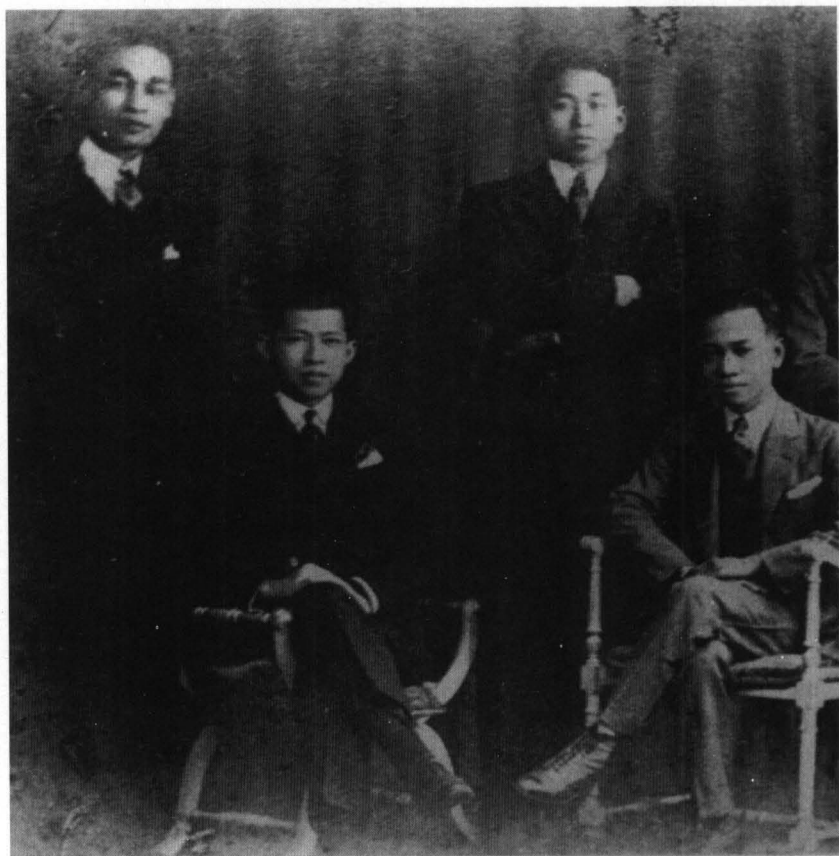


PART II: THE REVOLUTION

7. Announcement of the People's Party No. 1 (1932)
8. Provisional Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam, 1932
9. Letter from Pridi to Phoonsuk, 2 July 1932
10. Outline Economic Plan (1933)
11. *Some Aspects of the Establishment of the People's Party and Democracy* (1972)
12. The People's Party and the Democratic Revolution of 24 June (1982)



*New men studying in France. From left: Khuang Aphaiwong; Pridi Banomyong;
Thaep Aphaiwong; Luang Wichitwathakan*

INTRODUCTION

LIFE

In 1927, Pridi and six friends met in Paris to form the People's Party with the aim of replacing the absolute monarchy with a constitution. Pridi became the party's first leader. In 1931, leadership passed to a military group which provided the firepower. On 24 June 1932, Pridi wrote the "announcement" which served as the manifesto, but military efficiency rather than mass public support was the basis of the fast and bloodless victory. Pridi, however, was interested in two documents which, since the resolutions at the first meeting in 1927, he had seen as basic to any significant change in Siam. The first was a constitution. Pridi drafted the constitution which the king accepted three days after the revolution, but whose title the king amended by adding the word "provisional". Pridi also had a major role in drafting the "permanent" constitution completed in December. Second was an economic plan. Pridi presented a draft in early February 1933. Two months of stormy controversy followed. The king wrote a commentary which was longer than the plan (and which disagreed with Pridi on every point except the introduction of a lottery). The Assembly debate on the document grew heated after some members carried weapons into the chamber. Immediately after this debate (1 April), the king dissolved parliament. On the day after that, a new cabinet enacted an anti-communist law. On the 13th, Pridi boarded a boat for France.

WRITINGS

This section presents six documents in two very different groups. The first group consists of four original documents dating from 1932-33 and penned by Pridi. The "Announcement of the People's Party No. 1", which is sometimes referred to as the party's manifesto, was read to the soldiers, distri-

buted in handbill form, and broadcast repeatedly on radio on the morning of 24 June 1932. The "Provisional Constitution" was presented to the king on the same day. The letter from Pridi to Phoonsuk dates from a week after the event. The "Outline Economic Plan" was presented to the government nine months later in March 1933.

The second group consists of two pieces which Pridi wrote about the 1932 revolution many years after the event. *Some Aspects of the Establishment of the People's Party and Democracy* was written for the fortieth anniversary and first printed by Pramot Phungsunthon in 1972. "The People's Party and the Democratic Revolution of 24 June" was sent to be delivered as a speech at a seminar in Bangkok to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary in 1982.

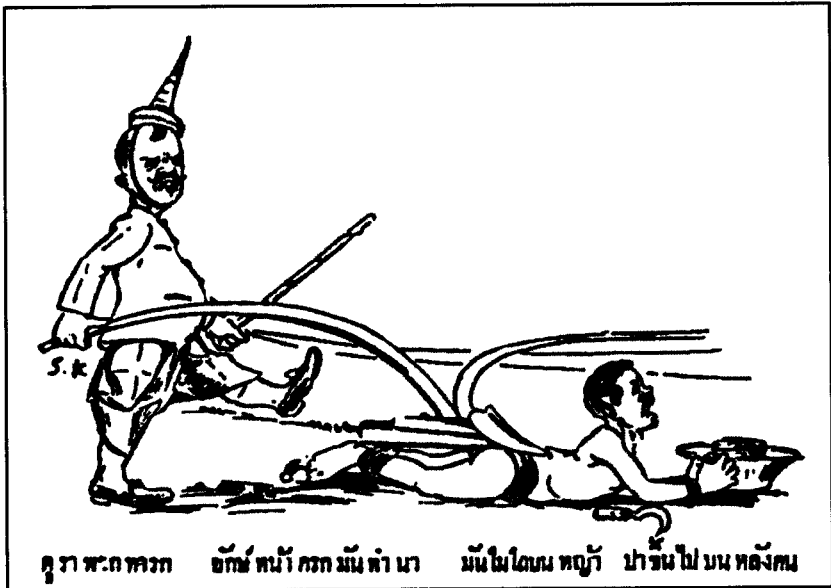
PREFACE

In the speeches and writings of Pridi which appeared after his exit from China to Paris in 1970, the phrase which appears possibly more often than any other is "the change of government on 24 June 1932".

Yet this overthrow of the absolute monarchy has had a difficult fate in Thailand's modern history. Even at the time, the status of the event was uncertain. The bland entitling of the event as "the change of government" suggests something less than confident revolutionary fervour. The argument that the Thai language had not yet invented a word for "revolution" is a poor and partial explanation. It was after all an unusually efficient and dull event. The *Bangkok Daily Mail* of that afternoon reported that "there was not the slightest excitement . . . mail collections and deliveries were as usual . . . there was no hysteria, no bad feeling anywhere". This calm was deceptive. Royalist forces discussed an immediate countermove, but resolved instead to adopt a long-term strategy. The events of 24 June began a long period of bitter struggle between the old order and the new men. But with the renewed strengthening of the monarchy from the 1960s onwards, the historical importance of 1932 has been significantly down-played. The date of 24 June was removed from the list of national holidays in 1960.

For the radical tradition, also, the event has been a problem. Attempts to interpret it as a bourgeois revolution or as a Kuomintang-style blow against an imperial tradition run into obvious problems. The fact that the event was followed, within six years, by the development of militarism and eventually of military dictatorship, prejudices its utility in any radical historical tradition. Perhaps for this reason there has been only one serious academic thesis published on 1932 by a modern Thai historian (Nakharin Mektrairat).

The announcement, the provisional constitution, and the outline economic plan are original documents, but their significance for understanding the 1932 revolution is slightly oblique. All three had a short life. When the king returned to Bangkok two days after the “change of government”, Pridi and other members of the People’s Party made a formal apology for the contents of the announcement, and all copies were suppressed. The rhetoric found in the announcement does not resurface anywhere else in the subsequent history of the People’s Party. The provisional constitution was replaced in December 1932, though much of its content was carried forward in the new charter. The outline economic plan, as Pridi later noted, “was not a proper economic plan . . . Rather, it was a preparatory project . . . the outline or proposition on which a plan should be based” (*Asiaweek*, 4 January 1980). Controversy over the plan provoked a crisis within the ranks of the party, and sent Pridi into temporary exile from April to September 1933. The plan was not discussed thereafter and not openly published at this point. When Pridi later had responsibility for economic policies, his actions did not closely reflect the thinking and the prescriptions of the plan. Yet he never disowned the plan, and in later life spoke wistfully about his failure to win sufficient support for it.



“Cruel-faced giants don’t plough on the grass. Instead they lift up the plough for use on human backs.” Si Krung, 4 August 1931

Even so, the announcement, provisional constitution, and plan are important guides to contemporary thinking in the early 1930s. As Nakharin has pointed out, the plan is not really a plan and was clearly written in a great hurry. Like the announcement, it is perhaps best read as a tirade against the old order. A series of themes run through the trio of documents. First, there is the strong dislike, not of monarchy itself, but of the power, privileges, and pride of a parasitic aristocracy of royal blood. As Matthew Copeland has shown, this strong dislike had become gradually more powerful and more widespread in urban society over the previous two decades. The resonant phrase about “farming on the backs of the people” was not Pridi’s coining, but was in more general use (see cartoon reproduced from Copeland’s doctoral thesis). A second theme of these three documents is a strong faith in the power of a new national state, armed with a constitution and law codes, to transform both economy and society. Third, there is an over-riding concern for the rural poor which made up the mass of Siam’s population. Fourth, there is sensitivity to the outside world. This sensitivity emerges on the one hand as a wish to emulate the West’s level of “civilization”, and on the other as a desire to avoid becoming entangled in the last adventures of Western colonialism. Fifth, there is the conviction that Siam needed a vision of a perfect society as a trigger for change. In both the announcement and plan, Pridi presented this conviction through the concept of (*phra*) *si-ariya*, the future Buddha who heralds a utopian age.

Nakharin and Copeland have shown that such ideas were widespread among urban Siamese in the five years before 1932. But, as the suppression of the plan and announcement anticipated, these ideas would not guide the governments which descended from 1932. Why this was not so is the major theme of Pridi’s retrospective writings.

The two reflections on 1932 written by Pridi at a much later date are both less and more than records and reminiscences. They were written (or at least, first presented) forty and fifty years, respectively, after the event. Both appeared at times when military dictatorship was strong. In 1972, the generals had conducted a coup against their own government, sacked parliament, and were engaged in writing a new constitution to institutionalize their rule. In 1982 the military was still in the ascendant following the coup and massacre of 1976, and was engaged in broadening its penetration of the Thai economy, polity, and society by infiltration, internal espionage, vigilante groups, and outright suppression. Against these backgrounds, Pridi’s tortured concern in both these retrospective pieces was to identify why the 1932 movement and his vision of a society based on a democratic constitution and economic planning, on law and equity, seemed to have been so conclusively defeated.

The two pieces must also be read as part of Pridi's connection to a new radical generation. Once he had moved to Paris in May 1970, Pridi became accessible both as an icon and a source of learning and inspiration. Many academics, intellectuals, and journalists made the pilgrimage to Paris to see him. The extracts from *Some Experiences and Opinions of Senior Statesman Pridi Banomyong* in part 1 are the result of one such pilgrimage. Thai student groups in Europe began to ask him for speeches, articles, and messages. Both of the retrospective pieces in this section originate from such invitations. Pridi was very happy to accept. His concern with tracing the history and legacy of 1932 was far from morbid. He was intent on passing on the learnings to a new radical generation. This theme is clear in both these pieces, and also in "Uphold the Aim for Full Democracy of the Heroes of 14 October" included in part 3, and in many other pieces where he set Siam's experience in the context of the revolutions of the modern world.

NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

The outline economic plan already exists in an English translation in an appendix of Kenneth Landon's *Siam in Transition* published in 1940. Originally we had not intended to include the plan in this collection because this translation exists. However several people dissuaded us from that course on grounds that Landon is not easily available, the plan is too important to ignore, and a new translation might be enlightening. We decided to complete our translation before checking it against that of Landon. If anyone now cares to compare the two translations, they may be shocked how different they are.

We are not suggesting that Landon's translation is seriously inaccurate, although we think there are several slips. The big difference arises for three main reasons.

First, it is not possible to make a literal translation between Thai and English because the structure of the two languages is so different. Some recasting is always necessary. Landon recast quite liberally. We have been much more conservative. As a result, Landon reads more smoothly as English. But at some points we feel he strays quite far from the original sense.

Second, as Nakharin has noted, the plan was written in great haste. In places, it seems Pridi's mind was racing faster than his pen. Occasionally Landon has been tempted to guess the missing bits, and to embroider quite liberally to help the reader. We have tried to resist this temptation, to approximate the translation to Pridi's compressed and elided form, and

occasionally to insert a few words in square brackets which are not present in the original but which help to improve the sense.

Third, Pridi was writing before much of the modern Thai terminology for economics had been invented. For some important concepts, he had to invent new phrases by stringing together ordinary Thai words and expressions. Some of these concepts are of major importance in the plan, and the translation is not at all straightforward.

For example, one basic concept is: *ekachon tang khon tang tham*. Literally it means: private/each person/does differently. We have translated this throughout as: private free enterprise. Landon is less consistent. He varies the translation to suit the context. Often he too has "private enterprise". But he also has other forms such as "individualism", "individualist enterprise", "each doing as he likes", and so on.

Even more vexed is the phrase *rattaban prakop sethakit eng* which is fundamental to the whole document. Literally it means: government/composes or undertakes/economy/itself. This is the opposite of private free enterprise. It describes government management or control of the economy. Again Landon varies the translation according to the context. He starts out with "government must administer a national economic policy", but later uses forms such as "when the government administers the whole economic system", "the government controls the whole economic system", "the administration of the whole economic system", and so on.

For consistency, we wanted to use a single phrase for this term throughout. However, the choice of term is not simple. Nowadays our interpretation of all terms related to state control over the economy is affected by half a century's experience of communist and socialist governments. Yet Pridi was writing in 1932 (or before; he claims to have presented the "principles" of the plan shortly after foundation of the People's Party in 1927). Stalin's first five-year plan was not yet complete. Some of Pridi's ideas may have originated from the international discussion provoked by that first essay in state socialist planning. But Pridi's whole conceptualization of the state's economic role did not have the benefit of the huge subsequent learning, debate, and literature on this issue. If we adopt a modern term for this crucial phrase—such as "state economic management"—we will risk conjuring up in the reader's mind some ideas and constructs which were not available to Pridi and whose meaning is shaped by later history. Hence we have adopted a quasi-literal translation and used it throughout: "the government runs the (whole) economy itself". Occasionally Pridi used slight variations, such as replacing the verb with *chat tham* or *chat kan*, and we translate such instances as "manages". The result is rather clumsy in places. But this seems better than trapping the reader into an interpretation which may significantly distort Pridi's original intention.

In the retrospective pieces written from 1970s onwards, Pridi made constant use of the term *thatsana* or *thatsana sangkhom*. The dictionary definition of *thatsana* is standpoint, view, or point of view. *Sangkhom* is society. Pridi used this term to describe the ideas or mental outlook of any society, also the ideas behind any movement to change a society. In modern usage, “ideology” might be a suitable translation, but Pridi was not using any of the modern Thai terms for ideology, some of which were available to him at the time of writing.

It is tempting to vary the English translation to suit the context. At different points, words such as outlook, idea, ideology, culture all fit very well. However, as Pridi used the term very often and very prominently, we wanted to find a single word to signal his usage. Suphot Dantrakun has translated the term as “culture”, but again Pridi’s term is not the modern Thai translation for culture, and this translation does not work well in all contexts. We have adopted “vision” and “social vision”. This translation captures the visual metaphor which is the root of the original word. In some cases, the resulting English is a bit odd. But overall we prefer the consistency.