

## SUMMARY

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

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*The first chapter of this series, as it appeared in this Journal in the July issue, dealt with the appearance of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat as Leader of the nation from the coup d'état (20 October 1958) up to the time he was appointed Prime Minister by Royal Proclamation.*

*The second chapter which appears here deals with the political aspects of the Field Marshal as Prime Minister and his Administration, particularly the pursuance of his policy, both at home and abroad, and how they have been instrumental in building and stabilising his leadership.*

*Whereas the first chapter dealt with the Prime Minister and his position, this chapter emphasises on his acts, thus proving the principle that the act of a leader is more important than the man himself.*

## The Political Policy

### A. Domestic Policy

#### 1. *Special political characteristics of the "revolutionary era"*

The events from the date of the coup d'état up to the enforcement of the present Provisional Constitution on 28 January 1959 reveal many political characteristics quite distinct from those prevailing before the coup. These were the abolition of all existing political parties, the ban on any assemblage for political reason of more than 5 persons and the termination of membership of all members of the National Assembly. Other political characteristics include the promotion of unity and harmony between the Executive, Legislative and Judicial Powers to a degree never before achieved in this country, thus making for the rapid development of the country in all spheres.

#### 2. *The Constituent Assembly*

The Constituent Assembly is the offspring of the aforesaid Provisional Constitution. Its duty is twofold: to frame a new Constitution and to act as the country's Legislative Body, pending the birth of the said Constitution and the creation of a National Assembly. The man who plays

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the most important rôle in the enforcement of this Provisional Constitution is, of course, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, the present Prime Minister and Leader of the Party that led the successful coup d'état on 20 October 1958.

It was the coup party, now known as the Revolutionary Party, of Field Marshal Thanarat who selected the members of the Constituent Assembly, later submitted to the King for approval. In the selection of the Constituent Assembly members, the position of Field Marshal Thanarat as leader has, of course, been considerably strengthened, all the more so because of the absence of a clause in the Provisional Constitution terminating their membership, thus enhancing the stability of the country and the security of the Field Marshal's revolutionary government.

### *3. The Statement of Policies*

Field Marshal Thanarat has made it clear that his government is a temporary one. He also confirms his government's intention to steadfastly uphold two institutions:

1. That the King shall forever be the Supreme Head of the Thai nation and as such shall be honoured and revered.
2. That the principles of democratic government, human rights and the greatest happiness for the Thai people shall be strictly upheld.

This confirmation by the revolutionary government has, as a result, dispelled any fear on the part of the people that the revolutionary government will never let hold of its power and that the principles of democratic government will not prevail.

### *4. The improvement of administrative machinery*

The revolutionary government considers the improvement of administrative machinery of prime necessity. For the purpose, it has "mobilised the brains, the labour and the various resources" of the country in the creation of The National Economic Development Board, The National Research Council and The National Council of Education. It also appears in the form of bringing under the administration of the Office of the Prime Minister the nation's key offices, such as The Budget Bureau, The Civil Service Commission, The National Economic Development Board, The National Research Council and The National Council of Education. Moreover, there were created the posts of Assistant and Deputy Assistant to the Prime Minister, Panel of Advisors and Inspectors attached to the Prime Minister's Office, to assist the Prime Minister in discharging his heavy and widespread responsibilities.

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The effects of this "mobilisation" have again been conducive to the stabilisation of the Prime Minister's position as Leader.

#### 5. *Economic and Educational Plans*

Under Field Marshal Thanarat's leadership, the nation has, for the first time, long-term economic and educational plans the importance and the determined implementation of which have been emphasised time and again by the Field Marshal and his ministers.

#### 6. *Official Tours*

Another important practice which makes him acceptable to the people, especially the country folk, and reveals a leader who has taken to heart the welfare of the people, is his frequent official tours to even the remotest parts of the country. The aim is to find out the real needs and problems of the people—the task which, in normal times, befalls the members of parliament and the political parties.

### B. *The Pursuance of Foreign Policy*

#### 1. *The special characteristic in the pursuance of foreign policy*

One of the reasons that prompted the coup d'état of 20 October 1958 was the realisation by the Field Marshal and his colleagues who later comprised the Coup Party of the dangerous position this country was in as a result of communist infiltration and subversion. Besides, because of the selfish and aggressive acts of certain countries, Thailand has suffered humiliation and injustice, thus incurring disrespect of Thailand and the decline of Thai popularity in many quarters.

Having assumed power, the Revolutionary Party set out to vigorously promote Thailand's friendship with other countries, to raise Thailand's prestige internationally and to prevent and suppress communist infiltration and subversion.

It also declares its avowed aim of honouring Thailand's treaties with other nations and her obligations to, and her faith in, SEATO as well as Thailand's policy of supporting the United States and her allies. It will also pursue the policy of abiding by the United Nations Charter and promoting world peace. In receiving foreign assistance to promote economic expansion and ensure military preparedness to safeguard national independence and prevent foreign armed aggression, the Revolutionary Party has made it clear that the assistance does not, and never will, deviate Thailand's ultimate will to stand on her own feet.

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Among the measures introduced by the Revolutionary Government to combat communist infiltration and subversion are the release of soldiers for Community Development work and the setting up of Mobile Development Units.

### *2. The royal popularity and influence*

Thailand's prestige has been immeasurably enhanced by royal visits abroad, creating at the same time sympathy and co-operation on the part of many countries in Thailand's cause. It should be noted, however, that Field Marshal Thanarat's ability as leader had again been accepted when His Majesty, soon after his six-month tour of the United States and Europe, had, at a big gathering to welcome him home, asked the people to give three cheers to the Prime Minister.

### *3. Mutual Security*

Because of the Thai Government's manifest will to honour her international obligations including her special ties to SEATO and ASA and of Thailand's unique geographical position, the focus of mutual security in the path of communist aggression and infiltration in this part of the world not unnaturally seems to be on the Thai government and its leader and indeed in this matter Prime Minister Thanarat's leadership rôle cannot be minimized. In foreign affairs the Prime Minister's leadership has been further strengthened by the appointment of Nai Thanat Khoman as Foreign Minister.

### *4. Thailand's respect for UN Charter*

Out of her determined will to honour the United Nations Charter and in this connection its Article 94, the Thai Government and the Thai people accepted, although with vicious heart-bleed and humiliation as well as with the unsuppressed feelings that she had suffered an injustice not often called upon to bear by any nation, the decision of the International Court of Justice to allow Cambodia the possession of Phra Vihara Monastery.

## **Summary and Analysis**

### **Summary and analysis of measures enhancing the Prime Minister's Political leadership**

Two facts have emerged regarding the Prime Minister's leadership. One is that the political situation in Thailand is quieter and more stable than that of her neighbours. The other is that the Thai people, because of the absence of political parties and a popularly-elected National Assembly on the one hand and the existence of martial law and Article 17 of the Provisional

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Constitution (which will be discussed under the next heading) on the other, have been called upon to make a greater sacrifice than at any time in the history of democratic government in this country.

All this inevitably points to a greater responsibility on the part of the government in all spheres not only in what had already happened but also in what is to come, especially the shape of the new Constitution now in the making.

### *1. Article 17 of the Provisional Constitution*

Article 17 has given the Prime Minister more power than any of his predecessors in the history of democratic government in this country. Although, according to the Constitution, any order or action by the Prime Minister has to be approved by the Council of Ministers, and the Constituent Assembly has to be informed of any of such order or action afterwards, the interest of the people in this matter is focussed on the Prime Minister himself. It is feared that such order or action by the Prime Minister may be made unscrupulously or without due consideration of all factors involved. For this, however, there is a consolation. It is that all the orders or actions by the Prime Minister, by virtue of this Article, have so far been carried out after meticulous and intensive consideration by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. Moreover, this Article has become most instrumental not only in preserving peace and order in the country but also in dealing with any elements that conspired to overthrow the monarchy and subjugate this country to foreign domination.

### *2. The Constituent Assembly*

As the Constituent Assembly serves both as a constitution-framing and a law-making body, composing also, as it were, of members selected by the Revolutionary Party, there is, therefore, no opposition party. As a result, fear has been entertained by the people that the birth of the new Constitution may be unduly prolonged and that the new Constitution, when born, may not suit the country and the people in which case the foundation of democracy in Thailand will again be threatened.

### *3. The philosophy of paternal government*

The ideal of paternal government has been extensively put into practice by the revolutionary government in its relationship with the people, thus upholding the centuries-old Thai governmental system. As a result, the relationship between the government and the people has been not only intimate but at times very informal.

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#### *4. The multiple positions held by the Prime Minister*

To direct the policy and assume control personally of some important positions, the Prime Minister has occupied the positions of Minister of National Development, Supreme Commander of the Thai Forces, Director-General of Police. This, coupled with the fact that the Prime Minister's Office is the nerve centre of innumerable agencies, has made him functional leader of the entire Thai officialdom: namely, the military, police and civil services.

Moreover, in view of his being accepted as leader, he is incessantly being invited to preside at the openings of roads, bridges, offices, fairs, swimming pools etc. This, although producing a heartening effect on all concerned, imposes an additional strain on his health, which he can ill afford.

#### **Summary and analysis of administrative problems of the revolutionary government**

##### *1. Problem of Trust*

Not a few officials, because of trust placed in them by the Prime Minister, have held several positions simultaneously. This practice has doubtlessly prevented them from concentrating on, thereby impairing their efficiency in, their main jobs. In some cases, it is found that an assistant or a subordinate to a person in one agency has been appointed simultaneously his equal or even his superior in another agency. Again, efficiency in the main job is likely to be impaired when a man is appointed member of innumerable and sometimes so variegated committees-official and semi-official. This unfortunately is a practice which, introduced and expanded by the previous governments, widely prevails in Thailand to-day. It is unfortunate in that the practice is now taken for granted by both the officials and the people alike and that no one has as yet seriously raised the question.

##### *2. Problem of lack of co-ordination*

In spite of the fact that the existence of the Prime Minister's Office has helped effect a close co-ordination among many agencies, it appears that lack of co-ordination is still predominant in many other quarters, clearly evidenced in the programmes of expansion of the twin cities of Bangkok and Dhonburi.

Again, because of lack of co-ordination, innumerable government agencies are woefully either under-staffed or over-staffed.

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It is high time the government appointed a Commission—similar, perhaps, to the Hoover Commission in the United States—to study this situation and recommend improvements.

**New trends in the promotion of Prime Minister's leadership**

In the study of factors that have strengthened the Prime Minister's leadership, at least two new trends are discernible. The first is a new and increasing rôle of the Prime Minister's wife—'Thanpuying Vichitra Thanarat. Her position as President or Patron of numerous councils, committees, organizations etc., especially in connection with social, including women's, welfare, has, not indirectly, been conducive to the acceptance by both the officials and the people of her husband as leader. Also her recent visit abroad has not been without significance since it has not only promoted the ties of friendship between the countries visited and Thailand but has also pointed to the acceptance by the governments of those countries of her husband's leadership in this country. The other is the employment of the military in Community Development work and the creation of Mobile Development Units whose work in the promotion of education, health, etc. as well as in the dissemination of knowledge and information to curb communist subversion and infiltration has reached the remotest areas of the country.

*Summarized by Patom Jarnson*

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