

allowance of Special Drawing Rights to patch up a conjunctural payments crisis, the receiver country has always ended up in bankruptcy, in total catastrophe. Examples are many in Africa as well as in Asia. Therefore, this destabilization caused by the IMF advice that these countries have followed, shows clearly that the philosophy of the IMF is not often—if ever—in the interest of the Third World countries.”

Touré linked the idea of a debt cartel and a new monetary system. “Whether you speak of a debtors’ cartel or South-South cooperation, all that means really is that the South should form a common front. . . . To constitute a debtors’ cartel would be a strategic solution. Those who demand payment of our debts, can only demand repayment if we have the means to do so. They must be brought to reconsider their position, i.e., to offer us better repayment conditions. Otherwise, in trying to repay our old debts, we are getting more indebted. We think that the best way to pull the Third World out of this bankruptcy situation, or out of this precarious monetary situation, is to first of all reconsider the international monetary system. This is a necessity. The second consideration is the strengthening of South-South solidarity.”

The need for unity

The idea of South-South cooperation was a recurring theme when the question of how to implement the new world economic order, how to get a new monetary system, was discussed. As Asamoah put it: “I think that the North-South dialogue will take much longer to materialize, and I think the area of more immediate progress will be in this field of South-South dialogue and cooperation. And I think if that could be developed, this could improve our position in relation to the North-South dialogue.”

Touré also emphasized this point: “One point is clear. The North is in agreement to act in a concerted manner. One of the first remedies must be agreement in the South to act in an equally concerted manner vis-à-vis the North. The South is a market of raw materials, a key borrower from a debt-ridden market, and a market upon which more and more pressure is brought to bear.” Touré indicated the “vicious cycle” of Third World countries running to the banks in the North to borrow money deposited by oil producers from the South, and asserted: “Once again, it is necessary to stress that, in all domains, South-South dialogue is the solution to our present situation.”

At the time of independence in Africa, the United States was the one hope that Africans had to break the colonial relations with Europe that had kept Africa undeveloped. Unfortunately, the United States did not distinguish itself that much from prior and present European policy toward Africa. As Kamanda said: “The United States must shape a coherent policy vis-à-vis the Third World in general, and Africa in particular. There are numerous friends of the United States in the world who have the impression that there is no clear and precise African policy, no Third World policy of the United States.”

Thailand: the choices as elections approach

by Pakdee Tanapura and
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Since the beginning of the year, Thailand—a country of 42 million inhabitants—has again been plunged into political instability. Strategically situated, Thailand has common borders with the Indochina countries on the east, with Burma on the west, and with Malaysia in the south. For more than two decades, the country has been involved in the Indochina conflicts: after having provided the United States with bases, Thailand is now providing the Khmer Rouge of Pol Pot (backed by China) and Khmer Serai forces (“Free Khmer” led by Son Sann and backed by the United States) with training camps to fight the Vietnamese-backed Kampuchean government of Heng Samrin. This is Thailand’s backup for the “China card” policy of the U.S. State Department.

Since 1976 Thailand has been operating under a quasi-parliamentary system dominated by the Thai military. The four-year “crisis management” provided by the constitution was to come to an end on April 21, at which point the military-dominated appointed Senate would relinquish to the elected National Assembly the power to nominate the prime minister. The present government of Premier General Prem Tinsulanonda would have run a high risk of losing its place to a civilian government.

Army Commander in Chief General Arthit Kamlangek, in league with Prime Minister Prem, opted for a “democratic coup” by proposing an amendment to the constitution, in order to prolong the provisional crisis management for another four years.

Fearing a violent coup d’état, the parliament initially accepted the amendment. Then the media and pro-British political figures such as Kukrit Pramoj, former prime minister and leader of the Social Action Party, began to argue that the amendment would pave the way for a continued military dictatorship. Rallies were organized by Anant Senakhan, a police officer under the 1960s Marshal Pao Sriyanond government. Anant recently quit his post-law enforcement monkhood to organize a hunger strike against the amendment. Under this pressure, the parliament convened a new session to reconsider the amendment.

In the second voting, the amendment was rejected, whereupon the parliament was dissolved by royal decree implemented by the Prem government. Election day is set for April 18, giving the candidates only one month’s campaigning. The quick dissolution allowed for elections to take place under the old electoral formula of the crisis-manage-

ment constitution, thus effectively voiding the parliament's vote against the army's amendment.

The country is now divided into two camps—for and against the amendment. The first camp is strengthening General Arthit as the strong military man. The second camp is pushing Kukrit to the fore as the opposition leader.

Kukrit Pramoj and General Kamlangek

A graduate of Oxford University with a masters degree in philosophy, Kukrit Pramoj is widely known as a homosexual and a demagogue. Kukrit is also known to be close to the Chinese and to Chinese business circles in Thailand. Since 1974, the year Kukrit became prime minister, he and his newspaper *Siamrath* have had a strong influence among intellectuals.

Kukrit has always advocated no-growth economic policies. It was he who promoted services at the expense of heavy industries in Thailand. He also owns one of the most luxurious hotels in Bangkok, the Indra Hotel. Since 1970, *Siamrath* has countless times attacked the Kra Isthmus Canal project, causing the project to be shelved. If dug across the southern peninsula of Thailand, this canal would not only shorten the oil route, making it unnecessary for tankers to detour through the Malacca Straits, but also develop the troubled southern provinces of Thailand economically. The Kra canal would end, however, the role of the Chinese city-state Singapore as the key trade and commercial center of the region.

When it came to building a new international airport in the Bangkok area, Kukrit was also against this chance for Thailand to increase its role as an international center in Southeast Asia. The badly needed airport was finally built in Singapore. When Thailand was badly hit by the oil crises in the 1970s and a nuclear program was seriously considered, Kukrit manipulated public opinion to put a stop to it. Kukrit and his party have also put into question the construction of the Nam Jone Dam, which would be able to produce 580 megawatts more of electricity in the year 1987. What is absolutely clear is that Kukrit Pramoj, his Social Action Party, and his newspaper have contributed to delaying the sound development of the Thai economy to Singapore's benefit.

As for the up-and-coming military figure, Army Commander in Chief General Arthit Kamlangek, his economic policies are not known; this leads some observers to believe that they can still eventually be shaped in the national interest. After the aborted military coup led by "young Colonels" a year ago, General Arthit has gained more and more power. He rapidly climbed to the post of Army Commander of the First Region (Bangkok-Central Plain Region) before being named Army Commander-in-Chief. It has been mooted that General Arthit would be the likely military man to replace General Prem, the present prime minister. Arthit's bid for power is opposed by other elements of the Thai military, however.

General Arthit is known to have links with the U.S.

Defense Department and State Department, and is an advocate of close Thai-Chinese cooperation, including recently increased contacts among senior military leaders. Curiously enough, he has also taken on as a close adviser Prasert Sapsunthorn, the former general secretary of the pro-Chinese Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). He has recently gained a favorable reputation by granting amnesty to those CPT members who willingly turn themselves in, reportedly at a rate of 1,000 per month. It is believed that the CPT has already lost up to 95 percent of its guerrilla forces to the urban areas in this way. Finally, General Arthit enjoys the backing of Queen Sirikit.

Basically, as the Thais would put it, the situation is one of "Granny's money buying Granny's cookies": Pramoj and Arthit are presently two sides of the same coin.

Perspectives after April 18

After the April 18 elections, it is likely that no party will emerge with a majority. However, Kukrit's Social Action Party along with the Democratic Party of Bhichai Rattakul will most probably form the next government, even though Kukrit had already vowed that his government would be "either horse or donkey but never a mule." Such a civilian government would not last long and could pave the way for the return as prime minister of former prime minister Samak Sundaravej, now head of the Thai Citizen Party, to be followed by General Arthit.

Other elements that could change such a scenario would be initiatives taken by the pro-industrial faction represented by the Chart Thai Party and the pro-American conservative party of former Premier General Kriangsak. Among the senior military officers known to be opposed to General Arthit are Supreme Commander Saiyud Kerdphol and General Harn Leelanond, army commander of the Fourth Region (Southern Peninsula Region), who are also very active in promoting development projects. Had early elections not been called, General Harn and the deputy communications minister, a member of the Chart Thai Party, would have already held a planned political seminar on the Kra Isthmus Canal project together with the local authorities of the 14 southern provinces. As for General Saiyud, he has constituted "soldiers for development" units manned with tractors instead of tanks.

General Kriangsak is sure to be re-elected to parliament. A senior officer confided to *EIR*, "Now, if only General Kriangsak would keep his distance from brandy, he can once again become a prominent political figure in Thailand—and this time with popular support."

If Thai political leaders focused more on making Thailand into an industrial power of the region, they would not feel compelled, as many in Thailand do, to view their future as a choice between being part of a Chinese or a "Soviet-Vietnamese" sphere of influence.

Continuation of the present political instability will make it difficult either to solve regional problems, such as Kam-puchea, or achieve economic development.

Thai politician looks to high-growth future

The following interview with Samak Sundaravej, leader of the Thai Citizen Party, was conducted by Pakdee Tanapura of the EIR Paris Bureau in Bangkok in March just after the dissolution of the Parliament.

EIR: You are accused of supporting the military proposal for the amendment of the constitution. Do you have any comment on this?

Samak: I want a stable government. Next year we will have to decide on lots of investments like those for the eastern deep port, the construction of a new airport, gas separation factories, etcetera. If the government were to be unstable over three to six months, nobody would want to invest in Thailand. I would like to have a full democracy, but given that the future looks so unstable, the presence of the military would help to stabilize the situation.

As for the question of whether or not civil servants and the military should be allowed to play a part in politics, I would say yes, they should definitely have this right. Sometimes politicians cannot deal with certain social and economic problems. A civil servant often has the experience and will be readily able to deal with these problems. A high school graduate cannot become minister of health! We need to be flexible on these questions.

EIR: Certain media like the *Siamrath* of Kukrit Pramoj have been encouraging instability in Thailand and sabotaging development projects by manipulating public opinion. What do you think of Kukrit Pramoj?

Samak: Kukrit is an old politician. People around him are bad. He might not have bad intentions himself. If he is in the government, he may not oppose infrastructure projects. If environmentalists did not campaign against these projects, they would not have anything to do. The present government has tolerated these people too much. In fact, they should be sent into the jungle so that they would not be able to use Kukrit and his newspaper any more. These environmentalists are really insane. They even say that wallpaper can cause cancer. I've been staying in a house with wallpaper for more than forty years and I don't have cancer. These people are definitely mad.

EIR: If you become the next prime minister, what would you like to do?

Samak: I would increase both wages and prices, based on the inflationary rate index. Income in the countryside will also have to be increased. This can be done through the reduction of the number of peasants. Look at the United States: around three million Americans work in the agricultural sector, but they feed 200 million inhabitants. We have to have a bigger input of advanced technologies in the agricultural sector, which would reduce the cost of production. We also need a system of intergrated food industries to transform the agricultural surplus into semi-finished or finished products such as animal feed. With such industries, we can shift peasants into this sector and thereby increase their income by more than four times. These industries can be developed in the provinces and thus avoid congestion around the Bangkok area.

'If the government were unstable over three to six months, nobody would want to invest in Thai projects. The present government has tolerated environmentalists too much. These people are definitely mad. As for solar energy, it seems to be good only for heating water, and Thai people don't like hot water except for making coffee. Nuclear energy is needed.'

In the meantime, we should use surplus such as animal feed to raise livestock in the countryside, which would raise the output of meat production in the country. If we can create a surplus of meat production, this can be exported internationally. Increased production would mean that we would be able to feed an increased number of population.

We should have nuclear plants, but the only obstacle would be the question of the site. Plants that leak are just too old. We have to have modern ones. As for solar energy, it seems to be good only for heating water. I have traveled around the world more than 10 times and I have seen a lot. If that is all it's good for, then we don't need it. Thai people don't like hot water except for making coffee. Nuclear energy is needed, and with cheaper electricity, we will be able to reduce the tax on gas and petrochemicals.