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INSURGENCY IN NORTHEASTERN THAILAND
(RESEARCH AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Overview	1
Scope	1
Objectives	1
Method of Development	1
BODY	1
Geography	1
Cultural, Social, and Economic Considerations	1
Historical Sequence of Events	3
ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM	9
Conditions Fostering the Insurgency	9
Conditions Detrimental to the Insurgency	10
EFFECTS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	10
BIBLIOGRAPHY	12

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Overview. In late 1965, the foreign minister of Communist China, Chen Yi, stated that his government was attempting to foster a guerrilla war in Thailand. Although this statement was made at a party, rather than in an official statement, it was directed to an ambassador and must be considered to have been made after some thought and not merely in passing. Since 1965, an insurgency manifested by guerrilla activity has been supported by Red China in an open effort to topple the established Bangkok government (8:3-4).

B. Scope. The insurgency in Thailand is being waged on several "fronts," each varying in target audience ethnic origin, terrain, climate, etc. The nature of the insurgency varies greatly from the northeastern provinces to the capital city to the southern border with Malaysia. As the northeastern provinces are widely considered the most seriously threatened, I shall direct my study to that region.

C. Objectives. I shall examine the background and development of the insurgency in order to determine the degree and nature of the current threat to the established Thai government. I shall attempt to determine what actions might be taken to defeat the insurgency.

D. Method of Development. I shall initially itemize geographic, cultural, social, and economic aspects of northeastern Thailand which may be related to a study of this type. I shall then relate the historical development of the insurgency in chronological order of events.

II. BODY

A. Geography. Thailand's strategic location is immediately appreciated upon studying a map of Southeast Asia. It is the hub or center of the region and shares common borders with Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia. The southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan is only 81 miles away from Thailand; separated only by a narrow strip of Burma and Laos. Thailand's borders offer little or no obstacle to would-be infiltrators. Hill tribes have moved freely across borders between Thailand, Laos, and Burma for centuries and continue to do so. The Mekong River, which serves as the border between Thailand and Laos for a considerable distance, is navigable and traversable in most places. The proximity of Thailand to Vietnam is noteworthy. Most of Thailand's 200,000 square miles are fertile, especially the Chao Phraya River valley. Thailand is relatively rich in farm lands, rubber, teak and other timber, and tin. There is a lack of minerals in the country. The northeast is the poorest section, possessing poor soil, inadequate rainfall, and no river connection to the Chao Phraya River basin (Bangkok area). The Petchabun Mountain range which separates northeastern Thailand from the rest of Thailand and the Phu Pan Mountain range which runs from near Mukdahan, Sakhon Nakhon Province, to Nakhon Phanom Province provide excellent base areas in which guerrillas may establish camps and training/logistical areas (1:40; 2:1-9; 4:157-159; 8:34-36).

B. Cultural, Social, and Economic Considerations.

1. Approximately 85% of Thailand's population may be considered

as an ethnic, cultural, and religious entity called "Greater Thai." Of this group, 60% are "Central" Thai, "Northern" Thai, and "Korat" Thai who are considered the educated cultural elite. The remaining 40% of the "Greater Thai" belong to the people known as "Thai-Lao." The "Thai-Lao" are approximately 25% of the total population of Thailand. They have a slightly variant language and script from the "King's Thai" used by their three sister groups. The "Thai-Lao" are concentrated in the northeast and have a noticeably lower standard of living than the rest of the Thai people. Figures cited in 1970 showed the annual per capita income of the eleven million inhabitants of the northeast to be approximately \$60.00 (virtually no increase since 1961) as opposed to \$180.00 per capita for the rest of Thailand (a 6% increase over 1961). Dietary conditions, health, education, sanitation, and welfare services are poorer in the northeast than anywhere else in the country. Factors contributing to the traditional depression of the area fall basically into two categories. First, the northeast consists of the Korat Plateau and lands along the western bank of the Mekong River, most of which is desolate, sandy or mountainous, and resource poor. Secondly, the Bangkok government virtually ignored the northeast for years, considering the inhabitants as social and cultural inferiors. All government social and administrative services were inferior to those elsewhere in Thailand. Government officials who lost favor with Bangkok were transferred to the northeast and ignored. The outbreak of an insurgency actually helped the people of the northeast in that the government was forced to take an interest in them as an obviously ripe target audience and to initiate programs in their behalf. In 1964 the government initiated the Accelerated Rural Development Program, which was mainly oriented to the northeast. By 1968, approximately one-fifth of the national budget of one billion dollars was allocated to government services for the northeast. Hopefully the government has realized the need for and will continue extensive cultural, economical, social, psychological, and political programs in the northeast in order to win the loyalty of the inhabitants rather than allowing such a fertile bed for revolution to exist (4:157-159; 8:41, 46, 65-67, 77).

2. A vast majority of the Thai populace earns its living by agricultural pursuits. The majority of families own and operate their own small farms and supplement their income by fishing or working in timber production. A slow-paced, traditional way of life prevails. Very deep beliefs in and sincere efforts to comply with the tenants of Buddhism, the national religion are striking features of the Thai character. Their religion and simple rural life style imparts a calmness and kindness which sets them apart from most other peoples of the world. The rural portion of the Thai society is relatively classless. The smaller urban portion of the Thai populace is reasonably well educated. Upward social movement within urban society, which is stratified to some degree, can be achieved through personal study and work or through family or social influence. The Thai people, as a whole, prefer action as individuals on matters of interest rather than forming interest groups. Their experience and religion teaches them that improvement in living and social condition is a result of work and merit. Acceptance of authority may be traced to the belief that high position and power are the result of ethical behavior. There are no significant social or economic groups who are sufficiently disaffected with the present government to spark a genuine revolution. Thailand enjoys a relatively high standard of living compared to other Asian countries due to its abundance of farming land and the relative sparsity of its population (2:22; 8:38-40, 42, 73, 77, 95).

3. Thailand had a history from the 7th century through 1932 of an absolute king who was both chief of state and supreme commander of the armed forces. The king was both a temporal and spiritual leader, being attributed with semi-divinity as a future Buddha. Under these absolute monarchs, modernization was accomplished by "borrowing" from other civilizations. A civil service program, citizenship, modern transportation and communications systems, and compulsory education were instituted. Since a coup d'etat in 1932, the king's prerogatives have been greatly limited; however, he still serves as a unifying national symbol. Both a father-figure and a spiritual and social ideal, the king is revered by Thais of all socio-economic levels. Subsequent to the 1932 coup, Thailand's tradition of authoritarian but relatively benevolent governments has continued. Modernization continues, principally achieved by patterning government actions on successful models from other countries. Changes usually result from external political and/or military pressure. Thailand's very existence as a nation has depended upon its ability to adapt to changing pressure forces and the nation has been amazingly successful in dealing with these forces in the past. So long as the government has retained its benevolent nature, the Thai populace has exhibited a marked acceptance of authority and the hierarchy, an apathy toward politics despite recent lack of means of popular participation (from 1932 through 1958 in eight general elections, no more than 40% of the eligible electors voted), and a historic lack of popular revolt against the established government regardless of how that government came to power (8:21, 28-31, 73, 90, 95).

4. There are in excess of 50,000 Vietnamese refugees living along the Mekong River in northeastern Thailand. These refugees fled North Vietnam during the fighting between the Vietminh and the Japanese and later the French. Most were fiercely loyal to Ho Chi Minh and even now support North Vietnam with money and recruits for the North Vietnamese Army (4:113).

5. Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia which escaped colonialism during the 16th through 19th century when England and France followed their merchants and missionaries into the area with efficient imperialism. Thailand has enjoyed over 700 years of independence, is fiercely proud of this history, and is most anxious to continue their independence (4:9, 8:4).

C. Historical Sequence of Events.

1. Thailand and Vietnam have warred for control of the Mekong River and the territory now encompassed by Laos and Cambodia for centuries. These two dominant states, under various dynasties and governments, have long been natural opponents for power on the Southeast Asian peninsula. After France had colonized Vietnam, Thailand was forced, through diplomatic and military means, to formally sign over portions of Laos and Cambodia to France in 1904 and 1907 based on "the incontestable rights of Annam (4:5)."

2. In 1778, a Siamese Army was victorious over the armed forces of Vientienne, Laos. The ruler of Vientienne had previously been paying tribute to the Vietnamese and now was forced to pay tribute also to the Siamese. The Prince of Vientienne attacked Siam in 1829 in an effort to regain Lao independence. Siam was again victorious and, after sacking and burning Vientienne itself, deported thousands of Lao people to what is now northeastern Thailand. This relocation was made in an attempt to render the Laotians incapable of fomenting another uprising, block the most likely Vietnamese avenue of advance

into Siam, and increase the security of the then-expanding dynasty in Bangkok (4:8). This then was the origin of the Thai-Lao populace of northeastern Thailand.

3. Beginning in the reign of King Rama IV (1851-1867), Thai kings tempered all their actions in the belief that they should appear ethical, just actions, even though the kings were absolute monarchs in the strictest sense of the word. After the fashion of Western governments, the kings from Rama IV through Rama VII surrounded themselves with cabinets of advisors or counsellors. This elite formed a strong military-civil bureaucracy that grew weary of restrictions on their power and activities imposed by the absolutism of the monarchy. The Thai economy was experiencing some poor times and the king was forced to reduce government salaries and the number of authorized employees. The oligarchy of powerful commoners surrounding the throne staged a successful, bloodless, coup d' etat on 24 June 1932. The leaders of the coup declared an end to the absolute monarchy and limited the powers of the king. King Rama VII was petitioned to remain as constitutional monarch, continuing the Chakri dynasty which has ruled from 1782 to present. A provisional constitution was approved and proclaimed by King Rama VII and he convened a National Assembly, the members of which had been proposed by the leaders of the coup (8:108-109).

4. The first National Assembly in the history of Thailand proclaimed the 1st Permanent Constitution on 10 December 1932. Under the new constitution, the king had no independent authority. One half of the members of the National Assembly were to be appointed by the Cabinet (the coup leaders) until one half of the eligible voters had achieved four years of education or until ten years had elapsed, whichever event occurred first. Members of the Cabinet retained virtually all power and authority for themselves. The king was vocal in his beliefs that he should have some powers formalized in a constitutional revision, based on the fact that as the Assembly was not elected, he was the representative of the people. When it became evident his demands would continually be rejected, Rama VII abdicated and ten year-old Prince Ananda Mahidon was crowned King Rama VIII. The clique behind the coup, led by Field Marshal Phibun Songkhrum, had been completely successful in wresting all power from the monarchy, yet had retained the monarchy in order to lend legitimacy to their government. Since 1932 the king has possessed no real authority to make governmental decisions; although, his influence is not to be discounted. Changes in the Thai government have, without exception, resulted from coup d' etat made legitimate after the fact by royal proclamation. The crown has no choice as to who is appointed to the major governmental posts, but must appoint whomever the coup group specifies (8:108-109, 111-112).

5. The clique led by Phibun formed the government through World War II, during which Thailand avoided defeat and loss of independence by permitting the Japanese Army to travel through the country rather than resisting their operations militarily. Although Thailand was forced diplomatically to be an unwilling partner of the Japanese, the United States looked upon Thailand as an occupied ally and provided funds and aid to the "Free Thai" movement headed by Pridi Phanomyong, a leader of the 1932 coup and a friend of Phibun, the Prime Minister. During World War II, the Communist Party formed and trained guerrilla bands in the north and northeast of Thailand to combat the Japanese, much as they did with the Hukbalahaps in the Philippine Islands.

Following World War II, Phibun was deemed a liability by powerful figures due to his cooperation with the Japanese. A civilian clique with the cooperation of the military forced Phibun to resign in July 1944. Seni Pramoj, former ambassador to the United States of America, was initially installed as Prime Minister. However, in April 1946, Pridi, leader of the "Free Thai" movement in World War II and the real power behind forcing Phibun's resignation, installed himself as Prime Minister in order to bring into line dissident factions who were being counterproductive. In 1946, an anti-Communist Act which had been passed in 1933, was repealed, indicating a liberalism in politics following World War II. An additional factor in the passage of the bill legalizing Communism might be that Thailand was seeking an affirmative vote from the Soviet Union on the matter of Thailand entering the United Nations. Under the Pridi government, Thailand attempted to help end the French-Vietminh conflict, by trying to form a Southeast Asian Union to mediate the matter, in an attempt to calm things down in Southeast Asia and lend security to Thailand and neighboring countries. The French refused to participate because they felt they would be victorious militarily and gain more by doing so (6:137, 153; 8:9, 110).

6. In June, 1946, King Rama VIII (Ananda Mahidol) was shot to death in his bedchamber. No one has explained or discovered the circumstances around the death. The unexplained death caused such an aura of suspicion around Pridi that he resigned in August 1946. Pridi's followers continued to dominate the government until Phibun returned from his self-imposed exile in Paris to lead the Army in yet another successful coup. Phibun himself did not initially install himself as Prime Minister but waited until April 1948 to assume that position. Several coups were attempted and successfully thwarted by Phibun's military power group. Those behind the coup were hunted down and shot or incarcerated. Anti-communism furnished an excellent excuse for the new Phibun government to ferret out and suppress all opposition and secure their power. Pridi fled to Communist China, thus confirming earlier suspicions of his Communist inclination (4:138-139, 8:110).

7. During the period 1948 through 1950, the Phibun government watched events in neighboring countries with a keen interest. Although appreciating a desire for independence from colonialism on the part of nearby nations, the Thais were extremely suspicious of Communist aspirations in Southeast Asia. In 1949, the Communist Party in Thailand began a discernible transition from a legitimate political party in opposition to the established government into a decidedly insurgent force. The Chinese leaders of the party in Thailand had aspirations of imitating Mao Tse Tung's success in mainland China. The Red Chinese, following their homeland victory, were also beginning to sow the seeds of revolution throughout Southeast Asia. A major propaganda campaign directed by the Chinese toward Thailand used a theme of putting an end to the Thai government's oppression of the Chinese residents of Thailand. The Bangkok leaders began to have serious misgivings about permitting the party to exist as a legal entity and began gravitating more closely to the United States as is evident by the numerous military and economic agreements and statements of alliance announced circa 1950. As Communist subversive activities increased until 1952, the Thai military and police forces raided many Sino-Thai business firms and social associations, arresting hundreds of Chinese. The National Assembly banned the Communist Party and all Communist activity in late 1952. In January 1953, the

Communist Chinese announced creation of the Thai Autonomous People's Government in Yunnan Province, whose purpose was to lead ^{the} Thai people in resisting and defeating western imperialism in Thailand. Pridi resurfaced in 1954 to denounce the Phibun government, indicating a Chinese desire to establish a pro-China Communist government in Thailand with Pridi at its head. Also in 1954, Thailand joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) despite veiled threats made by Chou En-Lai, the Chinese Premier. The Communist Party in Thailand was forced underground after being outlawed. Thai Communists began travelling to China to visit Pridi in Yunnan Province and to plan tasks to support their attempts to replace the established government with his leftist "neutralist" government. An example of these travellers is Tep Chotinuchit who met with Pridi in 1955, was jailed for a time on his return to Thailand, and headed the socialist faction during the national elections of 1957 (4:138-139, 153-155, 176-177; 6:110-113; 8:4, 5, 9-10, 110).

8. The relationship between the throne and the Phibun government was one of mutual distrust and personal animosity. King Rama IX was Bhumibol Adulyadej, who succeeded his brother Ananda at the age of eighteen. Phibun's government greatly restricted the king's personal freedom of action and movement as well as all royal governmental activity and authority (4:139, 8:110).

9. Phibun became inflamed with a desire for Western-style democratic government in the mid-1950's and in 1955 he pressed for and obtained legislation authorizing organization of and activity by political parties. Twenty-five political factions engaged in an energetic struggle for power and representation. The February 1957 elections to the lower house were marked with so many charges and countercharges of corruption, graft, and dishonesty and so many personal threats that the armed forces were called out to control the elections. The leader of the armed forces was Minister of Defense Marshal Sarit Thanarat, a royalist. Marshal Sarit was aligned politically with King Rama IX and Nai Khuang of the National Assembly. A third major power figure, behind Phibun and Sarit, was the Deputy Director General of Police Phao Siyanon, who had totally committed himself to working in the elections for candidates of his bent, while Sarit watched impassively and Phibun attempted to play off the Sarit and Phao factions against each other. In September 1957, Sarit led a coup which resulted in Phibun and Phao fleeing Thailand, and Sarit's protege Army General Thanom Kittikachorn, being immediately proclaimed as Prime Minister. Rama IX confirmed Kittikachorn's position so quickly and enthusiastically that it is speculated that the king had full knowledge of the planned coup and failed to warn Phibun. Since establishment of the Sarit government, the royal family has been free to travel at will. The king's influence has increased, but is still not independently decisive. The Sarit regime viewed the regent and his family as a unifying national force, an internationally appealing symbol, and a legitimizing factor for their government. After seizing power, the Sarit government forced Communists and leftists out of the school system, and news media, and forbade trade with Communist China. The government made the thrust of their effort anti-Communist rather than anti-Chinese as had previously been the case. Loyal Chinese were encouraged by being able to conduct business normally again and supported Sarit; however, a small segment of the Sino-Thai populace continued to be the main bulwark of the Communist Party in Thailand. In 1958, Peking began arming and equipping insurgent forces that were forming in the northeast. (This smuggling of contraband military equipment into Thailand has been on the increase in recent months.) Peking-trained Sino-Thai specialists in propaganda and subversion went into

operation on a higher scale. In October 1958, Marshal Sarit dissolved the National Assembly and abrogated the Constitution, declaring a national emergency based on his beliefs that a leftist coup was a real threat to his government. Thailand entered into a period of a strong authoritarian government, benevolent enough to retain sufficient popular support or acquiescence to remain in power to date (4:139-141, 154; 8:110-111).

10. In the early 1960's, the insurgency in Thailand really began to develop. The Chinese continued their propaganda, subversion, and the recruiting and arming of guerrilla bands. Hanoi began serious efforts among the Vietnamese refugees in the northeast by transporting young men and women to North Vietnam for six months to two years training for their return to Thailand and the insurgency. The Vietnamese formed the second level of leadership in the Communist effort in Thailand below the Chinese in the early 1960's and still retain that role. The main base for guerrilla activity was established in the 100-mile long Phu Pan Mountain range which runs from near Mukdahan toward the provincial capital of Nakhon Phanom. In March 1962, the "Voice of the People of Thailand" was initiated as a regular program on Radio Peking, quite often featuring Pridi. Other Thai language programming tripled over previously existing levels. In 1962 the North Vietnamese opened a school 40 miles from Hanoi for instructing Thai and Pathet Lao cadre. Chinese and Vietnamese increased their efforts in jungle training camps in Laos and Thailand. In 1963 infiltration of Pathet Lao increased into the northeast for the purpose of promoting separatism among the approximately eight million Thai-Lao in the area. The Bangkok headquarters of the Communist Party greatly increased its efforts in fund-raising and propaganda to enlist the efforts and support of left-wing politicians and business/social leaders. Despite all these efforts to topple the Bangkok government, when Sarit died of natural causes in 1963, his protegee Thanom succeeded him with little or no turmoil or uproar. Thanom remains as Prime Minister to date and the relationship between his government and the throne continues as it was between Bhumibol and Sarit (4:9, 141, 155-156, 159; 8:6).

11. In January 1965, the Red Chinese announced their support of the Thai Patriotic League, an organization with the announced aim of replacing the Thanom government with a "neutral" regime which would rid Thailand of American imperialism. Later that same year, Chen Yi made the comment cited in paragraph IA to a western ambassador at a dinner party, leaving absolutely no doubt as to Chinese support for an insurgency in Thailand. In November 1965, the United Patriotic Front of Thailand and the Thai Independence Movement merged and stated their objective as capturing control of Thailand. In that same month, the first real armed faction of the insurgency occurred when a guerrilla band ambushed and annihilated a group of police officers near Mukdahan, Nakhon Phanom Province. In December the Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC) was established to coordinate all anti-Communist operations in the northeast by Army and police forces. The commander was General Prapass Charusatien, now considered the strongest man in Thailand behind Thanom. The CSOC was organized as a joint civilian-military operations center; however, it was severely hampered in that it exercised no continuing control of forces. The normal commands in the area retained control of their forces from day-to-day, while CSOC was in charge only for specific projects in specific areas on a case-by-case basis. For approximately five years, CSOC was hampered by this disadvantage and experienced severe problems in attempting to neutralize insurgent forces in the

seven most critical northeastern provinces (4:158-159, 6:261, 8:69).

12. In 1966, United States Army Engineers completed construction of a two-lane, all-weather, hard-top road which runs from the central plains to the northeastern provinces and is called Friendship Highway. In 1969, Freedom Highway was finished, connecting Friendship Highway at Korat to the port of Sattahip on the Gulf of Thailand. This highway was principally built for military movement of troops and supplies of Thai forces to the northeast and to bind those provinces to the rest of the nation. Much Communist propaganda was aimed at United States Air Force resupply of bombs, spare parts, and other materiel being moved over these roads to the air bases at Korat, Udorn, Ubon, and Nakhon Phanom. A great deal of the desired effect of tying the northeastern provinces to the Bangkok government was lost due to Communist exploitation of this American military usage of the road (4:179).

13. In late 1966, CSOC identified eleven sectors of the northeast as special security problems. CSOC initiated propaganda programs requesting loyal members of the populace to leave their homes in the Phu Pan Mountains so that the police and military might identify insurgents more easily. Popular support in identifying guerrillas was enlisted. Small security teams of army and/or border police lived in the sectors and worked to deny the insurgents freedom of movement and to isolate them from the populace. In February and August of 1967, government forces cracked down on the infrastructure and control headquarters in Bangkok by raiding homes and offices of suspected persons. Thirty party leaders, including six members of the central committee were arrested. Similar raids in October and November of 1968 were conducted with lesser results. The incidence of terrorist activity that had climbed to more than 40 government officials assassinated per month in 1966 subsided and it appeared the Communist Party had been crippled (4:156, 161-162). The guerrillas seemed to abandon their plans for conducting a classic Maoist rural insurgency by conquering the ^{countryside} countryside and moving then into the urban centers.

14. In the early and mid-1960's, King Rama IX and many of the intelligentsia had been attempting to convince the Thanom government to restore the Constitution and national elections as it appeared the coup threat feared by Sarit in 1958 had been quashed successfully. Laos, South Vietnam, and Malaysia had all held parliamentary elections in the early 1960's and the Communists were making much of Thailand's failure to do so in propaganda programs. The king felt that elections would involve the people in the national government and increase their support for it. On June 20, 1968, the king proclaimed a Constitution drafted by the Thanom government which provided for a National Assembly of two houses. The senate would be appointed by the king from nominees submitted by the Cabinet. The lower house was to be chosen by the electorate. The freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly were guaranteed but might be curtailed during national emergencies. A national election was scheduled for 10 February 1969 and attracted great interest and fervor among Thailand's previously frustrated opposition politicians. Political campaigns were marked by numerous charges of graft, corruption, and inefficiency. For the first time the Thanom faction was forced to defend and debate its actions, philosophies, and programs. The two major political parties in the campaign were Thanom's United Thai People's Party (UTPP) and the Democratic Party. Two minor leftist parties, the People's Party and the Economist United Front had quite a large following in the northeast. The elections resulted in no party winning a majority of the seats for itself; however, the government could count on a

one vote majority through its own seats and those of loyal independents (4:143-151).

15. The Thai military forces which had hounded Communist insurgents from base area to base area in 1967-1968 unfortunately were not quite capable of completely destroying the insurgency at that point in time. The Communists' sincere dedication to pursuit of a "war of national liberation" enabled them to recover some of their strength and capabilities by 1971. On January 11, 1969, the "Voice of the People of Thailand" over Radio Peking announced a ten point program delineating many of the "grievances" of the people of Thailand. One of the major points was aimed at the northeast, deploring the "feudal system of exploitation" of the Thai-Lao. The program went on to call for the expulsion of the Thanom government and its imperialistic American backers. In the spring of 1969, propaganda leaflets appeared all over the northeast announcing the formation and existence of the Thai People's National Liberation Front, an attempt to gather legitimacy to the insurgency and proclaim its regenerated strength. In 1970 Communist incidents rose to 100 per month, the level they had attained in 1966. The Thai government estimated an active army of roughly 1000 soldiers, 300 to 500 Sino-Thai and 400 to 500 Vietnamese leaders, and up to 10,000 sympathizers active in the northeast. The movement is being conducted and supported simultaneously with a distinctly separate, though similar, effort in Northern Thailand. From 1970 to date there has been a growing number of Communist-perpetrated or inspired incidents in the northeast. The Thais continue to conduct counter-insurgency operations in the area with the aid of United States-furnished helicopters, training, and advice (4:152-153, 160, 162, 171-172; 8:8).

16. In 1971, Prime Minister Thanom and his cabinet were experiencing great difficulty in pushing desired legislation through the National Assembly. Socialist activists from the northeastern provinces were attempting to block almost every proposed bill, while agitating in their home provinces about the failure of the government to act so as to better the region. In face of the increasing insurgent efforts and the necessity for prompt, correct action to meet these threats, on 17 November 1971, Thanom invalidated the Constitution of 1968, disbanded the National Assembly and sent them home, and declared martial law. He appointed a 16-man National Executive Council of top military, economic, and political leaders who now administer the Thai government and are drafting a new Constitution to meet the needs of the existing situation. This is the current state of Thai national government.

III. ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

A. Conditions Fostering The Insurgency.

1. Thailand's geographic location and easy accessibility to would-be insurgents has historically involved them in their neighbors' hopes of expanding. This location and lack of natural barriers is particularly noteworthy at this time when both Red China and North Vietnam are in the market for additional territory (8:33, 152-153).

2. The poor natural and manmade assets of the northeast (poor soil; inadequate rainfall; lack of minerals; and poor health, sanitation, diet, and housing) are above Asian standards but leave much to be desired. The Thai government was late in reacting to this need.

The Communists were not late in reacting to the government's shortcomings.

3. Ethnic minorities in the northeast are wide open to insurgent tactics, especially when the insurgents are from the countries of these minorities' origins.

4. The government in Thailand is vulnerable to insurgent propaganda. The self-proclaimed constitutional monarchy dominated by a military, authoritarian group is open to exploitation and the Communists are quick to use it. The Thai populace is politically uneducated and unprepared to participate in their government and have no interest groups to speak for them. This is a strong target for propaganda.

5. Developmental programs in the northeast have been open to criticism as to their timeliness and appropriateness. These programs must be considered carefully prior to initiation to avoid self defeat.

B. Conditions Detrimental to the Insurgency.

1. Thailand's natural assets and traditional rural way of life ~~has~~ ^{have} developed a happy and relatively complacent people. There is opportunity for upward social movement through work within the established system, it need not be destroyed in order for one to get ahead.

2. Centuries of absolute monarchy followed by four decades of authoritarian but benevolent governments have prepared the Thai people to accept little participation in government so long as they are relatively secure and there is no widespread poverty and starvation.

3. Thai religious beliefs teach that power and prestige result from proper behavior and are not to be achieved by violent revolt.

4. The king is respected and loved by Thais of all social strata, ethnic backgrounds, and interest groups. The king is violently opposed to Communism and influences the majority of the populace to feel likewise.

5. Governmental interest in the northeast has been spurred by the security threat presently posed there. Village and local leaders have been granted increased authority and many socio-economic programs have been initiated in recent years with some success. Some examples of such programs are: road construction, public health teams, Mobile Information Teams, Mobile Development Teams, and the Accelerated Rural Development Program.

6. United States aid to Thailand has been extremely contributory to the government's stability. A durable alliance has developed between the two nations based on mutual interests. Mutual support between these two nations is pledged in defense treaties as well as in economic and political agreements.

IV. EFFECTS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

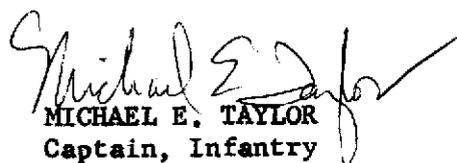
A. I feel that Thailand is capable of withstanding Communist insurgency but that certain critical actions must occur. I feel

that the Thai people are not ready for massive participation in an electorate in shaping their government and that their present form of government is indeed in the best interests of the country. Education of the adult population toward their knowledgeable participation will be extremely difficult due to the lack of mass communications and the low education levels in the northeast but I feel every effort must be made toward that end. It must be an unceasing effort until the populace is indeed ready to participate in governing themselves; but, until that end is reached, the present form of government should continue.

B. I feel that educated persons from the northeast, representatives of the Bangkok government, and specialists/advisors from more advanced countries should make an exhaustive study of security and developmental programs needed in the northeast. Each program must be an answer to a genuine and acknowledged need of the populace of that region and must be administered honestly and professionally.

C. The people of the northeast must be induced to identify with Thailand, rather than the geographic origin of their ethnic group. This problem is especially critical in dealing with the 50,000 Vietnamese refugees in the area. Continuous, well-thought-out programs must be conducted toward this end by sympathetic, honest officials of the Bangkok government.

D. I feel continued United States support is absolutely essential in Thailand's resisting the Communist insurgency. So long as Communist China and North Vietnam sponsor and totally support the insurgency there, Thailand must have outside economic, military, and diplomatic aid or be forced to seek some compromise or rapprochement in an attempt to retain their very national existence.


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