanded by the university administration before this incident, was to be suspended for two semesters. The student leaders who had called an end to the protest demonstration, did so with the understanding from the Prime Minister that the nine expelled students would most likely be readmitted without conditions. The rector's decision to punish the students with suspension only further angered the student leaders, who felt the crucial issue was freedom of the press and the right of students to criticize the government, and that this essential freedom should not be compromised. Word quickly spread throughout student circles that the government had broke faith with the students and tricked them into dispersing. The student leaders of all universities reconvened and planned another massive demonstration, announcing that this time they would not even bother to waste their time seeing the Prime Minister. As the movement for the new protest gained momentum, the government suddenly held a high level meeting and announced that the nine students would be readmitted without any conditions. Ironically, at this crucial meeting, none of the cabinet members even attempted to defend Dr. Sakdi, the rector. Moreover, some of the cabinet members encouraged the Prime Minister to remove Dr. Sakdi for the way he handled the entire matter. A few days later, Dr. Sakdi submitted his resignation which was promptly accepted by the government. In achieving all their original demands without having to carry through with the planned follow-up demonstration, the unified and persistent nature of the movement was seen as a master piece of the National Student Center of Thailand³².

³¹ *Thai Rath*, June 23, 1973, p. 1.

³² *Bangkok Post*, June 25, 1973, p. 1.

The government leaders were unable to sway the determination which marked the nature of this movement, even after the students had dispersed. The co-operation among the various universities in support of nine fellow students, and the swelling public support gave an entirely new dimension to the strength and significance of the National Student Center of Thailand and its leadership in the politics of Thailand. However, there emerged another unique event in aftermath of this student movement in support of student activism in Thailand. A group of students and professors protesting both the government's decision and the role of National Student Center staged a counter-demonstration supporting by Dr. Sakdi. Approximately 1,000 Ramkamhaeng University students marched around the campus with placards and banners, one of which read "We don't want those nine students"³³. By mid-day, the number of protesters had grown to about 6,000. After a rally held on campus the protesters decided to march to the Prime Minister's office where they demanded to see Thanom. They held a public forum while waiting for a reply to their demand, making speeches which called for the return of Dr. Sakdi and ouster of the nine "troublemakers". While waiting outside the Prime Minister's office, the protesters would periodically sing the King's Song and the national anthem to emphasize their loyalty to both King and country. The government was apparently unimpressed and did not even send a representative to see them. However, the government did let it be known that unless the protesters dispersed, they would be forced to use violent measures to restore order. Several hours later, after much discussion and rumor, the counter-demonstration broke-up and Dr. Sakdi's removal was upheld.

The organizational effort of the leaders of the National Student Center of Thailand was admired and praised by the government during the anti-Japanese Goods Week. However, through the actions and reactions of the government concerning the very domestic issue of nine expelled students, the National Student Center grudgingly won respect as an effective oppositional force in the ever changing realm of Thai politics. Government leaders unofficially reported on the fearsome potential of organized student pressure in domestic politics. The NSCT was able, on occasion, to enlist considerable support from the working class, the middle class, and the intellectuals. They were establishing themselves as the voice of the people, representing the best interests of a democratic form

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

of government in the face of a government determined to rule by martial law. This characterization of contemporary student activism in Thailand was explained in a special paper distributed by the National Student Center and written by its elected leader, Theerayut Bunmee. In the paper, entitled, "The Students Begin to Find the Target", Bunmee explains the relationship between the students and people as follows :

"... nobody can hurt the students without hurting the people. This is because 1) students are the children of the people ; 2) the people have great faith in students. The students have proved that they are grateful for the taxes collected from the people for educational purposes. The students also try hard with all their ability to solve the many social problems. As long as the students still stay on the people's side, the people's faith in the students will remain. This will mean increased bargaining power with the government ... ³⁴.

About the students' perception of their own power, he writes :

"... student activism can change the society as witnessed in Indonesia, Turkey, France, Japan, U.S.A. and in other countries. We study and understand what has happened in other countries... but I hope that the students would not overestimate their power. Power has to be controlled and used in a purposeful manner. Otherwise the power can cause destruction and chaos. And this we do not want to see" ³⁵.

On the future of student movement, Bunmee predicts with confidence :

"We came through the past and we will not destroy our movement in the future" ³⁶.

Activist Bunmee's confidence in the future of the student movement as a social and political force significant enough to cause major change in the Thai political system soon became a reality. Less than five months after the occurrence of the major demonstration described above, Bangkok witnessed a violent student revolution which brought down the Thanom government and discontinued military rule by martial law. Though most political observers were caught unaware, it can be stated now with some satisfaction that the authors', while gathering additional data in Bangkok during the summer of 1973, did predict a similar course

³⁴ (Translated from Thai), Teerayut BUNMEE, "The Students Begin to Find the Target" in *Student Society of Thailand*, July 1973.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

of events which in fact took place in October. Based primarily on the behavioral data previously collected on Thai students, a continuous file on student activism, and occasional rumors from university students in August, rather accurate predictions were made and discussed with several disbelieving colleagues and educational officials.

Though this revolution was the outgrowth of yet another demonstration against the arbitrary decision of the military government and the rule by martial law, its overriding significance to the Thai student movement and the future of Thai political system merits that a separate section be devoted to this important political event. The next section explains in detail the events leading up to the demonstration and subsequent violent revolution, and depicts the political atmosphere in the immediate aftermath of student revolt.

The Student Revolution of October, 1973

The fate of the Thanom military government and the future direction of the Thai political system was suddenly altered by a series of critical events which occurred from October 6th to 15th, 1973. Commonly referred to as "The Ten Days": this period of 1973 may well become known as the most important series of events in Thai political history since the "revolution" of 1932. An account of these eventful ten days is presented below ³⁷.

After the huge demonstration in June, Thirayuth Boonmee and other student leaders kept the pressure on the government to accelerate the promulgation of the constitution. On Saturday, October 6, 1973, Thirayuth and ten other political activist were arrested by special police agents while distributing leaflets urging support for the early drafting of the constitution. The leaflets specifically referred to December 10, 1973, Thailand's Constitution Day, as the date by which the constitution should be promulgated. Thirayuth and the other activists were accused of violating a National Executive Council decree which forbade more than five people to gather for political purposes. Those arrested with Thirayuth included Prapansak Kamolpetch, a one-time Bangkok

³⁷ Much of the information of this section was obtained from a special summary of "The Ten Days" compiled by the Bangkok Post, and personal interviews with student leaders, members of The Crime Suppression Division, and various eye-witnesses and participants.

parliamentary candidate ; Boonsong Chalethorn, deputy secretary-general of the National Student Center ; Bandhit Hengnilrat, a liberal arts student at Thammasat University ; Visa Kanthap, a humanities student at Ramkhamhaeng University ; and Thanya Chunksatharn, a writer for the weekly Maharaj magazine. Also arrested were Thawee Muenthikorn, a Thammasat economics instructor ; Montri Juengsirinarak, a writer for the weekly Social Science Review ; Nopporn Suwanpanich, a former Chulalongkorn arts instructor ; Preedi Boonsue, a Thammasat political science student ; and Chiwat Suravichai, former vice-president of the Chulalongkorn Student Union.

Those arrested were first taken to police headquarters and thereafter escorted to their homes where detectives carried out an extensive search for "more incriminating evidence". In ordering the arrest of the students in lieu of freedom of assembly, and the search of their homes in lieu of freedom from unwarranted search and seizure, Thanom-Prapas governing clique only added fuel to the flames of discontent and provided visible proof to the Thai public that student claims of government repression were correct. Moreover, the military government, in ordering the confiscation of all leaflets calling for the promulgation of the permanent constitution as matter of domestic security, was quickly interpreted by the general Thai public as further evidence that Thanom and Prapas had no real intention of relinquishing their powerful position to Constitutional government.

The comedy of government errors continued the following day, Sunday, October 7, 1973, when the Deputy Director General of the Police Department, Lt. General Prachuab Suntharangkoon ordered the arrest of Kongkiat Kongka, who was accused of being an overly articulate member of another activist group demanding an early promulgation of the permanent Constitution. Meanwhile, on this same day, the leaders of the powerful National Student Centre of Thailand (NSCT) threatened retaliation for the government actions.

The stage was being set for confrontation as the government continued to remain arrogantly insensitive to student demands and apparently ignorant of their determination. This was clearly seen the next day (Monday October 8, 1973) when Prapas ruled out the possibility of an early bail for the twelve arrested activists, and publically announced that confiscated documents linked the twelve with a plot to overthrow the government. Prapas, in a futile attempt to retrieve public support for the government's seemingly repressive acts claimed that the police had seized

documents "about communism" in Thai and Chinese. The Student Organization of the National Institute of Development Administration (N.I.D.A.) also appealed to Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn to drop the charge of inciting the public to act against the Government against the twelve arrested members of the Constitution Movement, but the government refused. The implication by Prapas that the activists were engaged in some communist inspired plot only angered the students further and on the following day, Tuesday, October 9, 1973, over 2,000 Thammasat University students congregated for an anti-government rally. Meanwhile, the entire Metropolitan police force was put on full alert as police received reports that the students threatened to march to Bang Khen where the twelve arrested activists were being held. Thammasat students also symbolically registered their disgust with the government by lowering the national flag and putting up a black flag as a sign of mourning. Although the black flag was removed by Thammasat University authorities, students refused to attend classes to take the scheduled exams; and the first-semester examinations had to be called off for an indefinite period. In the meantime, small groups of students went to Bang Khen detention center to visit the arrested activists, but were only allowed to see five of the twelve. This continued practice of the police refusing to allow personal visits to the remaining seven activists (which included Thirayuth) eventually led to rumors late in the week that they had been killed or seriously tortured in captivity.

During the afternoon of October 9th, the Thammasat Student Legislative Body voted approval of a five point proposal to be carried out by the Thammasat Student Council. These points were :

- .Non-violent protests will be made first and the students will remain at the Photi compound until the release of the 12 detainees ;

- .Ten representatives will be appointed to negotiate with the Government for a speedy release of the 12 detainees ;

- .Letters will be sent to all universities and institutes, calling for a show of strength and unity to support the negotiations ;

- .If the Government still refuses to release the 12 after these non-violent protests have been made the students voted to resort to violence in the form of demonstrations and bloodshed.

Rallies were held on other campuses on October 9th, and topics were not always political as was the case of the one very practical group of students at Prasarnmit Teacher's Training College. It was reported by the Bangkok Post as follows :

Several student leaders voiced their opinion during a mass student rally at the college yesterday that toilets are most important during student demonstrations. They pointed out that past demonstrations showed the marchers could not hold on longer than a few days since all of them have to go to toilets, change their clothes, and brush their teeth. They reasoned that if movable toilets are set up at the demonstration sites, the marchers could hold on longer in their fight for justice and democracy. The rally yesterday, which was participated by around 300 students, produced a consensus that any students could submit their ideas to the Students Council about the most efficient way to build the movable toilets — just in case they might have to be used in view of the present ferment among the university students.

After the rallies, students from the Thammasat and Chulalongkorn Universities and several of the teacher training colleges of Bangkok, joined in an all-right vigil braving the cold and light showers, and vowed “full support” to those arrested. The arrested now included former Member of Parliament, Khaisaeng Suksai, and the list of political prisoners climbed to thirteen.

The following morning, October 10, 1973, the students made good their promise of support and an additional 1,000 students joined in the protest rallies. Much to the satisfaction of the swelling crowds of students, student leaders declared that the Thanom-Prapas clique had staged the revolution “of itself, for itself, and by itself”. As the crowds at the rallies continued to grow throughout the afternoon, and with tension mounting, the government announced that Deputy Prime Minister Prapas had been appointed head of a special independent organization to “restore peace and order”. At the same time, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army, General Kris Sivara, was named as Marshal Prapas’ deputy in the new suppression force which had its headquarters, interestingly enough, at the Communist Suppression Operation Command (CSOC).

On the following day, October 11, 1973, Prapas agreed to meet with student representatives of the National Student Centre of Thailand, who promptly demanded the release of the 13 political prisoners. Prapas refused the demand but vowed to have a constitution ready in twenty months. When asked why Article 17, which allowed arrest and detention without due process, was evoked against the political activists, Prapas cleverly explained that it was for the benefit of the detainees because authorities would be empowered to expedite the case without going through normal legal procedure in postponing the litigation of the case. Thai student leaders remained unimpressed with the government’s at-

tempt at negotiation, and particularly perturbed with Prapas' refusal to release the 13 political activists. They returned to the rally which had now moved to the Thammasat University football grounds to accommodate the growing crowd of more than 50,000, to announce that the NSCT would take sole responsibility for the school closures and the student walkouts. At that point about 70 per cent of all private and government schools in Bangkok had already called off classes either by official order or by action taken by the students to join forces with NSCT at the Thammasat campus.

In the meantime, the 13 political activists who were being held at the Metropolitan Police Training School in Bangkok staged a hunger strike to protest the delay in police investigations and to give moral support to the mass rally of students. Seemingly worried over the course of events, Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn and Deputy Prime Minister Prapas Charusathiara consulted with His Majesty in a special audience that evening at Citrlada Palace which lasted for about two hours. His Majesty the King had reportedly expressed grave concern over the present student uprising.

The next morning in a move which was apparently designed to avoid confrontation with the students, the government announced that: "If any investigations showed that the students were purely and sincerely demanding for the Constitution, they would be released with fines for political gathering of more than five persons". However, making a clear distinction between young students and adult politicians, the government maintained that legal actions would be taken against the eight politicians who were arrested on the same charges if they were found guilty as charged.

It was apparently an offer of too little, too late, for the day began in a frenzy as thousands of students from universities, technical colleges, teachers training colleges, vocational colleges and secondary schools streamed towards the Thammasat University rendezvous from all directions. Many of the students arrived on foot, often accompanied by sympathetic teachers and lecturers while several passers-by donated money to the marchers. The number of students pouring into the Thammasat grounds swelled into tens of thousands by midday as it was announced that all schools in Bangkok had been closed indefinitely. Chulalongkorn University and Ramkhamhaeng University also announced the indefinite postponement of all examinations. Moreover, the Chulalongkorn Student Union declared in a formal statement that they "openly opposed" the

government's action on the arrests as "they could not bear the injustice any longer". Meanwhile, the students stepped up the pressure on the government by announcing a demand for the unconditional release of the 13 detainees who had been arrested following their activities in connection with the constitutional drive. The NSCT gave a 24-hour deadline starting from midday and warned of "decisive action" if the demand was not met. The Director-General of the Public Relations Department, Major-General Prakob Charumane, issued an assurance that no force will be used against the demonstrating students and appealed to the public to avoid the Thammasat University area where traffic jams were building. An extraordinary emergency Cabinet meeting was called at the Communist Suppression Operations Command at 2 p.m. to consider the ultimatum. The meeting went on for several hours before a solution was arrived at, while at Thammasat tension was building up as students waited for an answer from the Government on their demand. An hour-by hour countdown was started with student leaders telling the crowd that there were 23-22-21... hours to the deadline.

On the evening of October 12, 1973, about five hours after the ultimatum was received by the government it was announced to the waiting students that the 13 political activists would be released on bail. A great cheer went up around the crowded field as most students appeared apparently satisfied. However, some of the student leaders were still disgruntled pointing out to the rally that they had demanded an unconditional release and not release on bail. One of the thirteen activists being held by the government, Chaiwat Surarichai, was sent to explain the situation. At the rally he indicated that the other twelve persons were willing to remain in the detention center, and that their release should not affect the continued demand and protests for an early promulgation of the constitution. After hours of debate, the majority of the students present finally decided to reject the bail offer, and at 11:25 p.m. the remaining twelve political activists, upon learning of the decision of the NSCT, refused to sign a paper to accept their temporary release.

This offer by the government, though not all what the students wanted, was obviously as far as the government was prepared to go. Using previous demonstrations as a yardstick for compromise, the government obviously felt that release of the thirteen activists would allow both the students and government to save face while avoiding a possible violent confrontation. The pattern of previous demonstrations might have led most observers to speculate this to be the case. However, the govern-

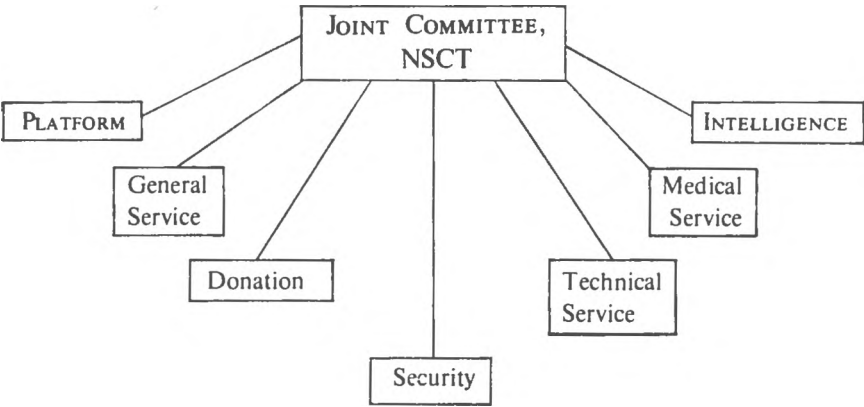
ment gravely underestimated the determination and seriousness of the students on the Constitutional issue. Moreover, discontent among the students and general Thai public had reached an all time high and the student leaders were well aware of the implications and power of their position. Also, they had been misled by promises of release just three months before involving the "Ramkamhaeng 9". They were not about to disperse as they had in the last demonstration and relinquish their powerful position, only to leave the government renege on their promises. After the students flatly refused to accept anything but an unconditional release of the thirteen, the government found itself with the choice of either a complete loss of face or an impressive show of force. In choosing the latter, they set the final stage for confrontation. At eleven thirty on the morning of October 13th, 1973, soldiers took up positions along the perimeter of the Communist Suppression Operations Command Headquarters while the 12 remaining activists remained on the grass outside the Bang Khen Detention Centre refusing to go with the police to Pathumwan Headquarters. About a half hour later, the government announced that it would not back down on its refusal to the student demand for the unconditional release of the 13 activists. About the same time, all gates leading to Thammasat University were closed as the demonstrators took up their positions. While the students were finalizing their plans to make the customary march along the Rajdamnern Avenue, pandemonium nearly broke out at the Bang Khen police detention center as police, under the direction of Special Branch Police Commander Major General Chai Suwansnasorn, tried to get the twelve constitutional activists to leave since they were official released on bail. A team of more than 20 commando police entered the cell where the twelve activists were staying. After heated discussions, the twelve activists, including Thirayuth Boonmee, voluntarily walked out from the detention center and waited patiently near the Super-highway for a "final decision" from the National Students Center of Thailand.

In the meantime, about 200,000 protesting students left Thammasat University campus in a protest march to demand the "unconditional release" of the 13 constitutional activists. Preparations were made for a prolonged demonstration at the Thammasat University as the NSCT food and welfare committees loaded about 10 small pickup trucks with food, fruit and other necessary supplies. The chair man of the Constitution Drafting Committee of the NSCT, Mr. Rachan Wiraphan, said if the 13 constitutional activists were not released by noon the students

would march to the Parliament House, and also revealed an alternative plan which called for the marchers to rally at the Democracy Monument if they were blocked by government forces on Rajdamnern Avenue at Makkawan Bridge in front of ECAFE.

Strategy for the organized protest allowed for each university and school having students in the demonstration to assemble in a particular area so that leaders could detect any “third hands,” and called for the tough engineering student to make up the front column of the protest march in case of any clashes with government forces.

ORGANIZATION OF THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND



This diagram shows how the National Student Center of Thailand operated in organizing the five-day protest which climaxed in a massive demonstration and the eventual confrontation which overthrew the Thanom Government.

As the march began, it became obvious that the NSCT leaders were meticulous in their plans, as a group of scouts were sent ahead to clear the way for the protest march (see following figure). Groups of students were organized and divided into separate sections to be responsible for food, first aid, co-ordination, commando duties, etc., each with its own coloured arm bands. Some engineering students carried wooden or metal bars while others wore protection against tear gas. A group of girl students marched ahead of the column carrying pictures of the King and Queen. Close behind the girls were a group of young men with thick

sacks for placing on barbed wire obstacles and for throwing over police dogs. This group was referred to as the "anti-dog" unit. Small groups of first aid workers walked among the marchers holding Red Cross flags aloft for easy identification. While the students were protesting peacefully at Sanam Luang and Rajdamnern Ave, the King met with an NSCT delegation of nine, some of which are the released activists from Bang Khen Center.

Meanwhile, student support from the public swelled as large amounts of cash, food, and supplies flowed into the donation booths in and around Thammasat University. By noon the NSCT announced it had collected over 400,000 baht (approximately \$20,000 U.S.). It was also reported that the majority of Bangkok buslines running to the Sanam Luang area would not pick up passengers other than those going to Thammasat University, and bus conductors were turning away passengers who indicated that they were not going to attend the rally. One of the conductors of a packed bus which avoided the regular bus-stops and went directly to Thammasat University simply explained his behavior by asserting that, "We are all fighting for the Constitution".

Before the protesting marchers, which had now swelled to over 400,000 people, moved from the Democracy Monument, there was news that the government had agreed to the NSCT demand which called for the unconditional release of the thirteen activists. The government also promised that the permanent constitution would be promulgated by October, 1974. Having achieved what they considered a victory, the student leaders called off the demonstration at the Democracy Monument and returned to Thammasat University campus to celebrate.

However, more than 200,000 students remained on the streets, and thousands of them refused to disband. This group, which included the "hard core" vocational and engineering students, was under the direction of Saeksan Prasertkul, a student of political science at Thammasat University³⁸. These students were dissatisfied and wanted a guarantee that the government would keep its promises to the students. Saeksan

³⁸ Saeksan Prasertkul, at that time, was the public relation officer of the NSCT. In selecting the secretary general of NSCT in July 1973, Saeksan was also on the ballot, but he was narrowly defeated by Sombat Thamrongtanyawong of Kasetsart University. Saeksan possesses a great talent in public speaking, and always wears a hat like the one worn by Che Guevara, the South American martyr and revolutionist. Though many labeled him as a radical, he was to emerge from this October uprising as a hero.

tried to control the restless crowd urging them to avoid any violent measure, while attempting to reach the other leaders of the NSCT, but his efforts were in vain. At about twelve o'clock, midnight, Saeksan decided to lead the crowd to the royal palace to request the King's advice. At that point some of the other leaders of the NSCT showed up and tried to convince the crowd that they should go home and not follow Saeksan. However, after Saeksan and the other leaders of the NSCT, including the NSCT's former secretary general, met and discussed what had happened, the two sides reached an understanding and then went together to seek the King's audience. What actually went on at this meeting is still open to question, but according to some of the student leaders' version the following points were discussed :

1. Their own personal safety was not guaranteed by the government. Hence it was perceived that there was little advantages of disbanding.
2. It was generally agreed that if confrontation was going to occur it should take place near the King's Palace. The rational was that retreating students could take refuge in the Palace Grounds. This strategy, though a departure from all previous routes of confrontation which usually by-passed the Palace in favor of the government buildings, was actually part of a contingency plan. The leaders in their meeting discussed this plan along with other proposals, many of which reflected the original writings of a famous Thai revolutionist. Known only as "Jit" to many of the student leaders, this former brilliant student of Chulalongkorn, upon graduation, choose communist insurrection in the jungle rather than the Thai bureaucracy in Bangkok. After his death in 1967, in a fight with government forces, his writings representing a blueprint for the Thai peoples revolution, began to emerge in books and newspapers around the university campuses. It is noteworthy that the events which followed this meeting are neatly outlined in several of these revolutionary essays.

It was still the same fateful Sunday morning of October 14th, when the students reached the King's Palace. However, only a King's representative, Col. Vasiit Dejkunchorn, came to see them about 5:30 A.M. The King's representative read the King's advice to the students which was to disband peacefully since the thirteen activists had been unconditionally released and the Constitution had been promised before October. After reading this message, Col. Vasiit told the students that, "Their majesties had been unable to sleep for four nights running during the protest. Now he would like all of you to go home".

It looked for a moment that the situation would return to normal and the students themselves, after singing the national anthem together,

began to prepare to go home. However, as the demonstrators started to disband, an unfortunate thing occurred which triggered the violent riot which was to last for the next two days. Unfortunately, as the demonstrators attempted to leave the street in front of the King's palace, Police Lt. General Monchai Phankongchuen, Assistant Director of the Police Department, ordered his men to form a barricade so that the students would leave the area in only one direction to ensure an orderly dispersal. The mass of students, however, proved too large and when the students' request that another exit should be allowed was refused, a wave of resentment ran through the mass of demonstrators.

It was about 6:30 a.m. when this confrontation turned into a violent clash. Exactly what happened has been reported in various ways. Some eye witnesses claim that the police started clubbing the demonstrators first because they were shoving against the police line. A reporter at the scene claimed that a bag of ice thrown from the crowd hit a policeman squarely in the head and knocked him down, after which the police began using tear-gas and threatened the students with their weapons. In any event, the molotov cocktails started flying in the direction of the police, while the police opened fire on the students. Many demonstrators were injured as some attempted to fight back with their wooden clubs. However, most of the students attempted to run from the area. Some jumped into the moat near by while others ran to take refuge inside the palace ground³⁹. Three girl students were said to have been beaten to death by the police⁴⁰. Many of the demonstrators ran back to the Parliament Building while some returned to the Democracy Monument, and others to Thammasat University. They quickly spread the news of the police brutality in the Palace clash. The story about the girls being beaten to death was told and retold.

The demonstrators were now without their leaders as all NSCT leaders disappeared from the crowd. Saeksan was said to have collapsed from exhaustion due to his intense and continued activity in the last four to five days.

Meanwhile, at Thammasat campus, the students started to regroup again, anxious to gain revenge on the police brutality. At about 7:45

³⁹ Later that day the King ordered the royal vehicles to take the students back to their homes safely.

⁴⁰ The names of these three girls were never revealed, and some government officials claimed that no one was killed in this initial clash near the palace.

a.m., a group of demonstrators set fire to a police booth beside Thammasat University. From that time on the violent clashes between students, who were joined by the public, and government forces continued along Rajdamnern Avenue for two days and one night. The area of heaviest fighting occurred near the end of Rajdamnern Avenue in the proximity of the Pramain Ground. The government brought several tanks and about 500 soldiers to the aid of the Bangkok police force in combating the demonstrators. However, the demonstrators refused to disband and many fought back with wooden clubs while a few had pistols. When the demonstrators were first confronted by the tanks, they thought that the soldiers would not actually use them against the students. However this assumption proved false as the army fired the M-16 rifles and tank-machine guns into the crowds of demonstrators. These weapons along with the helicopter gunships which the government also used to shoot at the demonstrators, were responsible for most of the casualties ⁴¹. Several hundred students were shot and wounded, while over one hundred were killed. A small number of soldiers were also killed and injured.

Throughout the violent confrontation the government used the media to broadcast distorted news reports claiming that the demonstrators were not students but communist agents and the student leaders were forced to join in a plot to overthrow the government. The government greatly exaggerated the rioters' capabilities by claiming that some demonstrators possessed machine guns and killed many soldiers. However, the broadcasts never gave any account of the number of demonstrators killed or wounded.

At about 3:30 p.m. the military gained control of the Thammasat University, and large numbers of demonstrators had to withdraw across the Chao Phya River jamming the Pran Nok landing. As the demonstrators realized the futility in fighting tanks and machine guns with clubs and molentov cocktails, they turned their frustration and anger to other symbols of government authority. Many of the government buildings along Rajdamnern Avenue were set afire as people from all over Bangkok travelled to the scene of the fighting. The crowds of demonstrators and onlookers grew to over one-half million people as crowds began to pour into Rajdamnern Avenue. Finally, at about 5:30

⁴¹ According to one report, tanks even pursued students to presupposed safety, of Thammasat University and fired into the campus grounds through the fences.

p.m., October 14th, the government gave up the battle and the soldiers were ordered to withdraw from Rajdamnern Avenue.

At about the same time, the government announced over radio Thailand that it had rendered its resignation to His Majesty the King. At about 7:15 p.m. the King addressed the nation on television and all radio broadcasting stations, officially announcing that Thanom's government had resigned and Professor Sanya Thammasakdi, the rector of Thammasat University, had been appointed as the new Prime Minister. At that point, many people cheered and ran into the streets shouting victory. Late that night Professor Sanya Thammasakdi addressed the nation by television and radio, promising a constitution and election within 6 months.

Thereafter, thousands of students and other demonstrators congregated at Democracy Monument where student speakers were asking them to disband and go home. However, many students were still angry over the slaughter of hundreds of young and unarmed people. They argued that it was not enough that the government had resigned because Field Marshall Thanom still remained the Supreme Commander of the armed forces and Prapas was still Director General of the Police Department. Many demonstrators wanted to continue the movement until they were sure that Thamon and Prapas were powerless; others claimed that they wanted to see both men dead. The hard core "yellow tiger" commando unit of the students directed their hostility to the metropolitan police headquarters which was now symbolic to the police force. The police protecting the headquarters had machine guns while several of the students had rifles and pistols⁴².

The gun battle between students and police in and around the public headquarters lasted from late October 14th to the following afternoon. At 7:00 a.m., the 15th of October, the "commando" students at Panfan Bridge were still holding out but were planning to retreat to the Monument. It was reported that a doctor, a medical assistant, and five nurses were shot dead in the Panfah Bridge area by what was believed to be machine gun and M-16 rifle fire, as they were tending to some casualties in the "battle field" facing the Metropolitan Police Headquar-

⁴² Government radio said that the rioters plundered the gunshops. However, other sources said that the rioters asked for only a few guns from each shop and the owners just gave the guns to them voluntarily. Some owners were said to have even demonstrated the proper loading techniques.

ters several hours before dawn. As the battle ensued, hundreds of demonstrators were gunned down as they tried to close in on the police headquarters. Finally, the police abandoned the building as the students set it afire. The technique employed was as ingenious as it was daring. After hijacking a fire engine at the scene, the students' "yellow tiger suicide squad" emptied the water from the tanks and then siphoned gasoline from a nearby gas station. They then sent a jet of the high-octane gasoline from a fire engine hose into the Metropolitan Police Headquarters near Phan Fah Bridge and tossed Molotov cocktail bombs into the pool of gasoline. An eyewitness at the scene said that, "Some were shot down, but the remainder successfully sent gasoline from a powerful hose into the building and then set it on fire"⁴³. In the meantime, rioting students and the public, many of them in their teens, roamed the streets, packed into commandeered buses and trucks and burned down or smashed most of the city's police booths, traffic lights and traffic signs.

At about 9:00 p.m., an unexpected calm came to the rioters when it was announced via radio and television that Field Marshall Thanom Kitikashorn, Field Marshall Prapas Churusathira, and Colonel Narong Kritekachorn had left the country⁴⁴.

As the gatherings dissolved, bus companies joined army buses in giving most students free rides home, while other students remained to direct traffic and put out the fires. It was clearly a victory for the students and other demonstrating civilians, and not a single uniformed policeman was in sight on the streets of Bangkok. One student armed with a fire hose to fight the flames which still raged along Rajdamnern Avenue summed up the significance of these historic "ten days in October" when he remarked, "We have made a new Thailand but it cost us a lot"⁴⁵. While the role of the students in the overthrow of the military government was no doubt the most significant of any other single force, there were other groups and certain conditions which aided the student cause. A major supporting condition was the growing cleavages within

⁴³ As reported by the Bangkok Post, October 16, 1973.

⁴⁴ It was later revealed that Field Marshall Thanom flew to the United States, while Field Marshall Prapass and Colonel Narong went to Taipei.

⁴⁵ Bangkok Post Summary, the costs were great as all Bangkok hospitals were filled with the wounded. However, public support was also great as blood donations ran so high that many hospitals ran out of blood containers.

the military which had withered away much of the support for the Thanom and Prapas regime. The royal Thai navy, which had remained in a rather subserviant position to the powerful army cliques ever since the "Manhattan Affair"⁴⁶, openly supported the student cause. Even among the army and the air force there were those officers who found reasons not to come to the aid of the police force while they were under siege by the students. Also the intellectuals, the "Young Turks" of Thailand, and former opposition politicians all helped the student cause. Common laborers and other civilian workers who went out on "wildcat" strikes in August and September aided in creating the atmosphere for revolt and many of these people also participated in mass demonstrations against the government on October. The overall effect of the efforts of the students and supporters was the creation of a free, but chaotic atmosphere in the immediate aftermath of the revolt, at which time the NSCT and other break-away student groups attempted to consolidate their power. The psychological barrier which had kept thousands of Thais submissive to military authority for over five decades was seriously impaired if not altogether broken. More important, the student revolution had created in its aftermath at least the atmosphere for change where significant steps towards the establishment of democratic institutions could be taken.

Student Activism in the Vanguard for Change After the October Revolt

The successful student revolt of October, 1973, marked a significant departure from all previous changes of government in Thailand, in that the new government was not only civilian dominated, but that it had ascended to dominance through the efforts of a prolonged and well-organized student-led demonstration. Moreover, the victory for the civilian-led government was obtained at the expense of the army and the police when these two groups were in complete control of a government ruling by martial law. This was no small accomplishment, and the

⁴⁶ The Manhattan was a United States warship of World War II stock, which on June 29, 1951, was to be turned over by American officials to the Thai government. However, during the official ceremony aboard the ship, Prime Minister Phibun was kidnapped by navy officials who had long been disappointed with Phibun's policy of favoring the Thai army, police, and air force at the expense of the Thai navy.

students were quick to grasp the implications of their increased power-base. While the period immediately following the forming of a civilian government showed a sudden decrease in general civilian protests and other related political activities, there was a steady increase in student activism and protest demonstrations throughout the country.

In the months immediately following Sanya Thammasakdi's accession to the Prime Minister, student protest were mounted against provincial governors, high-ranking university officials and other educators, a major Thai newspaper, the United States Ambassador, and selected American military personnel. One such protest occurring on October 21st, and involving an estimated 5,000 students in the Northern province of Lamphun demanded and obtained the resignation of the Governor Rong Thasanachalee for alledged corruption in administering fund allocated for local school projects. Another more revolutionary kind of protest involving the Dean of the School of Public Administration at the National Institute of Development Administration (N.I.D.A.) occurred in mid-November, 1973. The Dean, Dr. Amorn Raksasatya, was forced to resign from his position, for misrepresenting the students and the student revolt in an informal meeting with Thai students in Tokyo. While attending a conference in Tokyo, Dr. Amorn agreed to speak at an informal gathering on Thai students about the important events that had occurred in Thailand before he left. Apparently, while giving his version of the student revolt he was being taped, and the tape was subsequently sent back to Thai student leaders in Bangkok for review, transcription, and distribution. Soon thereafter, Dr. Choop Kanchanapakorn, the rector of N.I.D.A., and appointed MP to the National Assembly, announced his resignation. A more democratic system was proposed whereby candidates for Rector would be chosen by referendum, and subject to approval by a board of Deans of the various institutes, and the Dean was to be selected by a majority vote of the school's faculty. The system was overwhelmingly approved by referendum with 80% voting in favor of the new system of selection. Under the new system Dr. Thinapan Nakata was elected temporary Dean of the School of Public Administration and Dr. Somsak Xuto was chosen as N.I.D.A.'s new Rector. More important than the shift in persons at the top of this institution, was the fact that the appointment process, so prevalent in the Thai bureaucracy was overruled in favor of a more democratic elective process. If this system of selection becomes institutionalized and begins to permeate various levels of the government bureaucracy in other educational and service-oriented

institutions, significant change may well take place in making the traditional bureaucracy more accountable. However, while there were early indications that other institutions were ready to adapt the new system (e.g., Kasetsart University), there were also indications of resistance to this system by those who maintained that it was incompatible with Thai culture.

This apparent "purge" was also directed at the Dean's assistant who had accompanied him to the conference and taped meeting. It was no small coincidence that both men had been requested (and of course had to accept) to act in an advisory capacity to the National Executive Council (NEC) of the ousted government of Thanom and Prapas. Immediately thereafter, many of the tradition-bound educators and other high-ranking officials in the government bureaucracy began either to "change" their views on the significance of the student revolt and the importance of heroes of the revolution, or keep their opinions to themselves. Student leaders, having black-listed many of the high-ranking officials in the bureaucracy, were usually not able to have these people removed from government service, but did manage to have many of them transferred to less sensitive positions located in some of the most remote provinces of Thailand. The students therefore effectively utilized the age old bureaucratic technique of transfer to dismantle much of the supporting cast of the Thanom-Prapas clique.

Thus, in this particular instance, the students departed significantly from what might be expected of them according to Thai cultural patterns of respect for the more important cause of the "revolution". Moreover, this event forced at least a slight change in the attitude of some of the high-ranking officials in the crucial levels of the traditional Thai bureaucracy. Some student leaders realized the necessity to change cultural values of the established authorities, particularly among the educational administrators. An informal practice which eventually was to be referred to as "lang kru" (literally translated meaning "wash" or "clean-up" the teachers) began to be carried out by students at every level of the Thai education system, being particularly intense at the university and high school levels. The purported purpose of the "washing" exercise was an attempt to "modernize" teacher-students and student-oriented programs for reform. Moreover, it grew out of desire on the part of many students to have teachers better understand student values, behavior and aspirations. However, the harsher interpretation of "lang kru" is to "clean out" by removal or transfer, in such cases where

teachers are seen as a threat to the student movement. Protest leaders realized that if permanent acceptance, tacit or real, of the democratic innovations proposed by the students was to be a reality, change in various crucial levels of the Thai bureaucracy had to take place.

Another significant departure from all previous Thai student movements were the emergence of influential independent student organizations which broke away from the "moderate" and more central positions of the National Student Center of Thailand. The most significant of these organizations is The Free Thammasat Movement, led by Seksan Prasertkul, the political science student who played a significant role in the demonstrations which led to the overthrow of the military regime. A close affiliate of the Free Thammasat Movement and apparent counter-part at Chulalongkorn University is the Independent Chulalongkorn Student Group. Both student groups are extremely nationalistic and support more socialistic positions on domestic issues and anti-imperialistic positions on foreign policy issues, than does the National Student Center. These particular groups continue to be in the vanguard of the protest demonstrations for structural and policy change in Thai government. It was the Independent Chulalongkorn Student Group which launched a city-wide protest against the newly appointed American Ambassador William Kinter in mid-November, 1973, Poster Demanding to "Chase Kinter Away" were displayed around the Chulalongkorn University campus, while students distributed over 30,000 leaflets at all throughfares in Bangkok. The leaflets described Kinter as a career military man and warned the Thai people that the new U.S. Ambassador would be "war-minded" in his approach. The leaflets further attacked American "imperialism" and contended that:

American intervention in Indo-China has caused adverse effects on Thailand. Support for the previous military government has led to the decay of democracy in Thailand, and American bases here have tarnished the good image of Thailand as an independent country⁴⁷.

It took less than two months for Ambassador Kinter to fulfill the students prophecy of "intervention", as a widely publicized C.I.A. blunder provided adequate proof that this agency was in fact "meddling" in the affairs of the Thai government. The incident was especially embarrassing to William R. Kinter, who was not only a former U.S. Army

⁴⁷ Bangkok World (November 18, 1973).

Colonel, but also worked for the C.I.A. for two years in Washington. In a rare instance of openness, the U.S. Embassy admitted the C.I.A. involvement and Ambassador Kinter issued an official apology to the Thai government.

The bizarre incident involved a C.I.A. agent whose base of operation was the provincial town of Sakhon Nakohn in Northeast Thailand, an area where communist insurgents have steadily increased their activities in the last five years. The agent apparently sent a phony letter to Prime Minister Sanya Thammasak, and several newspapers as well, proposing a cease-fire with the insurgents in exchange for granting autonomy to rebels in Thailand's northeastern provinces. The letter from the C.I.A. agent was sent in the name of the local rebel commander of the estimated 5,000 communist insurgents in Sakhon Nakhon.

The C.I.A.'s involvement was revealed by an apparent blunder by a messenger boy who had the letter registered allowing Thai officials to trace it to the C.I.A. office in Sakhon Nakhon. While Ambassador Kinter, in his apology, described the agent's actions as a "regrettable" and "unauthorized initiative", suspicious Thai officials wisely surmised that the letter was designed to assess the new government's response to a cease-fire with the communists. Apparently, the students also realized that the most regrettable aspect of the incident as far as the U.S. Embassy was concerned was the fact that the C.I.A. agent's activities was unfortunately exposed. With the support of most of the Thai language newspapers, the students launched a series of protest activities directed at U.S. intervention in Thai affairs. On January 6, 1974, Thai students laid a wreath in front of the Embassy bearing the slogan "Go home, ugly Americans", while the newspapers carried anti-C.I.A. editorials and cartoons.

Hoping to stem the tide of anti-C.I.A. and anti-American sentiment which was on the rise after the incident, Ambassador Kinter, on January 8th, disclosed that the C.I.A. agent responsible for the letter was transferred out of Thailand while an embassy spokesman revealed that "appropriate disciplinary action" was being taken. Apparently the students were unimpressed with Kinter's explanation, for on the very next night, January 9th, about 5,000 students protested at the U.S. embassy grounds, while student leaders attacked the C.I.A. over a public address system outside the embassy gates. More important, several days after the C.I.A. incident, senior Thai officials revealed that the C.I.A. would be told to close its field posts and stay out of Thailand's internal affairs.

Previously, the C.I.A. had enjoyed Thai government co-operation for most of their clandestine activities. Operating out of the political section on the fourth floor of the U.S. Embassy under the agency's Plans Directorate, the department became known as the "dirty tricks department". The C.I.A. operation in Thailand has been one of the largest overseas operations and one of the most effective in cultivating an exceptionally close relationship with the former Thai Prime Minister, Thanom Kitikachorn. According to informed Thai sources, the relationship was so close that Thanom often made himself much more available to the C.I.A. chief than to the U.S. Ambassador.

During the same tumultuous weeks of the C.I.A. incident, thousands of Thai students gave Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka a hostile reception as he arrived in Bangkok for a two-day visit. The students massed outside Tanaka's hotel and blocked all the entrances with buses and demanded that Tanaka leave the country immediately. They withdrew that threat and moved the busses only after Japan's ambassador accepted a list of demands from them. These demands included that :

1. all Japanese loans to Thailand be without conditions
2. Japan lift its import quotas on Thai products
3. The Japanese government train all prospective Japanese investors in Thailand in Thailand's needs, tradition, and culture.

Thereafter, the students allowed Tanaka to leave his hotel, but as he left they beat on his limousine and shouted "Japanese go home". Interestingly enough, the police did not interfere, and only student marshalls with red arm-bands held back the noisy crowd of students who began burning paper effigies (i.e., Japan-made cars) in front of the Japanese Trade Center nearby.

During the months following the student revolt, a major student protest was also launched against Thailand's most influential Thai-language newspaper, Siam Rath, because of an article critical of King Bhumibhol. At a student rally the newspaper was publically burned as a symbol of the students' discontent with the article and determination to censor the editor from further publication. Shortly thereafter, the Thai police suspended the editor's license indefinitely for publishing the article by two Thais in Sweden, criticizing the King for not controlling troops and police during the student revolt in October, 1973. The newspaper's editor, Nopporn Boonyarit, hopelessly attempted to defend himself by asserting that the paper was simply trying to expose attempts to un-

dermine the monarchy. The monarchy and particularly the present King, has always played a significant role of respect and admiration in all Thai student movements. King Bhumibhol has been continually involved in public activities, and especially those activities related to Thailand's youth. Moreover, since this accession in 1955, he has personally presented the diploma to every university graduate in the country. A photo snapped of each such presentation are hung on the wall of around 15,000 Thai homes every year. While the student protest was an attack on the newspaper, Siam Rath, and in support of the King, it had the intended effect of putting all newspapers on notice that public criticism of those people and ideals held sacred by the new student revolution would not be tolerated. The implications of the latter became much more significant to the student leaders who continued in their strategy to change the Thai society and political system.

Voluntarily public support for the main student organization, the NSCT, continued since the October uprising and as of December 1973, the NSCT had received almost 20 million baht (approximately 1 million in U.S. currency) in donations from the public. Some of the money was used to help the families of those who were killed while other funds went toward paying the medical bills of those demonstrators who were injured during the uprising. The NSCT also set aside a huge sum as a proposed budget for the "teaching democracy program" which was to begin at the end of the 1973-1974 academic year. University authorities have co-operated with the proposed student program by re-scheduling the completion of the second semester so that the students could be released from classes as soon as possible. Moreover, by December 1973 government leaders of the NSCT who are mainly upper-classmen, graduate students, and even students who refused to graduate, know that only continuity in their own organization will assure the programs they fought so hard to establish. Eventually, even most "professional students" grow up and enter the government bureaucracy or politics and the NSCT could not continually enjoy the voluntary efforts and fund raising which occurred immediately after the October revolt. Hence, the NSCT leaders, after a series of sit-ins at the budget bureau, pressured the Prime Minister to eventually agree to provide a "special" fund for the NSCT from the national budget. If this budgetary procedure becomes officially recognized for future fiscal years, the NSCT might be guaranteed permanency through salaried positions of its bureaucratic organization and its politicized leaders might then remain on as monitors for the reforms of the social revolution.

The NSCT teaching democracy program was originally designed to have all people in all provinces become aware of the purpose and political implications of democratic institutions and principles. The students had planned to bring the message to the people through the use of several thousand dedicated NSCT members who could spend their time and energy "teaching democracy" in the outer provinces and remote villages of Thailand. However, the "teaching democracy" aspects of the program became somewhat misleading, and after some initial set-backs, student leaders and advisors who were promoting the program, such as Dr. Chaianan Samudavanijja and Dr. Tawat Wichaidit wisely adjusted their objectives in adapting to the provincial conditions. Before the program had officially begun F.I.S.T., a newly formed break-away student group from the NSCT, under Seksan's leadership decided to carry their cause to the provinces. Unfortunately, the Westernized middle-class and urban backgrounds which characterized many of the students of this group hindered them from establishing the necessary rapport with the common people of the provinces. Learning primarily from some of the mistakes and successes of Seksan's experiment and the performance (and lack of performance in many cases) of the Democracy Development Program of the late 1960's, the "teaching democracy" program was redirected in the form of a domestic Peace Corps with the predominant philosophy approaching that of "thought reform". To improve the establishment of rapport between students and villagers, about 5,000 students were selected and chosen for a particular assignment on the basis of their knowledge of that particular province. Hence, an attempt was made to assign students from the northeast and south and other provincial areas to their home-towns, and rather than "teach democracy", they were to reacquaint themselves with the concerns of the villagers. Moreover, students from metropolitan Bangkok who were sent to rural areas were urged to shed their urban and Western life-styles and live like the people whose interests they wish to serve, and to listen to the villagers' problems before discussing politics. Student leaders apparently realized that the success of their "cultural revolution" in the provinces will, in large part, determine the permanency of the political changes they have already achieved as well as the acceptance of effective constitutional government in the future.

The Immediate Future of the Thai Student Movement

Serious problems are sure to arise since military leaders are not likely to mildly acquiesce to the results of the new order of government for a prolonged period of time. The military has played a significant role in the Thai government's decision-making process since 1932, and it is reasonable to assume that they will remain a major influence in the shaping of the new government in the future. There is even a remote chance that the military may resort to the coup, if the demonstrations become more violent or directed against the present military leaders, or in the event that the ongoing student movement becomes exceedingly leftist in nature and tactics.

As the proposed campaigns and the party platforms of the Prachatpat and various other political parties began to enfold and dominate the media in February and March of 1974, the role of student leaders and activists became increasingly vague. The Thai public and media which had steadfastly supported the students in almost all issues and actions before, during and after the October revolution of 1973, began to turn their attention to the up-coming elections and criticize the behavior and proposals of student leaders.

Moreover, it seemed as though the public had begun to show weariness with the many strikes, demonstrations, and the sometimes violent fighting among students from various vocational schools which became common place in the three months which followed the October revolt. The public seemed to express the sentiment that since the military were overthrown and the new constitution was already drafted, the students had accomplished their main mission. Therefore, in view of rising inflation, the energy crisis and sagging economy, the Thai public became more interested in practical solutions and traditional moderate approaches to political change.

However, the student leaders remained determined to continue the movement which had lost much of its momentum by March 1974. Student leaders began to attack various activities of the government and business leaders in search for an issue that would gain nationwide support. With the major opposition, the former military ruling clique, no longer in power, even the moderate NSCT will have a more difficult time convincing a public suffering from a major economic depression which reached crisis proportion after the October revolt, to support them on various idealistic issues. The major opportunity which still remains for

the leaders who wish to maintain some continuity in the student movement is the "teaching democracy" program which sent thousand of students to the country-side in late March, April, and May of 1974.

Events in Thailand in the months of May and June in 1974 increased the power of the moderately-liberal civilian government. A brief military alert after the resignation of Sanya and his cabinet gave some rise to the speculation of a return to military rule. However, Sanya was persuaded to resume office, and in doing so, rid the cabinet of all remnants of the old military regime, and in their place appointed younger and moderately-liberal persons of high integrity. In the meantime, organized student groups began to ally themselves with worker and farmer causes, and were successful in organizing strikes among textile and other workers and forced the resignation of several high ranking government officials. Perhaps the most significant development during this period was the creation of the "New Force" party... the leadership of which is represented by Thai intellectuals formerly known as the "Young Turks of Thailand". The party platform of this new group is based on a domestic policy of socialistic reforms and a foreign policy designed to achieve a reproachment which the communist bloc, particularly the People's Republic of China. Interestingly enough, many of the specific proposals for domestic policy reforms and a "neutral" foreign policy reflect both the content and intent of previously stated demands and proposals by the NSCT and other student organizations.

Student activists also became involved in the elections which took place in January, 1975. Various student groups were very influential as campaign workers for the New Force Party and the new Socialist Party of Thailand which won 12 and 15 seats respectively, in the House of Representatives. However, in the midst of the student and labor movements and increasing trends toward socialism, it was the Phuu Ying Yai, "old important people", that resumed control of the government. Though there was a plurality victory of 72 seats for the Prachatipat Party, the military and industrialists re-emerged with significant influence in the new government as candidates associated with the old UTPP (United Thai People's Party) which was previously led by the deposed Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn, won over 100 seats under the banner of new party names. The four major parties backed by former UTPP members include the Social Justice Party which won 45 seats, Chart Thai with 28 seats, and the Social Agrarian and Social Nationalist parties which won 19 and 16 seats respectively.

These election results precipitated the inevitable — Thailand's first coalition government. Whatever the outcome of Thailand's experiment with democracy, Thai students and the NSCT will be forever remembered as the group most responsible for ending military rule in 1973 and establishing a new constitutional government dominated by civilians.