

11. SOME ASPECTS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S PARTY AND THE DEMOCRACY (1972)

I

The first official meeting of the People's Party was held in February 1927 at a boarding house on the *Rue du Sommerard* where we hired a large room especially for the meeting. The seven people at the meeting were: 1. Lieutenant Prayun Phamonmontri, a reserve military officer who had previously been a commander of the royal bodyguard in the Sixth Reign; 2. Lieutenant Plaek Kittasangkha [Phibun], a graduate of the Siam army general staff school who had come to study at the French artillery school; 3. Second Lieutenant Thasanai Mitphakdi, a reserve officer who had formerly been commander of the fifth cavalry regiment at Nakhon Ratchasima and who had come to study at the French cavalry school; 4. Nai Tua Laphanukrom, a science student in Switzerland who had been a sergeant in the volunteer regiment during the First World War; 5. Luang Siriratchamaitri, previously named Charun Singhaseni, assistant Siamese ambassador in Paris, who had formerly been a law student in the Justice Ministry, and who had been a lance corporal in the volunteer regiment during the First World War; 6. Nai Naep Phahonyothin, a barrister in England; 7. myself.

The meeting passed a unanimous resolution that I should be chairman and head of the People's Party until there was a person appropriate to be leader of the party in the future.

The meeting continued for around five days, and took the following important decisions:

I. The first purpose of the People's Party was to change the system of absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy. In those days there were no words *patiwat* or *aphiwat* to translate the French or English word, *revolution*. Hence we used the ordinary words "change the system of government in which the king is above the law to the system of

government in which the king is under the law". The second purpose of the party was to enable Siam to achieve six principles: 1. to maintain securely the independence of the country in all forms including political, judicial, and economic, etc.; 2. to maintain public safety within the country and greatly reduce crime; 3. to improve the economic well-being of the people by the new government finding employment for all, and drawing up a national economic plan, not leaving the people to go hungry; 4. to provide the people with equal rights; 5. to provide the people with liberty as far as this does not conflict with the above four principles; 6. to provide the people with full education.

II. Siam was surrounded by the colonial powers of England and France, both of which had agreed to treat Siam as a buffer state, but either of which might be ready to invade, seize, and divide Siam as a dependency or client state of these two countries. Given this situation, we saw that the method of changing the system of government must be through *coup d'état*, for which we used the ordinary Thai words "rapid seizure of power" because at that time nobody had coined the Thai word *rathaprahan* to translate the French phrase. A coup was necessary to prevent an intervention by the great powers. Once the People's Party had seized power, the great powers would face the situation called in French a *fait accompli*.

III. Those who attended the first meeting would form the central committee of the People's Party for the time being. Each would head up a branch to select trusted people by a process of personal scrutiny, and propose them to the central committee of the People's Party for membership. The committee could accept them as members only by unanimous resolution. At the first stage, each committee member was to find only two additional members, then divide up into separate branches.

IV. The selection of additional members of the People's Party would have to take account of their readiness to make a sacrifice for the country, their courage, and their ability to maintain confidence. Those who wanted to change the system of government were classified into three types, namely:

1. Those who should be invited to join the People's Party before the start of the seizure of power. These were further subdivided into those who should be invited early on, and those invited close to the time of the start of the seizure of power. Any friend with whom a member dined and socialized should not simply be invited to be a member of the People's Party immediately. Such a friend might like joking too much and saying things true or untrue just to amuse his listeners. He

might disclose the secrets of the party just for a joke. Some friends might have many good qualities, but when they drank they might be unable to control themselves and might speak nonsense. They might make the mistake of speaking about the party when drunk. Such people would not be invited to join the People's Party before the attempted seizure of power. But once we had seized power on the 24th June, there was no secret to keep hidden so they could be invited to join.

2. Those who would be invited once the process of seizing power had begun. They would agree to have a role as the force of the People's Party.

3. Those who would be invited on the day of seizing power itself, but after the seizure promised to be successful rather than unsuccessful.

V. As to the policies to be pursued after the People's Party had the power of government, the meeting entrusted me to make proposals in line with the six principles. I proposed general principles for an economic plan, and was later entrusted to draft an economic plan.

VI. The meeting also considered that if the activity of the People's Party was suppressed or failed, there should be one leader whose membership of the party we should keep unexposed to outside view, by allowing him not to attend the general committee meetings often, whether in France or after return to Siam. He would conduct himself like someone who stays quietly at home. This person would have the duty to carry out the work of the People's Party through to completion in case the party was suppressed or failed. This duty would include helping out the families of friends who were jailed or dead. The meeting agreed to entrust this duty to Nai Naep Phahonyothin, who was a man with considerable property inherited from his father.

When the meeting to form the People's Party was over, I returned to Siam in March of the same year. For another two or three months, the friends still in Paris selected people suitable to invite into the People's Party. They invited Nai Thawi Bunyaket, an agriculture student; Nai Banchong Sicharun, a Thai-Muslim from Egypt who came to visit Paris and took on the task of organizing other Thai-Muslims such as Nai Chaem Musthapha (son of the Islamic leader in Siam who is known by the name Khru Fa; later Nai Chaem changed his last name to Phromyong, similar to mine). Later they invited Midshipman Sin Kamonnawin, a naval student in Denmark who came to visit Paris. Later Phraya Songsuradet came for a study tour on the military in France. Friends still in Paris tried sounding out how he felt about the absolute monarchy, and found that he was dissatisfied. However

he was not yet invited to join the People's Party. After that, friends who formed the People's Party in Paris came back to Siam one by one, and gradually invited student friends who they had earlier observed in casual conversation. It was not limited only to students from Paris. Hence later in Siam those invited included M.L. Udom Sanitwong, a student from Switzerland; M.L. Kri Dechatiwong, Nai Saphrang Thep-hatsadin na Ayutthaya, and Leng Sisomwong, students from England; and others including friends in the army, navy, and other civilians in Siam. At the end of 1931, Phraya Phahon Phonphayahasena, Phraya Songsuradet, Phraya Ritthiakhane were invited, and Phraya Phahon was made head of the People's Party.

II

The People's Party called type-1 members "promoters of change in the system of government" or for short "promoters". This indicated that people of this type were just the vanguard of the mass of the people who wanted more freedom and equality than under the absolute monarchy. Members of types 2 and 3 were the next levels of support. However, the major power which helped the People's Party to succeed was the mass of the people who gave support both directly and implicitly.

Some people with the vision (*thatsana*) of the old order have stated that the People's Party claimed the people without the people's consent. This accusation follows the vision and standpoint of their own class-caste status (*chon chan wanna*) from which they receive benefits or of which they admiringly approve.

Progressive social science divides people into two main types: 1. Reactionaries are those who want the old social system to remain or even regress backwards further; 2. Others who are not reactionaries are the *people* which we translate as *ratsadon*. Most of the citizens of Siam who were subordinate to the power of the government of that era called themselves *ratsadon*. For example, when district officers recruited civilians for public works, they called them *ratsadon* recruits. Individuals pondering their own troubles would say: "*ratsadon* everywhere are beset by difficulties", which indicates the condition of people governed by the absolute monarchy.

The Thai people's wish to change the absolute monarchy did not begin with the People's Party. Those really interested in social science have already studied the theory on how people's social vision is formed, and have applied this to the reality evident in Siam ever since the time when Siam had to make treaties with various capitalist countries from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards.

I have already dealt with this topic somewhat in the book *The Impermanence of Society* and here I will just summarize it. When the tools for producing a society's necessities of life have developed, the men who make and use those tools must develop too. Productive power leads to greater abundance in the production of the necessities of life. As a result, the economic relations of man in society must change to avoid an economic crisis. When the economic system which is the basis of society has changed, the political system must change too. Otherwise conflict between the political system and the economic system at the base will create an economic crisis. The thing which guides the movement to bring about the changes demanded by the new economic system is man's social vision. In the book just mentioned, I dealt with the development of the social vision to change from primitive society to slave society, then from slave society to *sakdina* or *feudal* society, and from this system finally to capitalism. The social vision of capitalism is now ascendant. In the time ahead, other progressive visions will arise.

Here let me talk briefly about the birth of the social vision to abolish the absolute monarchy which is a feudal system. In Europe, this vision did not arise among the feudal lords. Rather, it arose because in western Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, the invention of steam power created a major revolution in production machinery and gave rise to what is known as the industrial revolution. The need arose to develop man to be capable of making and using this modern machinery. The serfs and slaves were expert only at using animals for ploughing or at making handicrafts. They were incapable of making and using the modern production machinery with any efficiency. The modern capitalists who owned businesses using the modern production machinery needed modern workers who had more knowledge and ability than the workers in the old feudal system. They also had to change the relations between business owners and workers into a new form—that is the modern capitalist system where the modern wage workers have more freedom than the feudal serfs and slaves who were forced to work. The serfs and slaves had no incentive to pay attention to the modern and more complex machinery. So the modern capitalists wanted to change the feudal political system to accord with the developing system of modern capitalism. The capitalist vision of society arose because of the need to change the feudal political system so that people would have more freedom and democratic rights. The thinking and vision which demanded the change of absolutism in Europe spread widely at the end of the eighteenth century. The feudal lords tried to retain the system from which they received the most benefit. They tried to use the old vision from the feudal system to oppose the new, progressive vision. Violent conflict arose between the old system and vision on one side and the new system and thinking on the other.

After modern capitalism had arisen in western Europe, it developed further into large-scale financial capitalism and imperialism which spread their power into Siam and other underdeveloped countries. Siam was forced to make treaties with various capitalist powers. Thereby Siam was forced to accommodate the capitalist economic system alongside the old Siamese feudal economy. Thus the vision arising from the modern capitalist system in Europe also came into Siam. Meanwhile, inside Siam itself, there was also a demand for change. People who had studied in Europe and America and who were not too stubbornly tied to the backward feudal system wanted to change the absolute monarchy towards a system of constitutional monarchy. But this demand had several levels. Some groups wanted only a little change, while others wanted to be completely under a constitution with full democratic principles. These different levels of demand arose from the varying boundaries on each individual's vision.

According to the scientific principle of the origin of human consciousness, "material existence determines human consciousness". Hence those who exist as feudal lords or tribute-lords have the consciousness to preserve that system. But there are exceptions, as I have recounted in the above-mentioned book [*The Impermanence of Society*, 18–19] as follows:

When talking of the "residual power" of the old order, we must understand that this residual power is not identical with the people of the old class. Some members of this old class are progressive and they understand the law of impermanence. They value the general benefit of society above the benefit of their class alone. They are people with ethics and they are worthy of admiration. The founding father of modern social science stated objectively as follows: "Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole." [from Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1888]

At the other extreme to the people described in the last paragraph, there arise people who seem like a new class, but who do not understand the law of impermanence. They believe the old state of affairs is permanent. They are not happy with the new state of affairs which is developing by natural

law. These people may not be the offspring of the old class. But they act as servants of the old order even more than those who come from the high ranks of the old class. This situation arises because the old order which is crumbling away loses control only of the outer casing of the political system. These people are still embedded in the power mechanisms of the state and economy. They still have the social vision of the backward old system. Unlike the progressive segment of the old class, this residual element of the old order has a vision which conflicts with natural law. They oppose natural law and the law of impermanence. They drag the society backwards even more than the old ruling class itself would do. However, "society can be dragged backwards only temporarily, because in the end the law of impermanence must prevail" [*The Impermanence of Society*, 20].

From the law above, we can conclude that those belonging to the new order are not simply the same as those born and living in the new era. We must look whether the vision guiding their lives is the new vision arising from the new changes in the economy at the base of society. Or whether they hold the vision from the old order, as described by the proverb: "old wine in new bottles".

Let us apply these principles to examine which people initiated the vision to change the absolute monarchy in Siam. Those who represent the residual part of the old order believe the change came from people in the old order. But those who belong to the new order, especially those at the forefront, believe it came only from people in the new order. However, those who are philosophers and as described above, "have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole" do not limit themselves to either the new order or the old. They look at both sides and discover the truth.

Within the old order of Siam, there were people more progressive than those who clung to the old thinking. Around a hundred years ago there were three younger brothers of the king, Krommun Naretworarit, Phraongchao Sonabandit (later, Kromkhun Phitayalap), Phraongchao Sawatdisophon (later Somdet Kromphra Sawat) and Phraongchao Prisdang. They joined with some officials from the Siamese embassy in London, including Luang Wisetsali (Nak na Pombejra, later Phraya Chaiwichit Sirthisattra, governor of Ayutthaya), and Sub-Lieutenant Sa-at Singhaseni (later General Phraya Prasitsalayakan, Siamese ambassador in London, and then Phraya Singhaseni, commissioner of monthon Nakhon Ratchasima). They sent a petition to King Rama V to modernize the government. They were progressive, but not to the extent of petitioning for Siam to have a parliamentary system under which people would participate in elections and ministers would have to command the confidence of parliament. Yet they were very brave to have made a petition. Current intellectuals who truly belong to the new order

should not be surprised to find that there were once relatives of the king who had such progressive thinking. Please follow up for yourselves how this matter concluded, how the king responded to this petition, what the king said on the occasion of his birthday about government by the parliamentary system, and what the king wrote to his daughter from Norway (in the book *Klai Ban* [Far from home, vol. 2, p. 36])—I quoted this letter in my lectures on administrative law at the Justice Ministry law school in 1931. [The quote in these lectures runs: “Today at dinner there were not many important people. We waited for the prime minister for a while and then were told he could not come as he was engaged at the Storting [the Norwegian parliament]. That is, the parliament was making trouble. This prime minister is the one who thought of separating Norway from Sweden. Very clever. Speaks good English. He urged me strongly not to have a Storting in Thailand at all. The king also said the same thing.”].

Those interested in the history of democratic thinking among the Siamese should research what happened to those who sent this petition to the king when they returned to Siam and whether they expressed any opinion about democracy anywhere. I was once a law student in the Justice Ministry at the time when Somdet Kromphra Sawat was chief judge of the high court. I had the opportunity to study whether judgements written by him revealed any democratic vision. For example judgement no. 326/1912 has this passage:

in a case so severe as to warrant capital punishment, if the hearing has not come to a clear enough result, to find that Nai Thomya is guilty and should receive the death penalty would be risky and improper. According to a Buddhist saying, when cases are in doubt, to let even ten wrongdoers go free is better than punishing one person who is innocent.

The democratic principle of judicial practice laid down here was followed by judges then and later for many years, until the time when the old carcass of the ancient feudal system was revived. Then some judges with the old vision threw away this Buddhist saying which had been the basis for a democratic vision of judicial practice.

At that time, law students at the Justice Ministry had to study various laws, so people from that group should still remember the law about private schools of 1917. The history of this affair is that the Education Ministry of the time submitted to King Rama VI a draft law to regulate the schools which previously had been founded by private interests with no need to ask government permission. The Education Ministry wanted to require private schools to have permission as well as other strict controls. King Rama VI sent the ministry's draft bill to the law-drafting council, of which Somdet Kromphra Sawat (then Kromluang) was the head. He inspected the draft,

and then redrafted it according to his own democratic vision. He wanted freedom in the provision of education and he wanted education to spread widely among the people. Hence he drafted a provision whose essence was that if someone wanting to found a public school applied to the Education Ministry and the ministry did not reply within a specified time, it would be as if the application was approved. King Rama VI agreed and promulgated this Private Schools Act. This made the Education Ministry very unhappy. The ministry tried many times to amend the law, but without success. This illustrates that Somdet Kromphra Sawat, even while in the bureaucracy, still had some democratic vision.

Those who really belong to the new order must not look down on ordinary commoners as if they had no thought to demand change in the absolute monarchy.

When I was studying in upper secondary over sixty years ago, I heard about, read about, and met two elderly commoners. The first was K. S. R. Kulap, who issued the magazine *Sayam Praphet* [Siam type, a pun on *Sayam prathet*, the country of Siam] which picked at the absolute monarchy until some people charged that he had a screw loose. But when I met him, I did not think he had a screw loose. The second was Thianwan who had the alias, Wannapho. He had very democratic principles. At that time, he had a grey beard and was almost seventy. I met him in a rowhouse near Wat Bowonniwet. He was once imprisoned for writing and speaking in opposition to the absolute monarchy. He did not think he had broken the law. His case is of the type described by the old saying “the rule of law cannot compete with the rule of the mob”, which is a reference to the cliquiness of judges in old times. But Thianwan, who was imprisoned, extended the saying as: “the rule of law cannot compete with the rule of the mob; the rule of the mob cannot compete with a boot on the neck; and a boot on the neck cannot compete with a king breaking the neck.” This indicates the vision Thianwan had towards the absolute monarchy. Many of the new generation in Siam at that time who read and talked with Thianwan may still remember this saying of his. But he was an ordinary commoner who attracted no interest from those who held the vision of the old order. It is as if people of the old order do not like to mention K. S. R. Kulap or Thianwan, who in their youth over a hundred years ago openly called for change in the absolute monarchy.

Students who studied Thai from the book *Basic Elementary (Munlabot bapphakit)* before the time of *Speed Reader (Baep rian reo)* may remember that they were taught about the decline of the absolute monarchy from the start of reading ABC. Those who studied after *Speed Reader* had come into being may have heard earlier students mention this. Phraya Sisunthonwohan (Noi Acharayangkun) composed a text about the decline of the imaginary kingdom of Sawatthi. I can remember a bit:

Praise be to the Buddhist trinity, fathers, mothers, teachers, angels in the zodiac . . . as time went by, the servants sought young girls with beautiful faces to make music and provide entertainment night and morning at the residence . . . whatever was obtained, the wife became mad with greed . . . some warnings were issued, but the king did not pay attention, so whoever could make some gain for himself, did so, and the people were all sick in their hearts.

In this text there was a saying which people revived and discussed a lot during the Sixth Reign. Some senior royal family members in Paris warned me to keep in mind this saying which ran:

The king who ruled Sawatthi was fooled by his army commander who was very cunning. Hence the kingdom was destroyed.

Hence it can be seen that among students who studied *Basic Elementary* or among later students who heard their predecessors relate it for them, there arose some general appreciation of the decline of the absolutist or backward feudal system. I would like to honour King Rama V who had a more progressive heart than some very backward people. Even though this book appeared in his reign, he approved its use as a textbook to create a sentiment to help the king get rid of bureaucrats who were corrupt, who cunningly told him lies, and who acted more royalist than the king.

During the Sixth Reign there was a call for change in the absolute monarchy in many newspapers and magazines. Several English-language newspapers in Siam displayed a daring vision. These papers are probably difficult to find now. But anyone really interested should be able to find some. This vision helped some Siamese become a little more aroused to the point where some people thought of seizing power by force—the so-called Ro. So. 130 group.

Later there were many newspapers which, although under the absolute monarchy, dared to risk jail by writing articles calling for change in the absolute monarchy. Some papers were closed down, and several editors jailed. But still people put out many little papers and magazines.

When I came back to Thailand in 1927 after being in France almost seven years, the youth of that time who had never been to see democracy overseas were nevertheless aroused to change the absolute monarchy. This shows that those who did not live in the feudal style had developed a consciousness that this system was not suitable as a result of their own experience and the influence of the progressive journalists of that time who called for change from the feudal system to constitutional monarchy. Hence my little group returning from Europe did not have much difficulty in

inviting those aroused in Siam to be members of the People's Party because they had the basic want already. The fact we invited only just over a hundred people as type-1 members was because that was enough to create the vanguard of the people and because of the need to maintain confidence within a limited circle. But when we had seized power on 24 June, we received support from huge numbers of people. Some came in person to offer congratulations at the Ananta Samakhom throne hall where the command headquarters of the People's Party was established. Others sent letters and telegrams. As further evidence, when the party deputed Thawi Bunyaket to accept applications from people wanting to join the People's Party at Suan Saranrom, there were so many applicants that the membership cards we had prepared ran out and people fought over them.

Hence we maintain we were the "People's Party" because we acted according to the needs of the people, not the wishes of the reactionaries.

Many decades passed from the time the demand to change the absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy appeared in the various documents mentioned above, until 1932. It is normal that the law of social science, which I described in *The Impermanence of Society*, must apply. Let me insert an extract here [p. 75]:

By natural law, the form (the political system) must be in line with the substance (the economic system). If the form of society changes slower than the material basis of society for too long a time, nature will force the form to fall into line with the substance. Hence, when this does not happen by evolution, it must happen by revolution. For instance, the change in the system of government on 24 June 1932 had to be this way because the form of society changed slower than the material basis of society. The change in the absolute monarchy in France at the end of the eighteenth century had to take place through revolution because the feudal form refused to change by evolution to fall into line with the material basis which had progressed much farther.

III

Some people understand wrongly that the founders of the People's Party in Paris were dissatisfied with the Siamese ambassador of the time over the inadequate payment of monthly allowances, and hence thought of changing the absolute monarchy. This misunderstanding has spread more widely since Nai Khuang Aphaiwong, who became a member of the People's Party only three months before the day of the revolution and who hence does not know what truly motivated the founders and who has had a social vision from

before that time, spoke at the teacher's council (*khurusapha*) on 23 November 1963 to distance himself from any responsibility for the People's Party. He made many incorrect statements to show that he had a large personal income and belonged to the class of the feudal nobility and bourgeoisie, and hence was different from other students who joined together to fight for justice at that time, especially myself and Lieutenant Plaek whose monthly salaries were not enough. The file of information which shows who received what salary—whether son of a millionaire or not—and how the Siamese ambassador was equally strict with everyone, is probably still there at the Thai embassy in Paris, as I will explain at a more suitable opportunity in the future.

Here let me state that I and the six friends who founded the People's Party in February 1927 already had the idea that the absolute monarchy must be changed. The social vision to change the absolute monarchy had arisen because of the laws and facts I have noted above. But at another level, each of us had different ideas about the need to develop society, and about the principles and methods of social development. After we had the power of the state, these differences led to conflict among us.

In particular, in Siam there were some young people who had already decided together to be serious about changing the absolute monarchy. They joined the People's Party after I and friends who founded the party in Paris returned to Siam. As for me and the friends who had been in Paris, we had been talking together for many years earlier. People of that time who are still alive today, including some royal family members who uphold the Buddhist saying "truth never dies", could probably relate how great was the demand for a change in the absolute monarchy around 1925 at the end of the Sixth Reign. When Lieutenant Prayun Phamonmontri, who had been the commander of the royal bodyguard and a royal page close to King Rama VI, came to Paris and met me in 1925, he talked about the decline of the absolute monarchy and the demand of the people in Siam for a change in the system. Hence in 1925 itself, after I had talked with Lieutenant Prayun several times, I invited him to take a walk on *Henri Martin* street, and remarked that I had heard that the people who wanted to change the absolute monarchy were already many in number, but there was nobody who had decided to do anything committed. Thus we had to go beyond mere talk. We had to start small and grow big by gradually inviting friends who we could rely on to join in the first unit. Hence subsequently we invited other friends including Lieutenant Plaek and Second Lieutenant Thasanai, who moved from their old lodging to the same as mine in the *Quartier-Latin*, and we talked together almost every day.

We laid plans to stimulate the idea among friends and students in general that the absolute monarchy must be changed. The best opportunity was

during the 1925 annual meeting of the S.I.A.M. [Association Siamoise d'Intellectualité et d'Assistance Mutuelle] of which I was then the head. The society had organized for Thai friends to assemble at a big mansion which the society hired for fifteen days in the district of Chatrettes. We organized almost every kind of sport including target shooting so that we had grounds for practising using weapons. In the evenings we had lectures about international and domestic affairs, debates on educational topics, meaningful drama performances such as "Lo-le-buri" [Wobble-ville] by King Rama VI about the disintegration of the courts and judges in the imaginary city of "Lo-le", and some music and singing but no dancing to arouse sensual desires. This gathering in the summer of 1925 resulted in the creation of close friendships among the Thai student friends who attended, to the point that at the end of the fifteen days several people regretted that the group had to split up. So I and the founding friends named earlier consulted together and agreed that at the next annual meeting in July 1926 we should develop the consciousness of our student friends to a higher level to challenge the ambassador who was the overseas representative of the absolute monarchy. But we would challenge in a way which custom and tradition allowed, that is by petitioning King Prajadhipok who had just ascended the throne in succession to King Rama VI. And we would take as our basis the dissatisfaction shared by most of the students because the ambassador paid too little allowance money, even though each person had an adequate budget which either the government or their family had entrusted to the ambassador. In line with the law of social science on the development of consciousness, we used economics as the basis to develop a consciousness of politics.

The king rightly judged that I must accept responsibility for subverting the student association to become like a labour union, a *syndicate*. In France at that time the workers' movement was active but the ideology of *syndicalism* came later. May I print here the king's ruling as it appeared in a telegram from Phraongchao Traithot (Krommun Thewawongwarothai), the foreign minister, to the Siamese ambassador in Paris, together with the permission for me to study further up to doctorate.

[In English] Copy No 14080 (Received 22nd October 1926)

His Majesty, having examined all the documents submitted concerning Prince Charoon's dispute with the S.I.A.M. and students' petition, has come to the conclusion that the Students' Society has deviated from the purposes for which it was formed. The object of the Society should be entirely social among students under the care of the Paris Legation. It seems that the Society has now become a sort of Syndicate of students, in

which the students meet to discuss the actions of the Minister and to form resolutions and take actions contrary to the wishes of the Minister. The students have discussed and condemned the manner in which the Minister has been paying out their allowances, they have sent representatives to England well knowing that it was against the wishes of the Minister. They have shown themselves to be thoroughly hostile to the Minister and the actions of the President of the society has been on the verge of insolence. Such a state of affair cannot be tolerated for if students are allowed to form themselves into a syndicate hostile to the Minister in this way, no Minister can possibly accept the responsibility of looking after the students' welfare in the future. His Majesty, therefore, orders that the S.I.A.M. in its present form should be dissolved. If it is still desired to form some Society that will afford the Students some social intercourse among themselves, new statutes must be framed in which the Students will be allowed to have free hand as to social arrangements but otherwise must be under the strict control of the Legation. Moreover junior students of the Preparatory and Public School class should not be full members and have votes. They can join the holiday camp under the special person or persons chosen by the Minister. They should live as much as possible apart from the elder students while joining in some of the sports and entertainments. His Majesty considers that Nai Pridi Panomyong must be held chiefly responsible for the Society's deviation from its original purpose and for inciting a feeling of indiscipline and mistrust of the Minister among the students, His Majesty, therefore, commands that Nai Pridi Panomyong be immediately recalled.

As to the second part of the students petition asking for their allowance to be paid in pounds instead of francs, His Majesty is willing to consider the matter after having received explanations from the Minister. If it has not already been done so, a copy of the petition should be supplied to Prince Charoon and Prince Charoon is requested to submit explanations with reference to the said petition concerning allowances.

His Majesty deeply regrets to learn of disciplinary feelings among students and wishes to call them to their sense of duty.

Sd/TRAIDOS

Div.A / Copy of telegram from H.H. the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Sect. 1 / Bangkok to H.H. the Siamese Minister in Paris. Despatched from No 3007/ Bangkok on the 25th November 1926. Received in Paris on the next day.

SIAMADUTO
BANGKOK

With regard to the question of recalling Pridi Panomyong as contained in my letter of 178, 27th October, I am now commanded by H.M. the King to communicate to Pridi the following message. BEGINS. With reference to your recall, your father has now petitioned His Majesty that it may be postponed until you have passed examination the degree of Doctor of Law which will take place shortly. His Majesty has been most graciously pleased to grant that petition on condition that, however, you tender to the Siamese Minister in Paris (a) written apologies and the expression of regrets for your attitude in connection with the recent unfortunate incidents. END.

Please take note of the content of the above communication and act accordingly.

Sd/ TRAIIDOS

IV

Those who have studied the natural law of conflict, under which positive and negative, new and old fight one another, and who apply this natural law to human society, will understand that within human society new and positive forces clash with old and negative forces. Hence the People's Party which made the revolution on 24 June to change the absolute monarchy into constitutional monarchy had to face a negative side, or various reactionary elements, which opposed the people making the revolution. These can be classified into several types, for example:

1. Some of those who lost benefit from the change in the system were not resigned to the law of impermanence, and tried to revive the old system in some form. This is common and in conformity with the law of conflict. The exceptions were those who were resigned to the law of impermanence, among whom may I honour King Prajadhipok, who ceded more royal power than others, and also many princes and nobles of the Chakri dynasty who followed the example of the king in pardoning the People's Party.

2. Others who did not lose any benefit from the change of system yet embraced the old order with both body and soul as I described above. Even though these people were born and lived in the new era, they were not of the new generation. That is, they belonged to the new generation, but in soul and vision which were the leading principles in how they conducted their

lives, they belonged to the old order. This group used their external physical power, which was more robust than that of the past generation who were then old, to oppose the revolution more violently than did the old generation of the old order who lost benefit from the change in system. This group's opposition to the revolution had many aspects including being more royalist than the king (*ultra-royalist*).

3. *Social scum* (*sawa sangkhom*) are the *rotten mass* (*set somom*) which the old society discarded but which left remnants in the new society. Social theorists of the right wing and the left have the same view that social scum are a dangerous class which neither wing wants to associate with its movement because social scum are egoist and show the *self-conceit* that they are more important than others. At the end of the great French Revolution there were people who, it was said, were such social scum that they could even sell their own fathers to further their own interests. Napoleon I took what was being said at the time about social scum and applied it to Talleyrand, a vacillator who changed his view back and forth according to his own benefit, as follows: "Monsieur could even sell his own father".

V

Some people tell falsehoods to many of the present generation to make them lose their beliefs and fall into doubt. For instance, consider the false charge that the People's Party knew that King Prajadhipok would grant a constitution but forestalled him by making the revolution of 24 June.

Before the Second World War, Nai Chai Ruangsins, *po mo* [*pathamaphon mongkutthai*, royal decoration] and Thai barrister who was an official in the Education Ministry came to ask me whether it was true, as he had heard from someone who had been a minister before 24 June, that King Prajadhipok had already drafted a constitution, and that the People's Party knew about it but forestalled him by acting first. I explained to him as I had stated in parliament on 9 May 1946 as follows:

The People's Party came to know six days after the change in government, that is on 30 June. Phraya Phahon Phonphayuhasena, Phraya Pricha Chonlayut, Phraya Manopakorn Nitithada, Phraya Siwisanwacha, and myself were summoned to attend in audience on the king. Chaophraya Mahithon, who was the royal secretary, took down the record. The king said that he had wished to grant a constitution, but when he consulted high-ranking officials of the time, they disagreed. Finally when he returned from a visit to America he asked someone who attended in audience on

that day to consider the issue. That person offered his opinion that it was not yet time, and the advisors agreed. The People's Party had no foreknowledge of the royal wish and performed the change honestly, not to forestall, as some people have pretended, twisting the truth. The complete truth appears in the record of the meeting on that day. The fact is that King Prajadhipok had a prior wish but there were people who advised against it. Hence when the People's Party asked the king to grant a constitution, the king was pleased to make this gracious gift to the Thai people. I would like all present and the Thai people as a whole to remember the king's graciousness and to have high esteem for His Majesty at all times.

I can remember the impressive scene of that audience. The king had tears in his eyes when he pointed his finger at Phraya Siwisan, who joined the audience on that day, and said: "Siwisan, I sent a matter for you to consider, and you wrote a memo that it was not yet time. You also sent the memo of Stevens (an American adviser on foreign affairs) which agreed with you."

After I came to Paris in 1970 some people of the new generation came to ask me the truth about what they had heard. People who lost benefit because of the People's Party informed some of the new generation that the People's Party changed the system of government because they knew that King Prajadhipok would grant a constitution and wanted to forestall him. Some people of the new generation with the vision of the old order believed this and spread the information more widely during the time I had to escape from Siam. Some still believe this to the present day.

I thus explained the truth as above. For the sake of historical accuracy, please take the opportunity to consult a copy of the memos of Phraya Sriwisan and Mr Stevens, the American adviser, and the statement of King Prajadhipok. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the government organization which took over the affairs of the royal secretary and the Ministry of the Privy Seal ought to have kept these documents. But if these memos and the royal statement have disappeared, then please use the Buddhist wisdom that used to be inscribed on the certificates for primary and elementary school: *su ci pu li*, which is a guide to becoming a scholar or intellectual. Once you have heard (*su*) anything, use your brain to consider (*ci*) carefully whether it can be so according to reason, then ask (*pu*) to make certain, and finally write (*li*). Many of the young generation of earlier times can probably remember the verse that secondary teachers in many schools taught them to memorize:

su hear whatever in the world
ci consider intently and searchingly

pu ask questions to find hidden truth
li write down to prevent forgetfulness

I'm happy for people to come and ask me rather than listening to or enquiring from the opponents of the People's Party. I have advised that if it is impossible to get copies of those memos and royal statement from the aforementioned places, please think how those in the People's Party could have known the royal intention—beginning with Phraya Phahon who was the party head.

Before 24 June, Phraya Phahon was an assistant inspector of the army, and assistant aide-de-camp who had the duty to guard the king at certain times according to a rota. He was not a permanent royal aide-de-camp. Please consider whether a temporary royal aide-de-camp has the duty to attend the king and hear high-level political matters. You will find there was no way Phraya Phahon could have known the royal wish to grant a constitution. As for other members of the People's Party in the army and navy, their positions gave them even less chance to know the royal wish. As for those who were civilians, several were farmers and workers. Among those who were bureaucrats and who had posts higher than ordinary civilians, I was one who had the regular post of assistant secretary in the law-drafting department, and who taught at the law school of the Justice Ministry for two or four hours a week. How could I and other civilian members of the People's Party know the royal wish? If you claim that the post of assistant secretary of the law-drafting department provided a way, I must ask whether King Prajadhipok sent his draft constitution for the law-drafting department to scrutinize. I and all my friends in the law-drafting department can confirm that the law-drafting department never received a draft constitution to scrutinize. Nevertheless, according to bureaucratic practice there is a ledger to register the receipt and despatch of all documents. Please let those interested look at this ledger belonging to the royal secretary and the Royal Secretariat. You will not find a draft constitution by the king sent to the law-drafting department to scrutinize. With all these facts, those interested should write (*li*) the truth, instead of just listening (*su*) and writing the distorted truth which someone tells them. The king's wish to grant a constitution was known only to those people whom the king entrusted to know, including Phraya Phahon and myself six days after 24 June, and the king's ministers who would not talk to outsiders about a secret government matter. Any minister who agreed with King Prajadhipok should have supported his wish in the ministers' meeting. To sit quiet would make it seem as if the king stood alone on this measure and was opposed by his ministers.

I would like to thank the students who came to ask me, and who told me

they thought those in the People's Party were not so confused that they knew in advance that the king would grant a constitution but still risked their lives on 24 June.

I advised those who came to ask me, to think according to the method of the Buddha. To know something clearly you must use "critical method", which is the same method that Greek philosophers taught. That is, intellectuals should not just accept anything passed on from a teacher or other person. They must be able to categorize and analyse down to the details. For instance, when you want to be knowledgeable about fish, it is not enough to know that all aquatic animals which have gills and can swim belong to the one category of fish. You must know that this aquatic animal is a snake-head fish (*pla chon*) or an anabas (*pla mo*) or whatever. By the same token, when you hear that King Prajadhipok would grant a constitution, you should enquire from the informant what type of constitution the king would grant.

On 30 June 1932, the day Phraya Phahon and I had an audience with the king along with Phraya Mano, Phraya Siwisan, and Phraya Prichachonlayut, the king informed us of his desire to grant a constitution in stages. At the first stage, ministers would hold meetings without the king as chairman, but with the minister of the privy seal instead. This was Chaophraya Mahithon who had changed from royal secretary to this position. As for parliament, the king would adapt the Privy Council, which he had set up on a trial basis earlier, to have the position of a parliament. I think that the new generation who have an interest in the history of the Thai parliamentary system should research the truth about both the law and practice of the Privy Council. They should explain to students the full truth about what issues this Council met over, and what result came from the meetings. Documents on this would be better sources than listening to an informant whose knowledge is incomplete. As far as I can recall, document sources reporting the meetings of this Council should exist at some organization under the Prime Minister's Office which took over the affairs of His Majesty's principal private secretary and the Ministry of the Privy Seal.

On that day King Prajadhipok announced only the general principle about the essence of his constitution as far as I can remember. If any minister attests he knows more detail than this, let those interested ask him whether in King Prajadhipok's draft constitution the members of parliament would be appointed, elected, or both types; and whether the cabinet must have the confidence of the parliament or not. If anyone knows these details from a minister and approves of King Prajadhipok's draft constitution, then he should propose to the "Revolutionary Party" [i.e. Thanom and Praphat], which is now studying the announcement of a constitution, to take it as a model for drawing up the new constitution.

VI

Some people who used to be King Prajadhipok's junior pages, and some who received information which junior pages relayed incorrectly without completely knowing the real views of the king, tried to revive and expand the issue of conflict between King Prajadhipok and the People's Party, to show themselves as more royalist than the king. The new generation who want the real truth, instead of just listening to some junior pages, should ask for an opportunity to consult Queen Rambhai Barni [wife of Prajadhipok], and some royal family members who were close to the king after he abdicated, to find out what was the king's outlook towards the People's Party and those in the People's Party.

I and many friends in the People's Party have followed the advice which King Prajadhipok delivered in the ceremony to ask for royal amnesty, as follows:

I am very happy that you thought to come yourselves and make an apology today, which I did not request at all. That you have done so gives you great honour, as you have all shown you have truth in your hearts, and are people who are honest and courageous. That is, when you felt you had done something which was somewhat excessive and mistaken, you accepted the fault fully and openly. This is a difficult thing to do, and truly requires courage. That you have made this ceremony today shows clearly that whatever you did, you did for the true benefit of the country. You have shown that you are people with sympathy and bravery. You dared to accept responsibility when you felt you had made mistakes. This will make the people have even more trust in you. This makes me feel very pleased.

I and many friends in the People's Party were conscious of the mistakes which caused King Prajadhipok to abdicate the throne. We accepted the situation and tried to correct the mistakes. For instance, after the Second World War had begun in Europe and before the death of King Prajadhipok, the king sent a letter to the government with the wish to return and live in Trang with the rank and status of a prince which the king had reserved at abdication. The government was considering this wish but before a reply could be made, the king passed away. It was a disappointment to me and many friends in the People's Party. Junior pages who did not accompany the king to England had no knowledge of this. I remember that the letter was in the king's own hand to Field Marshal Phibun who read it in the cabinet meeting.

When the war was over, I re-established the status of king of Thailand in

full, as appears in the note from M.C. Suphasawat Sawatdiwat and the communication from Queen Rambhai Barni as follows [facsimile of handwritten letter]:

Bridge House
Trumps Green Road
Virginia Water
Wentworth 2185
20 March 1946

Dear Khun Luang [Pridi],

All of us have arrived safely in England. The English arranged a grand welcome, including the British Foreign Ministry and Defence Ministry organising a reception in our honour. They *make speech* explaining how clever we were . . . thanking us enormously. I made a *speech* in reply telling them that we thanked them for helping us to have the chance to save our face, and I stated that especially our group would probably not have done as we did. What we achieved was largely because the resistance group in Thailand set a standard of acting bravely without any fear of danger at all. All of the English thanked the resistance group in Thailand with great sympathy and sincerity. The welcome on this occasion was not done just because they had to. Everyone who spoke really *appreciate* us. I explained to everyone about the decisive actions of our resistance group including Khun Luang . . .

All of us from the queen [Rambhai Barni] down are well. The queen thanks you and Khun Phoonsuk very much for sending the offerings (*khruang sakkara*) for the royal ashes. And she was very pleased that you have helped to re-establish the honour of King Prajadhipok as king of our country in full, including your resolve to try to *justify action* of him also. This means all of us have *appreciation* for you as I *appreciate* everyone. The queen was greatly amused to know that now she herself has the surname of Banomyong. Another thing which you said, that really you yourself are Sawatdiwat too, pleased her a lot, and she said she agreed to accept you as Sawatdiwat! I hope you will come over here soon so we will meet again. I don't need to say how much I miss you because the love and respect which I have for you *has no bound*. As to how much I miss you it is very low language to explain the real feeling I have.

With much respect and regards,
Chin

So fair-minded people should see that anyone who claims to honour King Prajadhipok but who makes the mistake of believing the publicity by some junior pages, does not study the matter in full, and does not have enough sympathy and courage to be sensible—such people appear to be using King Prajadhipok as a tool to criticize the People's Party for reactionary purposes, in the manner of those who act as more royalist than the king.

About King Prajadhipok's abdication, the king explained in the documents of abdication how he had some disagreements with the government of the time. The government tried to explain matters to the king and thus appointed Chaophraya Sithammathibet, who was a minister in that government and who had previously been a minister of the king, to be the government's representative at an audience with the king. But the king decided to abdicate.

People have analysed that King Prajadhipok should not have abdicated because he did not have to accept the responsibility for putting his signature to matters which the government proposed. I reply to these critics that the government of the time was very disappointed that King Prajadhipok abdicated. But if we look at it from his side, we should respect his wish to preserve the dignity of the monarchy. When he saw that the government of the time was acting against his wish, he decided to give up his personal comfort by abdicating rather than having to sign approving matters against his integrity. For this the Thai people should respect, honour, and uphold the utmost dignity of King Prajadhipok for ever.

VII

Many people still misunderstand the democratic system in Thailand established by the revolution of 24 June 1932 and maintained until today. Let me explain that the word "*prachathipatai*" means "government by the people" which is the same as the English word *democracy*. President Lincoln analysed the word thoroughly as: "*The government of the people, by the people, for the people*".

The intentions and actions of the People's Party followed this ideal, as is shown by the provisional constitution of Siam of 27 June 1932 and the constitution of 10 December 1932. But at a turning point when an old system which had existed since ancient times was being changed towards a system of full democracy, there was initially a need for some temporary provision of semi-democracy.

After the Second World War, the People's Party delivered on its promise to the people to provide full democratic rights. The MPs of type 2, who were mostly members of the People's Party, joined with the elected MPs of

type 1 to draft a constitution with full democracy, which King Ananda Mahidol signed and promulgated as the constitution of the kingdom of Thailand on 9 May 1946 in place of the charter of 10 December 1932.

The constitution of 9 May 1946 gave the Thai people the most complete democratic rights. Clause 13 gave complete freedom of religion or faith. Clause 14 gave complete freedom of person, dwelling, property, speech, writing, printing, publicity, education, public assembly, association, political parties, occupation—with the qualification that these freedoms were circumscribed by law. But law did not infringe democratic right as it was designed to create peace, order, and morality for the people. Hence newspapers became widely distributed, and parties could be widely founded with no limitation on a party's political ideology.

The parliament consisted of the Senate and Assembly, both of whose members were elected, not appointed. For members of the Assembly, election was direct and secret. Election for members of the Senate was indirect and secret—by the principle popular everywhere known as two-stage election. At the first stage, the people elect representatives (who may be members of the Assembly), and these representatives of the people pass motions to elect senators at the next stage.

Later, on 8 November 1947, a coup abrogated the full democracy established by the constitution of 9 May 1946. The coup group established a new political system by the constitution of 9 November 1947 known as the under-the-water-jar constitution because those who made the coup announced that they kept the draft constitution hidden under a water jar. According to the system of this coup group, the parliament consisted of a Senate and Assembly. Members of the Senate were selected by the king. The number was the same as the Assembly. But in practice it was laid down that any royal command concerned with administration of the kingdom must be countersigned by a minister. Hence the government of the coup group itself appointed the senators. The king merely applied his signature to the government's proposal. As for members of the Assembly, although they were elected by the people, the new system laid down that the minimum age for electoral candidates was thirty-five years. This differed from the constitution of 9 May 1946 which specified twenty-three years in the electoral law in order to give opportunity for many of the younger generation to stand and be elected. As for freedom in founding political parties, the under-the-water-jar constitution cut this out. There were many other provisions including revival of the system of the Supreme Council of State from the absolutist period [abolished in 1932]. Hence it can be seen that the system which arose from the coup of 8 November 1947 was different from the democratic system of the People's Party, even though in the coup group there were people who had previously belonged to the People's Party, but who had disasso-

ciated themselves from the People's Party and joined with people who had the political vision of this coup group. Hence the duty of the People's Party, laid down in the party's objectives, to be responsible to the people was rejected by the coup group both in law and practice. From that time on, nothing could be achieved according to the objectives of the People's Party. From then on, the responsibility for the conduct of public affairs fell to the coup group and subsequent governments which succeeded to the coup group.

Some people have asked me why the Thai democratic system has had such ups-and-downs in the latter period. In particular, they relate this back to the People's Party. I explained that although there were conflicts inside the People's Party at times, ultimately the People's Party as a whole cooperated with the MPs elected by the people to establish a full democratic system by the constitution of 9 May 1946. The fact that after 8 November 1947 there was a system of constitutional government under which the constitution was amended ten times, was not the work of the People's Party. So please let those who are fair-minded distinguish the outcome of the People's Party from that of the coup group and its successors, and from that of the "Revolutionary Party" which openly referred to the system through which it governed Thailand as dictatorship. People should not misunderstand this as democracy.

Some people have broadcast that the constitution of 23 March 1949 was the most democratic of all constitutions. Maybe they are comparing this constitution with the various constitutions written after the coup of 8 November 1947.

The new generation interested in Thailand's constitutional system should compare all the constitutions in full detail to see which is the most democratic according to the meaning of the word "democracy".

The constitution of 9 May 1946 laid down the minimum age for candidates for election to the Senate as thirty-five years and for the Assembly as twenty-three years. But the constitution of 23 March 1949 laid down the minimum age for senators as forty years and for MPs as thirty years. No constitution in the world sets the minimum age for MPs so high. This amounted to reducing the rights of the new generation, as many people aged under thirty had been elected MPs under the constitution of 9 May 1946. The new generation of that time saw that the constitution of 23 March 1949 was not democratic because it gave rights to those older than themselves. Many of the new generation knew that constitutional monarchy holds that "the king can do no wrong", because the king does nothing of his own accord but merely affixes his signature to approve whatever the government proposes. The real perpetrators were those who countersigned the royal command and their group. If any king actually did anything of his own accord,

he would have to be responsible. The current British constitution and the Thai constitutions which the People's Party requested from the king, did not intend that the king be responsible for his official actions. But the constitution of 23 March 1949 was written in such a way that readers misunderstand that the king chose and appointed the senators by himself. But there was a rider that the chairman of the Privy Council must countersign the royal command. It sounded as if the king selected and appointed senators of his own accord, but the chairman of the Privy Council agreed to be responsible for the king's action. The new generation of the time could interpret this as a political ploy, because they could see that in practice when the constitution was announced, King Bhumibol Adulyadej was still a minor and the Privy Council performed the king's regnal duties on his behalf. Thus in practice, the Privy Council itself selected and appointed the senators. Granting this power to the Privy Council may be connected to the idea, put around by certain people, that King Prajadhipok had allowed members of the Privy Council to debate issues along the lines of parliamentary debate as the first stage in granting a constitution. Giving the chairman of the Privy Council the right to countersign the royal signature for selecting and appointing senators was an innovation in the world of constitutional monarchy. But whether it is a form which is more democratic than any which exist in that world, those who study constitutional systems comprehensively will have to decide.

24 June 1972