THAILAND:

Anatomy of a Counterinsurgency Victory

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FOR STUDENTS OF WAR, historical cases relevant to the present United States counterinsurgency in Iraq are plentiful, though not always immediately obvious. The Vietnam War is a case in point. That conflict provides numerous lessons regarding counterinsurgency, but many of them have been overlooked because analysts typically study the war as if it were a purely local affair, occurring amidst a regional vacuum. They forget that the fighting in Vietnam was only part of a wider regional struggle encompassing other national theaters of operation. Each of those theaters had its own unique character and distinct ways in which the United States was involved. Hence, each offers us a discrete set of lessons for today's campaigns. The counterinsurgency in Thailand (roughly 1950-1983) was one such related but distinctive struggle.

The Thai case is particularly relevant for us because it was, from start to finish, more akin to our 1955-65 advisory experience in Vietnam than to the main force employment era in the decade that followed (1965-73). Thus there is much that veterans of El Salvador, Colombia, Peru, Afghanistan, and Iraq would recognize. This is important, because the conventional side of the Vietnam War (depicted in such films as *We Were Soldiers*, *Platoon*, and *Hamburger Hill*) occurred only after earlier efforts to strengthen state capacity failed. By contrast, such efforts did not fail in Thailand, which makes the circumstances and nature of our involvement there such an important case study for serious students of counterinsurgency today.

That said, the usual caveat, as we shall see, is perhaps even more the case here. Every insurgency has its unique elements, none more so than Thailand's. In the end, peculiarly "Thai" factors drove events, but the ability of the counterinsurgency (with or without American input) to operate successfully within the distinctive parameters of Thai culture, even as the insurgents did not, offers particularly instructive lessons.[1]

Constructing the Counterstate

As in other regional conflicts, the Thai conflict grew out of a Communist bid for power. In a challenge to the Royal Government, the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) shed its pre-Second World War adherence to orthodox Marxist-Leninism, embraced Maoism, and adopted people's war as its strategy. From the outset, societal transformation was the CPT's goal. Its strategy

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PHOTO: In hill areas of Chiangrai Province, northern Thailand, in 1987, the author uses Mandarin to speak to Yao tribesmen. Yao and Mandarin are related, which allows communication. Tribesmen had reported illegal logging, which was hurting crop yields; the government was seeking to discern whether insurgents were using the activity to generate funds.

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was to negate the state's greater military power by mobilizing the people against it through the creation of a counterstate. Direct mobilization of a popular base and indirect mobilization through front organizations were to be the party's main lines of operation. Violence would be but one tool among many in an armed political campaign designed to march steadily towards seizure of the capital, Bangkok.

Tactically, the Communist Party used local guerrilla units (main forces were never formed) to challenge government control of certain areas. Operationally, the link between the party and the guerrillas was the clandestine infrastructure, the counterstate, rooted in CPT control of local areas that functioned as its bases for further expansion. To establish authority in such areas, the CPT employed terror. Recalcitrant villagers, or those whose community standing made them symbols of government authority (e.g., village headmen and schoolteachers), were selectively targeted.

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Simultaneously, to attract and unify popular support, CPT political themes and propaganda concentrated on promoting the perception that the party was the Thai people's sole champion, its only effective means to address grievances. Hence the CPT concentrated its activity mainly in rural areas beset by poverty and politically estranged from the central government.

Following Maoist doctrine, the CPT began developing its counterstate in peripheral areas of the kingdom, in the unincorporated space of what became three largely autonomous campaigns: the North, Northeast (*Isaan*), and South. Although Thailand is not especially large, neither is it small. Its 514,000 square kilometers (198,500 square miles) and 28 million people (in 1962) put it in the same league with a unified Vietnam (smaller in population than Vietnam, but larger in area).

Northeast Thailand was especially susceptible to such revolutionary activities, due in part to economic, cultural, and political characteristics that distinguished it from other regions.[2] It was the kingdom's largest and most populous region, yet its poorest (thanks mainly to an ecology that limited agricultural and other forms of economic development). It was politically alienated from the central government because of its population's Thai-Lao ethnicity and culture. Thai-Lao personalities had dominated radical politics immediately after World War II, and the region's delegates in Thailand's military-dominated parliamentary system had incurred the ire of the ruling elite by supporting neutralist sentiments even as Thailand moved closer to the West.[3]

Government repression allowed the CPT to tap the latent grievances already present owing to the Northeast's economic and social predicament.[4] To focus the resulting outburst, the CPT constructed its counterstate along standard Leninist lines. At the apex was a 7-man Politburo, below it a 25-man Central Committee. Central Committee members performed various staff functions, one of the most

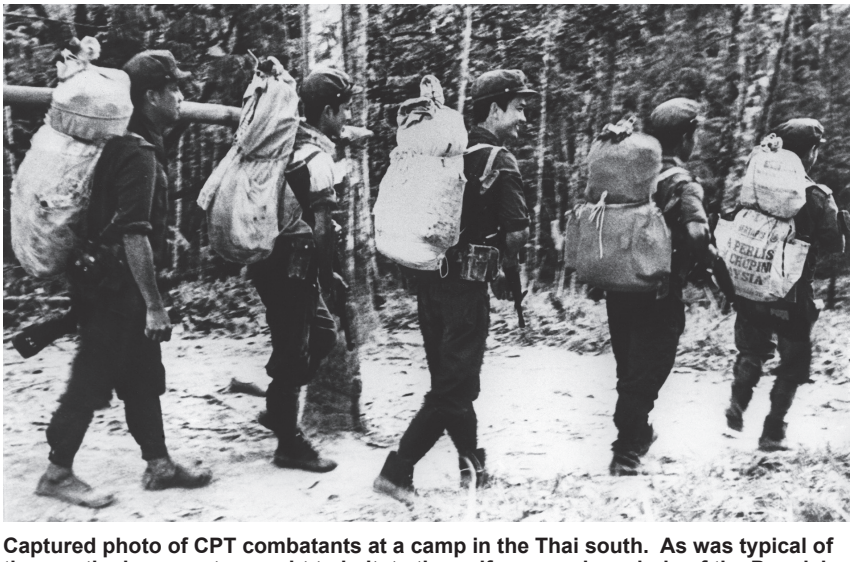
important being supervision of the military apparatus and creation of a united front (as called for by Maoist doctrine). Committee members frequently served as heads of Communist Party provincial (*changwat*) committees, which oversaw CPT district (*amphoe*) committees that, in turn, guided "township" (*tambol*) and village (*muban* or *ban*) party structures.[5]

The resulting alternative government structure emerged as a serious clandestine challenge to state authority and legitimacy in outlying areas. Robert F. Zimmerman, a U.S. official with long experience in Thailand, observed the following about this quasi-government's basic component, the village: "The party's greatest strength…lies in its elaborate organization at the village level in those areas where Communist insurgents are strongly entrenched. An excellent illustration of this organization at its best is the infrastructure that existed in Ban Nakham village, Ubon Ratchathani Province, in 1966. Although government Communist-suppression operations destroyed this infrastructure, there is little reason to doubt that it remains typical of communist practice in areas where the insurgents are in control. The Ban Nakham village organization was headed by a village committee consisting of a chairman, two assistant chairmen, and four other members, with one of the assistant chairmen and the four ordinary members responsible for directing the activities of eight specialized committees of 15-30 members dealing with such matters as youth and military affairs, political propaganda, labor and business, women's affairs, etc. This structure functioned within the village but was responsible to a 'zone commander' and two assistant commanders based in the jungle.

"Through this apparatus operating at the local level, the Communists have been able not only to recruit and motivate active adherents but also to mobilize sufficient popular support in the major insurgent areas to generate sources of manpower, food, shelter, and finances (in part through local tax levies), and to develop an effective intelligence network. They have also benefited from a certain amount of illicit 'assistance' in the form of accommodation or even bribes offered by government officials or by private construction firms engaged in building roads into the insurgent areas."[6]

According to former CIA officer Ralph W. McGehee, this infrastructure became quite extensive: "Using all the index cards and files, I wrote a final report. I prepared name lists of all cell members, including their aliases, by village. In this district the list contained the names of more than 500 persons. Those 500 persons did not appear anywhere in the Agency reporting at the time. The CIA estimated there were 2,500 to 4,000 Communists in all of Thailand. But our surveys showed the Communists probably had that many adherents in Sakorn Nakorn Province alone."[7]

It appears, however, that in some ways McGehee and his superiors might have been comparing apples and oranges. The CIA's 2,500-4,000 figure seems to have been an estimate of armed guerrillas, while the 500 individuals in McGehee's district were part of the mass base. When a village came under control of the CPT shadow government, its mobilization included providing manpower for a militia. Only the best members of this body joined the actual guerrillas in the CPT's bases, located in inaccessible areas. In other words, by counting only the full-time guerrillas, the CIA overlooked the much larger number of individuals actually involved in the



Captured photo of CPT combatants at a camp in the Thai south. As was typical of the era, the insurgents sought to imitate the uniforms and symbols of the People's Liberation Army of China.

movement. It is also important to note that, in contrast to the romantic Maoist vision promulgated by CPT literature, the guerrillas' weapons and equipment did not come from raids conducted against government forces, but from other Southeast Asian Communist sources.

With reliable sources of supply from abroad and recruiting made easy by repression at home, the CPT expanded steadily. By the early 1970s, a majority of the provinces in the kingdom had been classified as "infiltrated," meaning some sort of CPT activity was present.[8] Still, this activity remained confined mainly to areas outside the heartland, beyond the central plain that was the social, economic, and political center of Thailand. Penetration of urban centers of power on the central plain would occur later.

The State Responds

To counter the rising threat, the Thai government adopted a strategy directed against the combatants of the insurgent counterstate.[9] This was an inappropriate response to the CPT challenge because it sought to suppress the opposition by brute force rather than attempting to assuage the popular discontent fueling the insurgency. In December 1965, the highest levels of the government ordered the formation of a Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC), later to become the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC). Saiyud Kerdphol, a respected officer whose background included covert operations in Laos against Communist forces, was placed in charge of this new command. What the government had in mind, though, was not counterinsurgency, but better management of the counterguerrilla campaign.

Saiyud later recounted, "The RTA [Royal Thai Army] then was run by 'the old school,' the pre-World War II officers. They had tremendous difficulty understanding counterinsurgency, rebellion, and the fundamental causes which fed revolt. Praphas [former Deputy Prime Minister and the muscle behind the government that ultimately fell in 1973], for example, named CSOC the 'suppression command.' He could understand that the fight had to be coordinated—that's why he set up CSOC—but he wasn't talking about CPM [civil-police-military; essentially, the coordinated application of all resources to the insurgent problem, as done by the British to defeat the Communists in Malaya during the Emergency]. Some of the younger generation of officers, though, were more attuned to reality. Among them was Prem [later Prime Minister].

"We understood immediately that what we were dealing with was a political problem. We applied CPM to the problems of the Northeast, yet we knew more was needed than simply a response. Coordination is the key to winning, but all must look at the problem through the same eyes. You need a common blueprint on which to base the plan.

"Two things were obvious: there was nothing worse than to fight the wrong way, *and* the key is the people. We had to ask ourselves, why do the people have a problem, why are they taking up arms? We did a lot of mechanical things, such as setting up Village Defence Corps and special training centers through which we could run all regular companies.

"The crucial point, though, more than numbers, is orientation. You have to keep analyzing a target area. You have to keep asking yourself, 'What are the reasons for popular discontent? What are the problems?' Figure out the solutions, then implement and coordinate."[10]

More or less disregarding his superiors, Saiyud began to organize CSOC for a genuine counterinsurgency, one that would seek to get at the roots

Saiyud Kerdphol talks with tribespeople in Pua, Nan Province, northern Thailand, in May 1973. Civic action activities are being carried out in the background. Then a major general, Saiyud had attracted attention early in his career for his insights into insurgency and counterinsurgency.

of the conflict. To clearly define the nature of the problems, he did two things immediately. First, he set up an intelligence analysis center with branches in the field. Copies of all government reports (and any other data that could be gathered up) were then fed into the intelligence system and analyzed with the aid of borrowed computer time—a novel methodology for Thailand at the time. This weeded out typical bureaucratic misstatement and inaccuracy and expedited distribution of a definitive assessment of various problems to pertinent agencies. Second, he established an extensive research and analysis branch under the brilliant and at times controversial scholar, Somchai Rakwijit. Under Rakwijit's guidance, the branch soon produced comprehensive assessments based on sound data. Rather than relying on suspect reports passed from outlying regions through the official bureaucracy, he sent researchers into the field, often alone, to study insurgent-infested areas.

Using the data generated by these systems, Saiyud developed a response that called for a mix of civil and military measures. His modus operandi constituted a textbook approach to classic counterinsurgency: identify the problem; move in with solutions, using the military to shield the effort; and send specially trained forces to seek out the guerrillas.

Although Saiyud's approach seemed logical, it encountered resistance. CSOC was at first given authority only over the small CPM task forces deployed to insurgent-affected areas. In 1967, guided by a comprehensive intelligence network set up by Saiyud, the task forces began to show promise in uncovering and dealing with the CPT infrastructure. But when CSOC asked for more units, military opponents, jealously guarding their own turfs, demurred. Before long, authority over field units was transferred back to regional army commanders.

Consequently, this first attempt at establishing a counterinsurgency program was rendered largely ineffective. Most commanders simply would not deploy their forces on what they viewed as a secondary mission. Instead, they concentrated on personal political and economic concerns. When actually called upon to move against insurgent forces, commanders did so in the traditional military fashion most resented by local peoples: search and destroy.

Nowhere was the ineffectiveness of the traditional approach more obvious than in the North. There, beginning in December 1967, a number of land quarrels between Hmong tribesmen and Thai in Chiangrai and Nan provinces exacerbated longstanding hill tribe versus lowlander tensions. The Thai government's initial response was heavy-handed and succeeded primarily in making more enemies. The security forces responded to ambushes with artillery and air strikes that destroyed villages and threw still more recruits to the insurgency. A flood of refugees ensued, devastating the economy of a large area of the North.[11] Concerted attempts by more enlightened officials to adopt alternatives were brushed aside or enmeshed in red tape to ensure they were not resourced.

Saiyud realized the inappropriateness of heavy-handed suppression and fought to implement his CPM strategy, as detailed in a plan titled *The Struggle for Thailand, Section II, A Solution for the North*. His approach was initially rejected by key government officials—"body count" remained the order of the day. Not surprisingly, as the number of villages destroyed grew, so did the number of guerrillas. Some CPT propaganda sessions reportedly involved as many as 200 armed guerrillas. Although its total strength in the North was still only an estimated 3,000 by 1973, the guerrilla movement managed to make life there extremely unsettled in many areas.[12]

This remained the general pattern of events for some time. While many Thai appeared to comprehend the socioeconomic nature of the Northern insurgency, the government's wrongheaded response ensured the failure of its misdirected counterinsurgency efforts.

An Alternative to Brute Force

The root of the problem in the North was that the hill tribe people concerned, the Hmong, not being ethnically Thai, were treated as second-class citizens. The government's discriminatory racial attitudes, reflected by the average Thai soldier, frequently translated into hostile acts against members of the population. The CPT took advantage of the hostility generated.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that regardless of structural conditions, villager loyalty remained very much up for grabs during this period. Despite

A staging point for small unit patrols in Nan Province, northern Thailand. Vehicles were used to move troops to jump-off points and to push bulk supplies. Harsh terrain meant tedious foot patrolling under dangerous circumstances.

the CPT's efforts to paint itself as the people's champion, communist ideology had limited popular appeal. In fact, setting aside the ham-fisted strategy employed by their rulers, most Thai preferred to side with the government and the status quo unless traumatized by specific grievances.

Using "other war" means, Saiyud sought to exploit this Thai inclination to side with the government or to remain neutral, particularly in the Northeast, where the target population, although culturally distinct, was nonetheless regarded as within the "Thai" family. He and other like-minded officials pushed through programs to meet popular needs through regional development.

Publicly, at least, Bangkok was under no illusions concerning poor conditions in the countryside.[13] During the early to mid-1950s, before the outbreak of actual violence, the government had begun a number of development programs to address the conditions. By 1958, this approach had been broadened to include the first community development pilot projects; and in 1960, a National Community Development Program was put into effect, consolidating many of the already existing programs (which had been scattered among various departments). According to government literature, National Community Development was designed to bring about the partnership of the Royal Thai Government (RTG) and its people at the local level.[14] It aimed "to encourage the people to exercise initiative to improve their communities and ways of living through cooperative efforts on the self-help basis" and to "bring the coordinated support of the various ministries concerned to assist the villagers in carrying out their projects."[15] By the end of 1961, at least on paper, most Northeastern villages were covered by the program, even, it should be noted, as repressive measures sent activists fleeing to the CPT for protection.

While National Community Development was directed at villages throughout the kingdom, additional measures to deal specifically with the Northeast were also implemented. The overall effort was facilitated by the United States, which had established an economic aid mission to the kingdom in 1950. Much of the $300 million in planned expenditures was provided by Washington. The principal vehicle for American assistance in this field was the Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) program. ARD created, trained, and equipped a local organization to plan, design, construct, and maintain rural roads and other small

village projects. Provinces selected for ARD were those most in need of immediate developmental help. In practice, this meant those provinces threatened by Communist insurgency as designated by the Thai National Security Council. Once a *changwad* was designated an "ARD province," the governor's staff and equipment were augmented. Simultaneously, the governor was authorized to implement village-level projects on his own.

By 1969, the governors of the 24 ARD-designated provinces—most of them in the Northeast—had progressed from having virtually no resources with which to mount any type of development program to having 250-member staffs, millions of dollars worth of equipment, and vastly increased budgets. The government had committed a cumulative total of $58,824,000 to the program, supplemented by $49,308,000 from the United States. How these funds were expended, it should be noted, reflected economic priorities. Road building and maintenance were the dominant categories. Other ARD activities included mobile medical teams, district farmer groups (cooperatives), and youth and potable water programs.

Mixed Results of "Development"

In terms of achieving politico-military objectives to end the insurgency, ARD's results in 1969 were mixed. Although physically and statistically there was a great deal of economic progress to show, the ultimate objective had been to "reduce, or even eliminate, insurgency through the development effort."[16] This had not happened. To the contrary, American and Thai evaluations consistently noted that ARD made no meaningful difference in the target population's overall disposition toward the government even though the actual activities involved were generally appreciated.[17] Even where the villagers' lot improved demonstrably (e.g., per capita income increased), the rosy statistical picture often did not reflect the continuing realities of the poor security situation.

Hence ARD failed to achieve a great deal toward realizing its objectives. This should not have been surprising, since the government had adopted a predominantly economic response to a fundamentally political problem. What should have been one supporting element in an overall program became the main effort due to the government's one-dimensional vision of "development" as panacea. The outcome was as predictable as it was ineffective.

The Communist insurgents wanted to restructure the existing systems of social stratification and to redistribute political power by seizing the reins of the state. Because there were no peaceful means to employ—they had been officially frozen out of the system—violence became their principal instrument. Noncommunist opponents of the existing order were similarly precluded from real participation. Their only choices were to sit on the sidelines or join the insurgents.

The solution to such a structural dilemma, then, should have been political reform. But this Bangkok could not see. Although political reform was mentioned as a goal, it was completely overshadowed by the program's economic aspects, such as infrastructure development. The skewing of goals was reflected in ARD's unsatisfactory results.

Role of the United States

Ironically, both the "hard" military and "soft" development sides of the Thai approach were generally attributed to U.S. direction.[18] Such a view was simplistic and misleading. Certainly U.S. influence was significant, but Thailand's collaboration with the United States during this period was a marriage of convenience for both parties. It was driven by a shared security perspective whereby both states sought to maximize their gains. In fact, when the drawbacks of partnership came to overshadow the advantages, the Thai government asserted its independence and backed away from greater collaboration.

What was on display, amidst a context of American strategic dominance, was the Thai capacity for assessment and adaptation, as demonstrated by Saiyud. The Thai government's approach matured in a manner that reflected peculiarly Thai characteristics and concerns.

In terms of grand strategy, the Thai sought two ends: national development and security, especially from external threats.

National development proceeded along a path that emphasized economics. A thread of American thought asserted that Western-style economic modernization would result in social and political "modernization," the product being the maximization of national potential for domestic peace.[19] The Thai came to accept this formula.

Security demands were assessed as most pressing in the post-World War II world due to the perceived menace posed by Chinese and Vietnamese expansionism. The Thai, therefore, negotiated American guarantees and military presence. They watched the evolution of American attitudes toward (and capacity for fighting) "brush fire wars," an evolution that began in earnest during the Kennedy presidency.[20] Inevitably, key Thai personalities such as Saiyud studied and were influenced by American and other Western (especially British) counterinsurgency concepts.

Western doctrine, regardless of origin, posited three essential tasks for successful resolution of insurgency: security force operations against the insurgents, population and resource control, and elimination of grievances.[21] Institutional predispositions of the Thai military led to emphasis upon security force operations, as well as population and resource control. Within the national context of an economics-driven development strategy, elimination of grievances emphasized providing resources and resolving economic complaints as opposed to rectifying the weaknesses of the political system. This approach played out in ARD, wherein goals such as "roads built" and "wells dug" quickly overshadowed more abstract objectives such as fostering popular participation in the political process.

Thai development efforts, then, did not begin at U.S. behest, but rather evolved from a shared perspective towards an appropriate approach. Nevertheless, the impact the United States had on the nature of Thai programs was considerable. This became even more the case as American officials formulated a plan with the Thai government for a coordinated response to insurgency.

A U.S. Military Aid Program (MAP) and a Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) had been in Thailand since the Korean War (during which Thailand deployed a regimental combat team and various sea and air assets), with the Military Assistance Command-Thailand (MACTHAI) added in 1962 for "operational combat assistance." The mechanisms needed by the Americans to support Thailand's counterinsurgency plan were fully realized during the tenure of Ambassador Graham Martin (1963-67). Programs, budgets, and U.S. personnel increased substantially. In mid-1966, Martin created the position of Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency to coordinate and regulate all U.S. military and civilian activities directly related to the problem of insurgency in Thailand.[22]

The number of personnel who administered such support fluctuated constantly. George Tanham has provided useful figures, all for the late 1973, early 1974 time frame (later than the period under discussion, but still illustrative): 101 embassy personnel; 179 U.S. Agency for International Development personnel in the United States Operations Mission (USOM), a plurality working with ARD; 26 personnel in the field element, United States Information Service of the United States Information Agency; 550 personnel in JUSMAG/MACTHAI (a portion of whom were assigned to Special Forces Thailand); and approximately 200 personnel assigned to a field unit (in Bangkok) of the Advanced Research Projects Agency, most of whom were contractors. Other units, such as the 4,000 men of U.S. Army Support Thailand, could be used as appropriate for missions within Thailand.[23]

Compared to the force levels in South Vietnam, those in Thailand were minuscule. Yet these forces were very effective. Although specifically prohibited from participating in combat operations, they performed the functions we now associate with stability operations.[24]

By the end of 1966, 60 percent of American aid funds were going to the Northeast. Mobile Development Units—16 units of 120 men each that carried out civic action projects—received an initial investment of $1.5 million. The significant ARD input through Fiscal Year (FY) 1969 has already been mentioned (just over $49 million).

Active as the United States was, a delicate balancing effort was required between providing support specifically to Thailand and support to the war effort elsewhere in Indochina. By the end of 1967, 33,369 U.S. Airmen and 527 aircraft were in the kingdom (by 1970 the personnel figure would reach 48,000), carrying out missions principally against North Vietnam. A Thai division of 11,000 men (14 percent of the army's total strength) was in South Vietnam, and a substantial 20,000-man "covert" force (27 light infantry and 3 artillery battalions) was in Laos.[25] In sum, "Vietnam War activities" were substantial and had a significant impact upon the economy and society of Thailand.

Even as the United States took a more active interest in the Thai counterinsurgency effort, there

A Thai soldier on guard duty at a patrol base of 4th Company, 5th Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, during operations in Betong district of Yala Province, May 1985.

was a conscious effort to avoid the missteps made in Vietnam. U.S. personnel might goad the Thai and offer funds, but they did not co-opt Bangkok's strategic direction, as they had with the Saigon regime. While the Thai did adopt many programs modeled after American counterinsurgency efforts in South Vietnam, their approach to dealing with the CPT maintained a distinctly Thai flavor and pace, both of which often proved exasperating to the Americans.

As one of the few Asian states that had avoided becoming a colony, Thailand responded to international and domestic challenges with Thai designs and imperatives. American aid and presence, although certainly increasing the viability of the Thai counterinsurgency (to include individual programs such as ARD), did not instigate or control it. Indeed, the American contribution to the Thai campaign, for better or worse, followed much the same trajectory as the larger Indochina conflict. The gradual winding down of the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia led to diminishing resources and removal of the sense of urgency that had marked the American advisory effort. By 1976, there were only 4,000 Americans left in Thailand, most providing communications or logistics support and not connected to the Thai counterinsurgency.

Changes in National and Regional Context

In Thailand, unlike in Vietnam, American assistance primarily worked to improve the Thai capacity for action. On the ground, Thai emphasis on the economic development approach, coupled with the overemphasis on military operations, allowed the CPT not only to survive, but also slowly to expand. As the 1970s began, Thailand found its agriculturally based economy unable to meet rising economic demands and its narrow political system unable to accommodate demands for increased popular participation. The government bureaucracy, monopolizing power, crushed efforts to form a viable democratic system. Calls for reform could not be dealt with in any substantive fashion because the mechanisms to do so simply did not exist.

In October 1973, the government finally reached a crisis point: a wave of student demonstrations ended with the arrest of activists demanding greater democracy. Violence erupted, and the military regime collapsed with startling rapidity. For the next three years, a succession of weak democratic governments sought to come up with a viable form of popular rule.

As the unstable situation persisted, demands by the left for the mobilization of marginalized elements of the population aroused fears of mob rule among traditional segments of the Thai polity. Those segments, in turn, made common cause with military factions favoring a return to authoritarian rule. In a coup on 6 October 1976 that featured a bloody assault on Thammasat University, the perceived center of leftist influence, the military bureaucracy returned to power. Many individuals, ranging from

students to activist workers to politicians, fled into the jungles or made their way to Indochina.

Eventually, these political refugees numbered in the thousands. Their numbers, their representation of virtually all major societal strata, and their profound bitterness towards the system all spoke to a spectacular opportunity for the CPT. Here at last was the systemic crisis for which the Communists had long hoped. After years of laboring in marginalized areas, unable to penetrate the heartland, the CPT finally found itself with the political vacuum it had sought that accompanied a state of political and social polarization.

As the acknowledged leading opposition group, the party was ideally situated to become the key agent for shaping and directing the forces demanding change. Presented with at least 4,000 new recruits from diverse backgrounds and occupations, many of whom were "progressive" in their orientation, the CPT saw a chance to replicate the popular front strategy that Mao had realized with his anti-Japanese united front.

Banking on anti-government and anti-American sentiment fostered by more than two decades of CPT propaganda labeling American imperialists and their reactionary Thai allies as the people's great enemies, the CPT called upon all sectors of society to rally to it and launched an assault on all aspects of the old regime, even the king.[26] After decades of slow, difficult expansion, the party (and many knowledgeable observers) felt that the events at Thammasat University had revealed to all, at last, the true fascist character of the military regime and its obedience to imperialist American instructions. Thus the CPT thought the way was paved for mass insurrection.

The party's resulting attacks, directed against both the government and Bhumipol Adulyadej, the ninth king of the Chakkri dynasty, represented a significant change of strategy. Virtually all aspects of the "old feudal order" were now fair game and were denounced in favor of a proposed new society—a Communist one. Externally, too, the situation seemed to favor this open attempt to seize power: Cambodia, China, Laos, and Vietnam all gave the CPT support.

What the CPT thought was as an extremely advantageous situation suddenly collapsed under the weight of other, unanticipated, events in Southeast Asia. Most important, the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia (1978) rekindled fears of Communist territorial expansionism into Thailand itself and stoked Thai nationalism. Then, in early 1979, China's thrust into Vietnam dramatically heightened anxieties that the kingdom was about to become involved in internecine conflict among two Communist powers vying for political influence in Southeast Asia.

Doubt and fear extended beyond the government into the ranks of the CPT itself. With its close ties to both China and Vietnam, the CPT leadership found itself caught between Thai nationalism and ideological commitment to other communist movements and sponsors. Ironically, perceived expansionism by the Communist Vietnamese, not American imperialism, now seemed to pose the greatest threat to the survival of the Thai nation and thus to the Thai revolution. When the CPT refused to go along with Vietnam's plans, the party paid the price.

In January 1979, even before the Chinese attack on Vietnam, CPT backing for Beijing led the Central Committee of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, which took its directions from Hanoi, to order the CPT to vacate its bases in Laos. Coming on the heels of the loss of sanctuaries in Cambodia due to continued fighting along the Thai-Cambodian border, this was a substantial blow. The CPT was wracked by a bitter internal battle complete with defections to the Vietnamese side and formation of a rival, pro-Vietnamese, organization, *Pak Mai*.[27] High-ranking CPT members began to defect to the government.

Although the Sino-Vietnamese split had dislocated base areas and disrupted supply lines, resulting in serious setbacks, it was ideological issues that tore the CPT apart. The causes of such serious internal turbulence stemmed from what dissidents cited as overly rigid adherence to the Chinese version of people's war and failure to learn from (in particular) Vietnamese success. Dissidents within the party argued vigorously that had the CPT been ready—had it mobilized in the urban areas instead of strictly following Maoist doctrine and staying in the countryside—it could have moved decisively amidst urban chaos. For the Politburo, this position represented a dangerous doctrinal deviation.

Battle was joined at the long-delayed Fourth Party Congress, held in regional sessions throughout 1982. During the Congress, dissident accusations of "old guard" ballot tampering split the party,

thereby signaling the beginning of the end for the CPT. Battered from within and without, especially by an increasingly effective government counterinsurgency strategy, the membership became disillusioned. What had been a trickle of defections became an uncontrollable hemorrhage.

The Government's New Approach

In a sense, the CPT had self-destructed. However, internal disaffection and external fratricide were not the whole story. Individuals were willing to leave the party only because the state had given them somewhere to go. Ultimately, changes in the government's political policy and the environment that such changes engendered created such a haven.[28]

The needed changes were begun shortly after the events of October 1973. In November, Prem Tinsulanond, then a relatively obscure officer, was made the deputy commanding general of the Second Army, charged with security in the Thai Northeast. Among his many duties was responsibility for directing the Northeast region's counterinsurgency program.

Modifying Saiyud's original CPM approach (the two men knew each other well) by enhancing its political aspects, Prem soon began to see results. Psychological operations, persuasion, and heavy use of the civilian provincial governors and their resources constituted a marked departure from the normal emphasis on firepower. By 1975-76, the Second Army had become a model of sorts in dealing with the insurgency.

Second Army's approach can be characterized as development-for-security, with development understood to be a socio-economic-political process. "It is the weakness of the system which allows guerrillas to grow," Saiyud stated flatly. "The target, therefore, is the population, not areas or enemy forces. Problems of the system must be addressed. The popular base of the insurgents must be destroyed. Strengthen the villages first, *then* go into the jungle after the guerrillas."[29]

This Prem did, acting within his own area of control. Eight years had passed, however (from Saiyud's 1965 assignment to CSOC/ISOC until Prem's assignment to the Northeast), before Saiyud's philosophy could blossom full force. During the interim, those who did not see repression as the answer to the insurgency were forced to be content with doing whatever they could.

Once in charge, Prem did things differently. His methodology was not unlike that used successfully in numerous other areas around the world by counterinsurgent forces. First, a target area was blanketed with troops, who drove off the CPT's armed units. Then, all particulars of the population were learned and the insurgent counterstate dismantled through systematic intelligence collection and exploitation. At the same time, civic-action programs were instituted and local forces formed, while special operations against strongholds kept insurgent forces at bay. Finally, civil authorities again assumed complete control.

What gave substance to the form, however, was the growth of the democratic system. Prem's forces, rather than being the law, became the administrators of the law. In effect, they became the embodiment of the Buddhist ideal of how things ought to be. The democratic process they insisted on accorded with traditional demands by the populace for a just order, thereby legitimizing the government.

Prem's initial success attracted attention. From then on, his rise was rapid. In 1976, he became commander of the entire Second Army Region. Only two years later, in September 1978, he assumed command of the army as a whole. By February 1980, he was prime minister. Under him, Saiyud ultimately became supreme commander of the armed forces.

Throughout his rise, Prem drew his key support from the "Young Turks," officers of battalion-command level influenced by their counterinsurgency experiences (especially in Indochina) and a desire

Prem's forces…became the administrators of the law. …The democratic process they insisted on accorded with traditional demands by the populace for a just order, thereby legitimizing the government.

to move the military toward more professional concerns. The Young Turks were joined by another group calling themselves the "Democratic Soldiers."[30] The latter were to be equally important.

If the Young Turks provided the brawn, the Democratic Soldiers provided the brains. The major difference between the two was that the Young Turks came from the line while the Democratic Soldiers had been staff officers. Learning from Communist defectors and their own study, the Democratic Soldiers advanced "democracy," which they left quite undefined, as the key weapon against insurgency. Among their main supporters were Major General Chaovalit Yongchaiyuth, Prem's aide-de-camp, who would later head the army and oversee the destruction of the CPT, and Major General Harn Leenanond, head of army operations (G3), later to command the Fourth Army in the South and to destroy the CPT there as he had helped Prem to do in the Northeast while a member of the latter's staff.

These two individuals were apparently the principal authors of an extraordinary document, Prime Minister (PM) Order No. 66/23 (the 66th order in the Buddhist Era Year 2523, or 1980), "The Policy for the Fight to Defeat the Communists," subsequently augmented by PM Order No. 65/25 (1982), "Plan for the Political Offensive."[31] What they set forth was a politically driven strategy to meet the Communists. As 66/23 unequivocally stated, "Political factors are crucial [to the success of the counterinsurgency], and military operations must be conducted essentially to support and promote political goals."[32]

The follow-up 66/25 left no doubt what Prem had in mind:

"Let the development of democracy be the guiding principle .... We estimate that the CPT has slowed our democratic development, using weak points as propaganda subjects to deceive the people. Simultaneously, the CPT itself has pretended to give democracy to the people. What the CPT has in mind, however, is tactical democracy... [To meet them,] all patterns of dictatorship must be destroyed."[33]

Put in other terms, if lack of "development" in an all-encompassing socio-economic-political sense was the cause of insurgency, then it was the army's task to foster just such development as a counter. That such a view could come to the fore would have been impossible without the old-regime crisis that erupted in October 1973. Rising out of the turmoil, Prem, in concert with like-minded individuals, completely reoriented the Thai counterinsurgency approach. Asked much later what had been the principal factor that changed the campaign after he had spent years fruitlessly trying to convert his fellow officers, Saiyud responded simply: "Prem. What made the difference was having someone who could order support. This made all the difference in the world. We already had the ideas and the concepts. They had been in place for years."[34]

To implement them, Prem took CSOC/ISOC out of its advisory role and placed it again in the operational chain of command. Not only was it given the power to direct CPM task forces, as had been the case initially under Saiyud, but the regional army commanders, who had always been independent, were fully integrated into the structure. Gradually, all regular army and security force units in operational areas were likewise placed under the CPM task forces, where they worked intimately with civil authority.

Bangkok Wages People's War

Operationally, local forces were the foundation upon which all else was built. This concept was not new; it had been an integral part of Saiyud's counterinsurgency plans. Yet Saiyud's response had been premature. His call for self-defense forces and local participation were ahead not only of the bureaucracy, but even the populace. Tradition-oriented Thai peasants were not yet receptive to the idea of defending themselves. "The villagers were more afraid of the police than the enemy," Saiyud has noted.[35] This ended with October 1973 and its aftermath. It was democracy that thrust popular concerns to the fore and stimulated the people's willingness to defend what was theirs.

What *was* theirs? That which was "Thai." Here, we begin to pull together the many loose ends that have appeared in the course of this discussion. We can cite no particular point at which the people came to think of the system as "theirs." October 1973 was surely a benchmark, but the events that followed, with the left and right battling for control of the emerging democratic system, were just as important. In every sense, the contest became a campaign of the streets. The CPT—the illegal left—erred in not recognizing the need to get into

the battle directly (because its doctrine told it to stay in the rural areas). The legal left, which was on the streets, erred in adopting foreign cultural idioms and forms.

In particular, proponents of rapid change made the mistake of interpreting the situation in terms alien to the bulk of the population. The left saw the military as a creature of the West rather than recognizing that its structural position was a logical consequence of Thai historical factors. As a result, the left was quite unprepared for the reaction its actions sparked.

It was no accident that what have normally been termed "right wing pressure groups" achieved the strength they did in the post-October 1973 era. They built upon those cultural idioms salient to popular existence: "Buddhism, Nation, Monarchy." In a sense, the second of these subsumed the other two: to be a Thai was to be a Buddhist within a hierarchy that culminated in the monarch. To lose one's place in this hierarchy was to lose one's identity as a Thai.

Yet the CPT leadership, joined by that of the legal left, little understood just how far it had strayed from Thai cultural idioms. The two groups assumed that the conditions that had given them an alternative worldview would automatically produce the same worldview in others. They projected their individual cases onto the whole, and by so doing, they analytically distorted Thai reality.

Supporters of the status quo used the years 1973-76 to rally the populace against those who would destroy their world. Although the left prided itself on its mobilization abilities, its forces soon found themselves swamped by mass mobilization carried out by the right. The Village Scouts organization alone, which had a paramilitary component and drew its membership through appeals to nationalism (defined particularly as loyalty to the monarchy and Buddhism), reached a membership of 2.5 million, or over 5 percent of the total population, by mid-1978.[36] The CPT counterstate could not begin to match this strength.[37] Nor could the legal left, for all its organizational skills, attract such numbers.

And the Village Scouts were but one of several anticommunist organizations, with others, such as *Nawaphol* and *Krathing Daeng* ("Red Gaur"), though fewer in numbers, far more militant. When the legal left was perceived to have taken the logical next step in its "anti-Thai" approach—threatening the monarchy by attacking the Crown Prince—the carnage of October 1976 resulted. Specifics of the episode become, in such a context, virtually incidental. Given the shape of the emerging cultural confrontation, the clash would have occurred eventually.

CPT attacks on the monarchy all but sealed the party's doom. The subsequent reactionary mushrooming of popular mobilization by rightist groups enabled regular forces to be reassigned to face external threats. The population aroused became "a people numerous and armed."

Thus were born the "Rangers." Begun while Prem was army commander, the local-forces Ranger concept turned the communist methodology of mass mobilization on its head. It used locally recruited manpower, often drawn from already existing organizations such as the Village Scouts, to operate against the insurgents, while nationalist mass organizations in the villages fostered systemic loyalty. Controlled by regular army personnel, the Rangers had, by the end of 1981, grown to 160 companies, about 13,000 men, more than the CPT armed strength of 12,500 at the time.[38]

So plentiful were recruits that they were difficult to absorb properly. Lack of control at times forced the disbandment of units, but others were formed to take their place. Soon, the local-forces structure covered all areas of the kingdom. This development occurred with almost startling rapidity. In a sense, it capped another complementary effort. As the government pushed to integrate all areas of the kingdom, growing numbers of former soldiers who had fought in the Indochina conflict were hired as security forces by construction companies charged with building strategic roads. As such, they engaged in regular combat with the insurgents.[39] Other ex-soldiers were recruited as settlers and relocated into contested areas with their families, creating strategic hamlets.

All of these measures met with success. That CPT people's war should be buffeted by Bangkok people's war was irony of the first order. What followed was almost anticlimactic. Because the change in government strategy coincided with the larger changes in the international situation and with the intra-party strategic debate, all elements

Thai "Rangers," or local forces, examine a captured CPT camp in Nan Province. The Rangers experienced explosive growth once the CPT directly attacked the Thai monarchy. Surveys consistently showed that more than half of all rural people still viewed the royal couple as divine, a reality completely missed by a materialist movement committed to Maoism.

necessary for the demise of the CPT came together simultaneously.

Prem's political strategy, which held that insurgents would not be treated as prisoners, but as those returning to the fold, established an environment that became especially important in promoting a willingness among Communist guerrillas to lay down their arms. Offered amnesty with minimal security precautions, demobilized insurgents were enticed to resume normal lives.[40] By mid-1983, the vestiges of the CPT had, for all practical purposes, become a nuisance rather than a threat.[41]

Those insurgents laying down their arms returned to a different Thailand. Not only had the democratic system created a new political environment, but Prem's administration had paved the way for an economic boom by abandoning statist policies in favor of greater integration within the world economy. Reform formalized under Prem resulted in a period of significant national vitality that continues to the present. Consequent rapid industrialization and urbanization spawned a whole host of new challenges and problems, but ones so different to those being discussed by radicals that the CPT became essentially irrelevant. Throughout, the United States remained an important player by promoting these developments, though on a much smaller scale than during the Vietnam War era.

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Conclusions

In the end, Thailand won its battle with the CPT insurgents. Noteworthy as the victory was, however, particularly in light of the results in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, it would be incorrect to see the Thai example as a template for employing elsewhere a particular combination of tactical techniques. To the contrary, the Thai victory was largely a result of its strategic approach being realized in an operational art shaped to Thai realities, particularly political realities. Had the various elements not been carried out in accordance with those realities, the outcome could have been very different. In this sense, the counterinsurgency existed in symbiotic relationship with its society.

As Saiyud stated, the weaknesses of the Thai system provided the opportunity for the CPT. An imperfect system itself "threw up" the manpower that became the CPT. A people's war strategy, combined with a plenitude of manpower produced by government abuses, allowed the CPT to grow. Seeking structural change to pursue socialist development, the CPT established itself in remote areas and worked to build the sanctuaries it needed to achieve critical mass. It then sought to make its counterstate viable by pushing into the central heartland.

In each of its three main campaign areas—the Northeast, North, and South—the Communist Party had the benefit of working in unique circumstances that favored the recruitment of marginalized individuals. In the Northeast, particularly, building a counterstate seemed possible. But these conditions were not replicated in the heartland, where U.S. assistance played an important role in strengthening state capacity.

Unable to penetrate the central core of the kingdom, the CPT had to wait for new developments. These came with the explosive ouster of authoritarian rule and subsequent chaotic efforts to fashion a democratic system by implementing parliamentary mechanisms and increasing local government. Sudden allowance for popular democratic participation naturally enough produced different views of how this should occur and what shape the result should take. To that end, the forces of the left and the right became locked in conflict. If this democratic political space was midwife to societal conflict, it also produced salvation for the system. New military leadership emerged, and it saw democracy as the means for countermobilization.

Royal Thai Army M-60 machinegunner operating in Uttaradit Province, northern Thailand. The CPT built its northern theater of operations by exploiting grievances that had long festered among highland tribes over lowlanders intruding into their traditional areas.

Political mobilization, however, is a dangerous business in the absence of institutions into which unleashed popular forces can channel their energies. In Thailand's counterinsurgency campaign, existing cultural practices and idioms provided these. Numerous mass organizations in support of the traditional pillars of society—Buddhism, the nation, and monarchy—were formed. At times, their energy amounted to millennial fervor, as would be anticipated in a time of profound structural upheaval. By voicing their support of the pillars, members could opt for utopia, a perfect Buddhist world, even while remaining firmly fixed in reality—supporting the system that protected the pillars.

That the security forces were able to mobilize this outpouring while the Communists could not resulted, of course, from the fact that the Communists never really attempted to do so. Instead, their ideological worldview overpowered their strategies. Mao would have condemned them, for the essence

of the united front strategy he passed on called for the exploitation of structural reality as the would-be revolutionaries found it. This, the government, rather than the insurgents, was able to accomplish.

"Government" in this context must be used with some reservations. Before October 1973, a fundamental weakness of the Thai counterinsurgency was that it was not a national reform effort, but the strengthening of an imperfect system (with substantial U.S. assistance). Although this reinforcement was important, when all was said and done, the old order responded to insurgent violence with violence. Some, to be sure, were more enlightened than others and recognized the counterproductive nature of repression, but they were neither in positions of power nor citizens of a system that could behave otherwise.

This is not to say that countermobilization against the insurgents could not and did not occur on a tactical scale. It did, particularly when Saiyud was given authority through the mechanisms of CSOC/ISOC. Yet this could only be a short-term solution given the long-term structural dilemma at hand: how to ask the populace to fight for "their" system when they had little direct stake in it (aside from the lifestyle offered by the status quo). Defense became possible only when a faction of the military, represented most prominently by Prem and Saiyud, became the government and could mobilize the populace behind democratic institutions.

This process further highlighted the importance of cultural idioms. The bureaucratic polity was not necessarily predatory, because it was kept in check by the same cultural dicta that had in the past checked the absolute power of the monarchy. CPT efforts at mobilization could overcome the traditional worldview and replace it with an alternative construct only where the representatives of the authoritarian polity had crossed the bounds of acceptable conduct. Because of specific decisions made by men like Saiyud and Prem, these transgressions never reached the level necessary to negate existing popular conservatism and latent support for the ideal order.

In a phrase, Saiyud and Prem rescued the system from itself. That rescue was not preordained. Prem and Saiyud wandered in the bureaucratic wilderness for years before their moment came. Then, too, they were produced by the same system that "made" their opposite numbers, whether in the authoritarian polity (rival officers) or in the developing radical system (the insurgents). That they saw reform as the more proper course resulted from individual choice. When the moment came to be heard, they acted. Had they given heed to opposing counsel, the situation could well have deteriorated to the point where even the CPT's mistakes would not have kept it from becoming a key player in the drama of Thai political transition.

It follows naturally enough that the precise techniques adopted by Prem and his cohorts, while necessary, were certainly not sufficient to ensure the victory of the parliamentary option in the democratic system. The counterinsurgency methodologies implemented, from local-forces to special-unit operations, had been in existence, but they had never been brought into play in support of a viable political goal. Predictably, attending simultaneously to the entire range of irregular warfare demands, from tactics to politics, within a strategic approach that is correct and sustainable was—and still is—the key to successful counterinsurgency. Support of such an approach is ultimately in the interests of the United States. ***MR***

NOTES

1. For a more in-depth treatment of the events in Thailand, see Thomas A. Marks, *Making Revolution: The Insurgency of the Communist Party of Thailand in Structural Perspective* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994) and Marks, *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), particularly chapter 1 (19-82).

2. See Thomas A. Marks, "Government Policy as a Reflection of the Development Model: The Case of Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) in Northeast Thailand," *Journal of East & West Studies* (Seoul) 10, no.1 (1981): 59-95.

3. See Charles F. Keyes, *Isan: Regionalism in Northeast Thailand* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1967). For attitude surveys, see Somchai Rakwijit, *Village Leadership in Northeast Thailand* and *Study of Youth in Northeast Thailand* (Bangkok: Joint Thai-US Military Research and Development Center, 1971).

4. See Komsan Madukham, *Dong Prachao: Land of the Dead* (Bangkok: Pitakpracha, 1977) [in Thai]. This is a useful volume; one of eighteen such works that Somchai Rakwijit, research director for CSOC/ISOC, arranged for his personnel to produce using pen names. The authors thus had access to all available data, to include classified material.

5. Interview with Somchai Rakwijit, Bangkok, 13 May 1986. See also David Jenkins, "The Hit-Run 'Government,'" *Far Eastern Economic Review* [hereafter, *FEER*], 23 July 1973, 26-27. The precise combination of these elements at any particular time was problematic. More often than not, the standard nomenclature for identifying a particular area of CPT activity was to designate it a "zone." A zone could embrace anything from a village to a province.

6. Robert F. Zimmerman, "Insurgency in Thailand," *Problems of Communism* (May-June 1976): 27. Additional details may be found in Justus M. van der Kroef, "Guerrilla Communism and Counterinsurgency in Thailand," *Orbis* 17, no.1 (Spring 1974): 106-39 (see especially 119-22).

7. Ralph W. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years in the CIA* (New York: Sheridan Square, 1983), 109.

8. Zimmerman (page 21) observes: "There is sometimes considerable controversy both within and between various government agencies (Thai and foreign) as to where 'Communists' are or are not 'active.'"

9. Portions of this section have appeared in my "Thailand's Terror Years," *Soldier of Fortune*, August 1990, 30-37 (cont).

10. Interview with Saiyud Kerdphol, former Supreme Commander of the Royal Thai Armed Forces, Phayao Province, 31 August 1987.

11. See Arnold Abrams and Chiang Kham, "Mountains of Discontent," *FEER,* 2 July 1970, 20-22.

12. See John R. Thomson, "The Burning Mountain," *FEER*, 25 April 1968, 218-20.

13. See, for example, the assessment contained in Community Development Program, *Summary of National Community Development Programme Thailand* (Bangkok: Department of Interior, 1961).

14. For an example of such literature, see Community Development Bureau, Thanom Kittikachorn, *Trends in Community Development* (Bangkok: Department of Interior, 1964); and Vichit Sukaviriya, ed. *Facts about Community Development Programs* (Bangkok: Ministry of Interior, 1966).

15. Community Development Bureau, 1.

16. George K. Tanham, *Trial in Thailand* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1974), 75.

17. See, for example, Ralph E. Dakin, ed., Security and Development in Northeast Thailand: Problems, Progress and the Roles of Amphoe, Tambol and Muban Government (Bangkok: USOM/Thailand, 1968); and USOM/Thailand, Impact of USOM Supported Programs in Changwad Sakorn Nakorn (Bangkok: 1967). Further analysis is contained in Peter F. Bell, "Thailand's Northeast: Regional Underdevelopment, 'Insurgency', and Official Response," Pacific Affairs 42, no.1 (Spring 1969): 47-54.

18. This is a central theme in, for example, Chai-anan Samudavanija, Kusuma Snitwongse, and Suchit Bunbongkarn, *From Armed Suppression to Political Offensive: Attitudinal Transformation of Thai Military Officers since 1976* (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1990). For an alternative approach that proceeds within a larger framework of reaction to perceived threat, see Thomas A. Marks, "The Thai Approach to Peacemaking since World War II," *Journal of East & West Studies* (Seoul) 7, no.1 (April 1978): 133-55, and Marks, "An Eclectic Model of Thailand's Participation in the Vietnam War," *Peace Research* (Ontario) 11, no.2 (April 1979): 71-76.

19. Agency for International Development, Introduction to Program Presentation to the Congress/Proposed FY 1971 Program (no date).

20. For particulars of this development, consult Michael T. Klare, *War Without End* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972); and David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications, 1972).

21. For a representative selection, see United States Military Academy, *Revolutionary Warfare*, 6 vols. (West Point, NY: Department of Military Art and Engineering, 1967); Naval War College, *Selected Readings for Counter-insurgency Course*, 4 vols. (Newport, RI, 1968); Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

22. Tanham, 115-50.

23. Ibid., 115-28.

24. The no-combat rule did not apply to "black ops" such as the use, during the period March 1966–January 1967, of a score of helicopters attached to the U.S. 606th Air Commando Squadron in support of Thai actions in the North and Northeast.

25. The battalions concerned had been formed in Thailand after being recruited by the Thai army. They were apparently trained by the CIA and detailed U.S. Special Forces personnel. Udorn was the site of "HQ 333" for Thai forces in Laos. Each unit was built around a core of regular Thai army personnel, all of whom "resigned" before becoming "volunteers." The initial cost to the United States had been $26 million annually for payroll expenses, one-third the amount of all U.S. aid budgeted for Laos. At the time, the insurgent Pathet Lao, who could function only because of North Vietnamese presence, claimed that half the "Lao government forces" were in reality Thai. The balance of those forces were Hmong tribesmen of the "Secret Army" under Vang Pao.

26. A more detailed treatment can be found in Thomas A. Marks, "The Thai Monarchy under Siege," *Asia Quarterly* (Brussels) no. 2 (1978): 109-41; and Marks, "The Status of the Monarchy in Thailand," *Issues & Studies* (Taipei) 13, no.11 (November 1977): 51-70.

27. This rival organization, *Pak Mai* (New Party), was later to be revealed as the Thai Isan Liberation Party, founded in Vientiane on 22 October 1979. See "Northern Separatists," *FEER*, 4 April 1980, 7.

28. Much of the material in this section, particularly that related to personalities, has been drawn from personal experience. I am also indebted to discussions with Saiyud Kerdphol; Anthony "Tony" Paul, former regional editor (Asia) for *Reader's Digest*; John McBeth, former Thailand correspondent for *FEER*; Mike Jones, former Lieutenant Colonel, Special Air Services (SAS) and security consultant; and John Cole and Denny Lane, both former U.S. Army attachés in Bangkok. In certain cases, these discussions spanned at least a decade and took place in numerous locations.

29. Interview with Saiyud Kerdphol, Phayao Province, 31 August 1987.

30. See Chai-anan Samudavanija, Kusuma Snitwongse, and Suchit Bunbongkarn.

31. Texts with commentary may be found in Sarochna Robbamrung, *Internal Security, Kingdom of Thailand*, unpublished paper dated 11 February 1987, prepared for the U.S. Army War College. Several sources claim that Prem himself wrote 66/23. It is not a long document. I have been unable to confirm actual authorship, though it is certain the Prime Ministerial Order was the product of much discussion among a small circle that included the officers named.

32. Sarochna, 2, 33, Ibid., 5.

34. See n. 28.

35. Interview with Saiyud Kerdphol, Bangkok, 13 May 1986.

36. This is the figure given by Marjorie A. Muecke, "The Village Scouts of Thailand," *Asian Survey* 20, no.4 (April 1980): 407.

37. Anthony Paul, "The Jungle War the Communists Lost," *Reader's Digest,* Asian edition, October 1984, 2-6, gives peak CPT strength as 14,000 armed insurgents, with another 20,000 individuals directly involved in support activities. No estimates ever placed the mass base in the 2.5 million range, the number who went through the Village Scouts Training Program, a one-week course.

38. Paisal Sricharatchanya, "Security: Playing the Same Game," *FEER*, 18 December 1981, 15-16.

39. See, for example, Jim Coyne, "Thailand's Battle Road," *Soldier of Fortune*, February 1982, 37-43 (cont).

40. In a witty piece, "Insights: Sex and the Single Insurgent," *Asiaweek*, 8 April 1983, 24, Anthony Paul noted: "As the surrendering insurgents have flooded into the Army's 'open arms' over the past twelve months, the soldiery have been impressed by the defectors' priorities in the first hours of their new coexistence with capitalism. Said a Phitsanulok-based colonel: 'As far as I've been able to establish, a communist is someone with an overpowering interest in seafood (notably missing from the jungle diet) and sex. Did Marx say anything about this?'"

41. For an excellent overview, see Anthony Paul, "Winding Down a War," *Asiaweek*, 8 April 1983, 16-24.

At the clinic of Ibrahim Higer

At the clinic of Ibrahim Higer
an American Colonel and minions
avoid tea, eye cracked catheters,
the crowd

inquire about vaccinations,
his schooling in Basra, little joke
over good times gone, come again,
the crowd

ask where water and power are
made, he doesn't understand, for it must
be by God, surely, or jest?,
the crowd

what diseases does he see, what
pestilences, shingles?, can they bring
medicine?, would he like help, training?,
the crowd

about the pharmacy, where is it?,
how do drugs arrive?, does he
have black-market issues?, of course,
the crowd

waste?, sharps?, is there an
incinerator?, where are your dead
buried?, have you not seen them, sir –
the crowd

his top, his biggest needs, what are
they?, an ambulance?, IV fluid?, a guard
at the entrance?, can they just hold back
the crowd

—CPT Benjamin Buccholz