

The Dominoization of Thailand

IN 1861, KING MONGKUT of Siam offered Abraham Lincoln elephants to aid the Union cause in the Civil War. The President politely refused the help, but that was not the end of military relations between the two countries. Thailand is no longer whimsically isolated from world realities; nor does it have a choice in the way it lines up on international issues. Over the past two decades, Thais have watched their country become a giant airstrip, where American B-52s, fighter-bombers and helicopter gunships roar off on missions of death for other Southeast Asian countries. They have seen their own troops become U.S. mercenaries, and their borders used as staging points for Special Forces and CIA personnel on missions of subversion into Laos and North Vietnam.

Thais have watched helplessly as their nation has become an American military base and neo-colony. U.S. Senator Gale McGee stated in a recent speech that "Southeast Asia is the last major resource area outside the control of any one of the major powers on the globe." And the mammoth Chase Manhattan Bank has been even more specific: "Thailand promises to be an excellent investment and sales area for Americans," its Economic Research Division writes, "if rebel insurgency can be contained."

The various minorities that make up Thailand have tried to resist the destruction of their culture and their forcible integration into a U.S.-controlled political economy. But the U.S. military advisors who train Thai troops to fight in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos have also trained them to fight rebels at home. Meanwhile hordes of AID and American university personnel comb the countryside, studying every aspect of Thai life and recommending and implementing programs of counter-insurgency.

Thailand has changed greatly in the century since its king naively offered a U.S. President military aid. Since then America has decided to fight its wars abroad, not at home—wars that make sure countries like Thailand stay in the Free World bank account.

[I]

THE THAI ELITE, whose body and soul is now completely owned, once prided itself on an ability to resist colonial domination. In the 19th century, the Thais closed their country to the probes of imperialism, and tried to modernize by selective contact with the West. This relative independence was validated by a British-French agreement to let Thailand remain a buffer state between their respective colonial empires in Malaya-Burma and Indochina.

Thailand's privileged status was ended by an event which has shaped the course of its history for the last quarter century: the United States' victory over Japan in World War II and its emergence as the dominant power in the Pacific Basin. The U.S. quickly decided that Thailand's position was critical for consolidating an American foothold on the Southeast Asian mainland; by 1950, U.S. military and economic aid began to flow to the Thai government, then headed by General Phibun, a former Japanese puppet whose mili-

tary regime rode to power on a 1948 coup.

Urged on by U.S. money and by the long shadow of the Chinese Revolution, the Thai army and police began an anti-communist crusade in the early '50s. Their campaign was focused on Thailand's Chinese Community, and it began officially in 1952 with the passage of the Un-Thai Activities Act (sic), supposedly aimed at combating "communist subversion," even though the Thai Chinese Community was notoriously apolitical. But if General Phibun's attack could not rid his country of a communist menace that did not exist, it could establish his control over the Chinese Community which had traditionally been the backbone for Thailand's indigenous economy. The Chinese entrepreneurs and businessmen responded to the anti-communist hysteria by paying a kind of "protection" money to the Thai elite—offering them positions on the boards of directors of Chinese corporations and other financial incentives.

Even though it was borne of intimidation, this alliance might have been able to slowly industrialize Thailand by relying on domestic rather than Western capital and thus avoid the disastrous controls that were always attached to investment. But this last hope for economic autonomy in Thailand was quickly foreclosed by the U.S.

THAILAND'S SMALL MEASURE OF economic independence had rested upon the government's ability to finance the infrastructure for development from export surplus. But after the Korean War, the U.S. dumped large quantities of tin, Thailand's third largest export, on the world market; meanwhile, the price of rubber, Thailand's second largest export, was forced down by the falling off of war-time demand and by American corporations' marketing of new synthetics; the price of rice, Thailand's largest single export, was also plummeting.

As this surplus dried up, the U.S. and its international financial arm, the World Bank, prepared to appear at the moment of Thai financial crisis with offers of financial and technical assistance. All that was asked in return for this subsidy was that the Thai military regime abandon any attempts to create an autonomous economy and allow Thailand to become an object of U.S. corporate expansion.

Since Thailand's status as a bona fide U.S. colony has been guaranteed, American financial commitments—now totaling nearly \$600 million in economic assistance and some \$900 million in military aid—have been accelerated. But the U.S. was not content with being the Thais' guardian. It wanted to be their mentor as well. And thus, while systematically destroying what chance the Thais might have had for economic independence, the U.S. has also set about the task of re-ordering Thai society—from rebuilding its military and government administration, to introducing new agricultural techniques and a Western-oriented educational system. To coordinate and implement this massive cultural onslaught, it has called in the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), which has its own kind of Catch 22: While AID is supposed to help Third World nations help themselves, it in fact helps American businessmen help themselves to the Third World. This is AID's mandate.

by Banning Garrett

TO DETAIL THE ACTIVITIES OF USAID in a country like Thailand is to see up close the warts on the face of imperialism. It is to witness the corruption of a country from within and the spectacle of traditional institutions and values being eaten away and replaced with something jerry-built and distinctively American.

In 1967, for instance, AID proposed studies on peasant reaction to U.S. plans for "radical" changes in traditional agricultural methods and the consequent disruption of rural life. Would the new high-yield crops, miracle grains, and computerized agricultural techniques increase the economic surplus or the peasant leisure? This was one question AID asked, making it clear that it voted for the surplus because it could be exported while peasant leisure could not. Would the peasants squander their additional income? How could they be convinced to invest it in further mechanization? At the same time it was surveying ways of manipulating human problems, AID was also studying marketing techniques for chemical fertilizers, whose U.S. exporters had increased their sales to Thailand by 300% between 1966 and 1967.

AID has also worked closely with the Thai government and American corporations to understand the problems arising from an intensive urban labor force. The AID labor union project was originally funded in 1967, and in 1969, its pressure led to the legalization of labor unions after an eleven-year ban. AID had decided that control of a volatile labor force would be easier if there was a union superstructure that workers would respect as an authority. The advance of U.S.-developed unionism to American investors was spelled out quite clearly by a U.S. Department of Commerce publication: "While the labor situation in Thailand has tended to be stable, there have been wildcat strikes from time to time, usually as a result of poor communications between workers and management. Businessmen have reported that the lack of a legitimate employee organization has proven to be an obstacle in the settlement or prevention of such disputes."

AID HAS STUDIED THE inner workings of the Thai bureaucracy, and helped the Thai elite to develop its economic plans based on recommendations of a World Bank mission sent to Thailand in 1957. The World Bank mission published a survey suggesting that the Thai government liquidate most state-run enterprises and devote itself to creating the proper conditions for private enterprise by "special tax and other inducements," and by "institutional credit arrangements and provisions of such physical facilities [infrastructure] as sites, buildings, power and water services, roads, housing, etc." The World Bank has put its money where its mouth is, financing over \$350 million in development of irrigation, railroads, port facilities, highways, electric power, and education since 1950. These projects have laid the groundwork for American investment by developing physical facilities and markets for U.S. goods and by training a cheap labor force to work for U.S. corporations in Thailand. And in 1964, the World Bank (along with Bank of America) set up the International Finance Corporation of Thailand, an off-shoot to the

World Bank's own IFC, as a means of financing private foreign investment.

AID AND THE WORLD BANK have set about remaking Thailand's internal life to the specifications of U.S. corporations, and have succeeded. Since 1960, U.S. private investment in Thailand has grown from \$25 million to over \$200 million. By 1965, there were nearly 100 U.S. corporations in Thailand, from Walt Disney Productions and Coca-Cola to Esso-Standard Oil, Firestone, IT&T, and Chase Manhattan Bank. American corporations have invested mainly in extraction of raw materials—mostly tin—and in light manufacturing and tourism.

In a 1966 Thai-American treaty, the Thai military regime officially granted the U.S. the "open door" it already had possessed for two decades; it also accorded America a "most favored nation" status for access to strategic Thai resources which U.S. corporations assumed was theirs as a matter of course. It has been AID's job to set up this cozy relationship and also to make sure that it continues well into the future.

[III]

AS AID AND AMERICAN BUSINESS established a seemingly permanent beachhead in Thailand, the Thai bureaucracy has been forced to expand to outlying provinces in an attempt to forcibly integrate previously isolated minorities into the U.S.-dominated political economy. The result has been peasant revolutionary movements in at least three parts of the country. And if these insurgencies do not presently represent a major threat to the U.S. client regime in Bangkok, it is primarily because they haven't yet developed in the central areas of Thailand or among the urban workers.

The Meo tribesmen were the first Thai minority to begin armed rebellion. It began in 1967, in the northern mountains where the Meos had always lived a seminomadic existence, with opium as their only cash crop. The Thai central government decided to force the Meos out of the mountains and into "resettlement villages" where they could be more easily controlled and taught to grow a variety of marketable crops. The Meos resisted, preferring their old way of life, and the Thai government responded by dropping U.S.-supplied napalm on several villages, forcing those who weren't killed or maimed to accept the lot of relocated refugees.

Conditions in the Meo resettlement villages are harsh, strongly reminiscent of the American Indian reservations of the 19th century. The people lack sufficient rice and water, and corrupt local agents pocket the funds appropriated for the Meo in Bangkok. The results of this resettlement program are grimly described by Arnold Abrams, reporter for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*: "Physical hardship and psychological strain," he writes, "have taken a heavy toll on these people. They are gaunt and sickly; many are in a permanent state of semi-withdrawal stimulated by the shortage of opium to feed lifelong habits. Yet the decay of the Meos' spirit is even more distressing than the deterioration of their bodies. It is hard to associate the pitiful inhabitants of Ban Song San (a resettlement village) with the defiant rebels remaining in the mountains. They



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have lost all semblance of inner strength and independence; they seem to have withered while assuming the manner of the humbled."

While Meos were being pacified, Malay-Chinese peasants in the south were beginning to establish liberated areas near the Thai-Malaysia border. Eighty per cent of the population of the four southern-most provinces are Malay Muslims who have been at best "benignly neglected" by the Thai government and at worst, attacked in the same way as the Meos. The Thai government has suppressed Malay-language parochial schools, and has generally neglected the development of public facilities. The government officials are almost all ethnic Thais, of course, and have the same racist attitude toward the Malays as they do toward the Meos whom they call "savages."

The Malay guerrilla movement has grown from the remnants of the Malayan Races Liberation Army (which fought the Japanese during World War II and the British in Malaya from 1948-1961, and today their national Liberation Army numbers about a thousand men. These guerrillas have met combined Thai-U.S. force. Whenever there is an outbreak of Malay-Chinese resistance, the Thai government immediately sends in its CIA-trained Border Patrol Police. Meanwhile, the U.S. Information Service sends teams into sensitive villages, showing films and distributing handbills, and also helping bolster the prestige of local administrators by bringing in MDU's (Mobil Development Units) to try to buy off discontent with new roads and community projects.

BEHIND ALL OF THESE EFFORTS stands the work of academics from centers like the Stanford Research Institute (SRI), which has worked on contract from the Pentagon's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). The reports SRI has prepared have ranged from the pinpointing of guerrilla camps and descriptions of "patterns of Communist Terrorist crop cultivation" to varieties of physical persuasion that might be used to make an insurgent tell the truth and "scenarios for possible conflict in Southern Thailand." With assistance from the Cornell Aeronautics Lab and the University of Michigan's Willow Run Laboratories, SRI has worked hard to perfect infrared photographic surveillance and other aerial reconnaissance techniques which have been used to trace insurgent movements and to survey the base camps of the NLA.

The insurgency in the northeast is even more significant than the efforts of the Meos and the Malay-China National Liberation Army. The northeast includes about one-third of the population and territory of Thailand, and consists mainly of Lao-Thai, ethnically related to the Thai, but still considered second-class citizens. Lao-Thai guerrillas began in 1965, closely following the formation of the Thai Independence Movement (TIM). The TIM manifesto called on all patriotic Thai peoples to help drive out the U.S. and to overthrow the Thai government, replacing it with one composed of representatives of patriotic, democratic parties.

Thus far TIM and its political arm, the Thai Patriotic Front, have not had great success in organizing peasants. (This is partially due to the atomization of the Thai village structure as contrasted to the cohesion of the Vietnamese villages which make them easily organized for guerrilla strug-

gle.) But then neither have the Thai central government and AID. Seventy-five per cent of AID's funds have gone into the counter-insurgency effort in the northeast. In fact, although it has continued to fund what it refers to as "development projects," AID actually no longer bothers to distinguish between development and counter-insurgency. As its 1967 program for Thailand says, "The U.S. AID program in Thailand is concentrated upon a single objective: supporting the Royal Thai Government in its efforts to contain, control, and eliminate the Communist insurgency in rural areas."

Indeed, AID manages to relate every U.S. study and project in Thailand to the "problem of security." For example, studies are proposed to probe the following questions: "Is the prevailing pattern of village organization in the Northeast adequate to cope with insurgency?" "What is the structure and function of the so-called wat (temple) committee in village life? Does this institution possess any relevance for promoting village security?" "What is the role of women in village life? Is it possible that . . . they can make a significant contribution to the promotion of village security?"

KATHLEEN GOUGH ABERLE ONCE called anthropology the "child of imperialism." Nowhere is this more evident than in the AID studies on Thailand which also provide a vivid description of the way that the American university has joined the Southeast Asia war effort.

Many of these studies have been or will be performed by the AID-financed Academic Advisory Committee for Thailand (AACT), headed by UCLA professor David Wilson. Professor Wilson recently co-founded a faculty group opposed to "those faculty members and students who seek to impose their ideologies on the academic community by coercive or uncivilized means." Wilson's touching concern for "academic neutrality," however, did not deter him from contributing one of the first counter-insurgency studies on northeastern Thailand. Written and researched for Rand in 1962 (although not published until 1964), the study—"Certain Effects of Culture and Social Organization on Internal Security in Thailand"—was done before armed insurgency developed in the northeast and elsewhere; but Wilson and Berkeley anthropologist Herbert Phillips nonetheless addressed themselves directly to the problem of "communist subversion." The basic problem of rural security, Wilson and Phillips say, is the "inadequacy" of the communication between the government and the villagers. Delicately skirting the reasons for the "communication problem," they discuss at length the "link" between the village and the government, finding that the village headman is usually ineffective: "When he meets the demands of the district office, he loses leadership and prestige in the eyes of the villagers; when he meets the expectations of his villagers, he loses his value to the district officer." But integration of the villagers is made even more difficult by competition with the communists, who "are penetrating villages with agents and workers, who gather information and build organizations that mobilize the energies of the idle and disaffected," report the professors. Wilson and Phillips propose that the government "neutralize these efforts by using comparable techniques." To do this, they recommend that the government recruit veterans, unemployed villagers and youth for a village defense corps which would also

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participate in public works programs. The village defense corps, however, should not receive military training, as such, because "a heavily militarized village defense corps, created to meet a communist threat that may never materialize, might very well constitute a hazard to the social order." The villagers might turn their guns on the government.

Though subsequent U.S. AID reports selflessly give the Thai government credit for the idea, the Village Security Force now being developed conspicuously resembles the 1962-64 plans drawn up by these two University of California scholars. The "hazards" suggested by Wilson and Phillips, however, have also developed: many of the security force units have proved to be "unreliable" and a threat to Thai government control.

THE PHILLIPS-WILSON REPORT is only one of hundreds that have been done by American scholars for AID in Thailand. Organizations like AACT have been created by AID to tap the widest possible personnel resources from American universities. Besides AID's private statements that the objective of these studies is counter-insurgency, the contract between AID and the University of California specifies that participating professors must supply AID with all research, done in the university and elsewhere, "which may relate to development and counter-insurgency activities in Thailand."

AACT is supposed to coordinate its activities with the older regional organization, the Southeast Asia Development Advisory Groups (SEADAG), which is also AID-funded and administered by the Asia Society in New York. The membership of SEADAG includes AID personnel, businessmen with interests abroad, professors from 34 major American universities, and 15 private foundations including Ford, Rockefeller, Asia Foundation and the Smithsonian Institute. SEADAG and AACT, together with these foundations, control (among other things) the scholarship funds that support budding Thai scholars and convince them to engage in studies at Thailand universities that will be useful to AID's program.

Private research groups have also gotten in on the action—and the Pentagon money—for counter-insurgency projects. The Research Analysis Corporation (RAC), one of the largest military think-tanks, has worked on problems the Thai Border Patrol Police face in the North, the ability of the Thai road network to provide logistic support for counter-insurgency operations, insurgent recruitment, and counter-insurgency organization in Thailand. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) have had a major project in Thailand dealing with "troop-community relations." Titled "The Impact of Economic, Social, and Political Action Programs in Thailand," and funded by ARPA at over a million dollars, the AIR proposal assured the Pentagon that it would "help the Defense Department and the Thai government evaluate counter-insurgency programs, show both organizations how to do this for future programs, and indicate to the U.S. government how to apply similar counter-insurgency programs and evaluate them in other countries, including the United States."

AID has attempted to train Thais not only eventually to replace the development functions of colonial administrators, but also to take over the counter-insurgency pro-

grammed by American professors. Since 1950, AID has financed an education in the U.S. or elsewhere for an elite of more than 5000 Thais. With the Thai government, it has set up "study centers" inside Thailand with ominous titles like the Hill Tribes Research Center in Chaing Mai.

[IV]

ALTHOUGH THE INSURGENCIES THAT the SEADAG and AACT professors are hired to study are not presently threatening the American client regime in Thailand, the problems created in the future by capitalist development may not be so easily "contained." In the central plains area, where a third of the population and most of the Thai peasants live, the continually increasing capitalization of agriculture by the Bangkok rich has resulted in a rapid increase in absentee landlordism and concentration of land holdings. At present, nearly 70 per cent of the land is in absentee ownership, in contrast with 20 per cent a decade ago. Forced from their land, the peasants are becoming either rural or urban proletarians—threatening to become a vast "industrial reserve army" of the unemployed. Some central plains peasants have already organized armed resistance to the Thai government. And this response can be expected to continue, for while the AID professors are aware of the problems of unemployment and peasant discontent in rural areas, as well as the growing slums, exploitative wage labor (ten cents a day) and unemployment in urban areas, they are unable to solve them: adequate solutions would threaten the military regime and Thai elite who are allowing the U.S. to turn Thailand into an economic colony and military base.

There are at least eight major American air bases sprawling over the Thai countryside. The American military accounts for the employment of at least 50,000 Thais in every walk of life—from laborers to translators, from clerks to prostitutes—and accounts for a major share of the Thai national income. Towns around the many U.S. bases have degenerated into little more than entertainment and service satellites for the U.S. soldier. This is also evident in Bangkok, where 70,000 GIs come each year on R&R (rest and recreation) leaves from Vietnam.

There are flashes of a vast nationalist revulsion at this occupation and at the enforced importation of American styles and values. The resentment is largely silent, but it is growing—even among the elite who owe their prosperity and dominance to the American presence. Recently, Kukrit Pramoj, a newspaper owner who is a conservative monarchist, angrily attacked the U.S. in print. He accused them of exploiting the Thais economically, of creating vast numbers of prostitutes and introducing Thai boys to homosexuality. He ended his article by warning Americans that Thais might someday smash down their embassy and burn the United States Information Service. "You American beasts," he wrote in a tone that may soon be the majority voice in Thailand, "return to your holes."

Banning Garrett is affiliated with the Pacific Studies Center as a specialist in Southeast Asia. He wishes to thank David Ransom and Harry Cleaver of PSC for use of their work on counter-insurgency research in Thailand.

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6E

They Shoot Hippies, Don't They?

Introduction by Tom Hayden

The following article describes a police department in the vanguard of the status quo, but no different in substance than those appearing everywhere in youth communities. It is a young, pipe-smoking, highly-trained and educated police force, fostered over the years by the social engineers of the University of California's Criminology Department. Supposedly it represents an "enlightened alternative" to the more violent and traditional police types. With their "peace corps" image, the Berkeley police represent the cherished fantasy that police-community relations can be improved through a higher level of professionalism.

It was a similar dream which inspired the creation of the Special Forces a decade ago. Now that the Green Beret symbolizes bloody intervention, we may forget their original purpose: "to win the hearts and minds of the people" through civic action and incorruptible law enforcement. In the Berkeley police force we see the same dynamics which plunged the Special Forces into their barbaric role. Berkeley has become a mini-Vietnam in which the manipulative skills of University of California administrators Clark Kerr, Charles Hitch and Roger Heyns have failed to keep control of the "youth problem." In the wake of their failures, the police have become increasingly dominant. Only five years ago, a massive Free Speech Movement erupted when a single police car came on campus; today the campus police have their Pentagon located in Sproul Hall itself (the site of the FSM sit-in) and, during "states of emergency," Sheriff Madigan and Chief Beall are more important than the University's chancellor.

Their education and training has only made Berkeley policemen more sophisticated oppressors. They are not into spontaneous police brutality; their specialty is full-scale counter-insurgency. Brutality is only a tactic within a larger strategy to remove cultural and political radicalism from Berkeley.

As this article points out, the Berkeley police concentrate their paranoid energy on the Telegraph Avenue youth colony. In their eyes, the total identity of the youth culture is criminal. Since 1966, they have fabricated a "crime wave" (drugs, communal living, etc.) as the permanent pretext for becoming an occupying army patrolling the crucial South Campus area.

Police tactics have escalated and diversified so much that Berkeley now can be considered a laboratory for counter-insurgency against young whites. The brutal forays by police into the Free Church, Free Clinic, and Runaway Center—all liberal institutions protecting and serving the young people—represent new developments in police attempts to exterminate Berkeley's youth culture. More ominous, however, has been the direct crackdown on "runaways" themselves: this summer, over 2000 young people have been apprehended while hitchhiking, charged with being in danger of "a lewd and immoral life" and being "out of parental con-

trol," and shipped out of town.

In addition to this relatively novel focus on sweeping out the youth colony, the police in Berkeley have a typical attitude towards relationships with the black community: heavy harassment of "suspicious" persons, including the killing of two unarmed burglary suspects since 1967. With more than a third of Berkeley's population black, the police are truly an occupying army for the majority of the people who live in that community. Moreover, until the Panthers moved their national headquarters to neighboring Oakland, it appeared that the Berkeley police would have their chance to become full-blown Green Berets by implementing their assault plan on the Panthers' top office.

For large numbers of people, then, the police have become the Number One problem. Perhaps because of this truly mass consciousness, Berkeley has become the one city in America where people are using the electoral process to take control over the police force. Stemming from the United Front Against Fascism conference in Oakland in 1969, a Berkeley committee has collected enough voters' signatures to put community control of the police on the ballot. The referendum, if approved, would divide the city into three sections: the black, the student/freak, and the white middle/upper class. These communities together would take control of the city's police. The actual policemen would be required to live in the district they serve, and would be subject to dismissal by their local commission.

The chief result of such a reform would be to lessen friction between the police and the community by destroying the present occupier status of the police. The immediate community would have increased voice over the priorities of law enforcement: Should the police, for instance, be making hundreds of pot busts—as they do now—or should they concentrate instead on breaking up the distribution of hard-drugs? Should the police be invading crash pads or should they be taking monopoly landlords to court? Should the police be attacking demonstrators or warning merchants that their criminal practices will make it impossible for their property to be protected? Should they be covering their tracks by "internal" investigations of police misbehavior, or should they be investigating the shooting and beating of demonstrators by county and state police?

The Establishment, ranging from the Berkeley police to the San Francisco Chronicle, has reacted with horror to the idea that radicals might succeed within the system. They claim the reform would plunge Berkeley back "into the Dark Ages" by enforcing segregation, fostering ward politics instead of "clean" city manager politics, and "politicizing" the police. In fact, however, the reform deals with reality and threatens the pleasant myths of liberal Berkeley life. The city is segregated, and not the ideal model of integration it claims to be. City-manager government is a form of bureaucratic elitism far worse than a system based on direct election. The police are already politicized.