

SUMMARY

THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD: A STUDY OF THE MEASURES CREATING LEADERSHIP IN GOVERNMENT

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This article is the first of a series of six (later to be published in book form) on the Government of Thailand during the present period, the so-called "Revolutionary era". It consists of an examination and analysis of the measures devised and used for maintaining and strengthening leadership of government, which is in effect, the Prime Minister, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat.

It is evident that, since his ascendancy to the power in October 1958, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat has become immensely popular as a leader and prime minister, and has attained a color and status that actually mark him off from all of his predecessors. In this study, the author bases his research largely on information contained in the speeches of the prime minister himself. His central proposition that "speech is an expression of the mind", thus resembles the legal assumption that "action indicates intention". However, he has purposely refrained from analyzing the significance of factors such as personality, attitudes, and administrative behavior for he contends that such attempt would require information that could be obtained only from a very close relationship and proximity to the man for an extended period of time. Since this has never been possible for the author, he wishes to forego such a venture for the present.

In this introductory chapter, the author describes generally the importance of the Revolution and its aftermath, as well as the prime minister's role and leadership from the outset to the present time. He also points out that, despite the principle of collective responsibility of the government, the prime minister is actually the true leader of the cabinet. This factor provides a major difference between the prime minister's authority during the revolutionary period and a normal political period.

As regards the measures supporting and strengthening governmental leadership, the government is invested with revolutionary power by the law in order to maintain administration. The pledge of the Revolutionary Government to safeguard the throne and perpetually to cherish the kingship as chief of the state and symbol of the Thai nation adds another significant factor to the strength of its leadership. Of the utmost importance, however, is the Article 17 of the interim

Constitution, which specifically invests absolute authority in the prime minister, after securing an approval of the cabinet, to deal with any act considered seriously detrimental to the peace and security of the nation and the throne. Obviously enough, these measures enable the prime minister to exercise his leadership to the fullest extent and, accordingly, to exert effectively his influence over his government and the society as a whole.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the revolutionary administration, which has been in existence since October 1958, is to continue only temporarily. It is considered as an opportunity to abolish all evil circumstances detrimental to the growth of the country, and for laying the ground rules of, and cementing a basis for, positive democracy in the society, as will be provided for in the Constitution to be drafted.

Moreover, one may appreciate better the prime minister's desire and intention for the improvement of society if his philosophy of administration is brought into consideration. As a matter of fact, the prime minister's administrative ideology is eclectic, but one of his important administrative principles is the concept of paternalism. He maintains, after having weighed the many factors involved, that the paternalistic form of government is still essential and beneficial to Thai society. He has stressed at various occasions the importance of this ancient Thai philosophy, which calls for a cordial, family-like relationship between the government, i.e. the officials, and the people in general. As a consequence, the prime minister himself has made numerous trips up country to the more remote regions for observing the welfare of the villagers. Indeed, this attitude, according to the author, provides a basic difference between the present prime minister and his predecessors, as well as the prime ministers of other democratic countries. This action on the part of the prime minister, it is maintained, helps to bridge the gap between the government and the people, which would otherwise exist during the revolutionary period in the absence of well developed political parties.

In his conclusion, the author points out that the role of the prime minister has gradually developed to an ever increasing degree from a powerful military leader to a learned politician and an efficient chief executive. In subsequent chapters, he will examine those measures creating and supporting leadership of Prime Minister Sarit Thanarat in the political, economic, social and military spheres respectively.

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