

'Peace movement' launched in Thailand as Soviets up the pressure on Japan

by Pakdee Tanapura

Soviet Marshal Vasilii I. Petrov, the first deputy defense minister and former chief of the Far East High Command, attacked the Japanese government of Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone for its alleged "revanchist aspirations," in an article published Sept. 1 in the Soviet Armed Forces newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda*. Petrov stated: "The Soviet people cannot ignore the increasing attempts to turn Japan into an American nuclear base and to increase her military roles in the alliance system with the U.S.A. . . . Obviously, not everybody drew the proper conclusions from the lessons of the Second World War and the nuclear bombardments of Hiroshima and Nagasaki." This warning was delivered on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Japanese defeat.

On the same occasion, a "peace initiative" was launched by dubious religious groups in Thailand, as a takeoff point for a similar offensive throughout Southeast Asia. The movement is being led by the World Council of Churches and the Church of Christ in Thailand, which were in the forefront of organizing "peace week" exhibitions and conferences in the two most important universities in Bangkok, Chulalongkorn and Thammasart. Starting on Aug. 6, a week of public debates was organized at the Buddhist pavilion at Chulalongkorn University. A Rolling Stones-style rock concert was also given, dedicated to "peace-loving people." The Bangkok Student Christian Center, affiliated with the World Council of Churches and the Church of Christ in Thailand, organized an exhibit dramatizing war's destructiveness and calling for unilateral disarmament by the Western countries. Cartoon movies calling for peace, made in an Eastern European country and distributed by the United Nations, were shown to young students.

Apart from the World Council of Churches, Buddhist groupings such as Santi Ashoka and Dammakai participated in a street demonstration and the week's debates. These two Buddhist fundamentalist groups are known to be notorious dissidents within the Thai Buddhist hierarchies. Their aim is to achieve a sacerdotal state in Thailand, based on rules and regulations laid down in the *Traipeekok*, the bible of the Buddhist religion, written by monks more than 2,000 years ago, after the death of Buddha. These groups are considered by the Thai government's Religious Department as potentially subversive.

Also joining the fray was Dr. Chaiwat Osathannand, a leading Moslem intellectual and assistant professor at the

A new "peace movement" has been launched to destabilize Thailand, with the sponsorship of the World Council of Churches, and to the advantage of the Soviet Union. Like its counterpart in the West, the "peace movement" is pushing a program that rejects nuclear power and high-technology development, in favor of the World Bank's model of rural, small-unit economics and zero population growth.

Faculty of Political Science at the Thammasat University, who was appointed to lead the "peace week" debates and conferences. Dr. Chaiwat, a known sympathizer of the "Islamic Republic" of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, called for a crusade against the military build-up in Thailand, which includes Thailand's purchasing 12 F-16 jet fighters from the United States. Chaiwat endorsed the development of a nuclear-free zone in Southeast Asia.

In order to give intellectual authority to the "peace" drive, the Chulalongkorn University-affiliated International Institute for Strategic Studies, which is modeled on the British IISS, had two important participants in the event, Prince Dr. Sukumphan Boriphatra, the Institute's deputy director, and Surachat Bamrunghong, a senior researcher there.

Prince Sukumphan, in his presentation, explained that nuclear armaments must be controlled by controlling the civilian use of nuclear energy. By supporting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1967, he expressed his oligarchical view of how to stop developing countries from acquiring nuclear technologies. For him, there is no difference between nuclear weapons and nuclear technologies; to contain the expansion of nuclear weapons "horizontally," one has to limit the development of civilian nuclear power plants.

As for Surachat, he hailed the the peace groups in Eu-

rope—the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in England, the Green Party in Germany and the Comité pour le Désarmement Nucléaire in France—for their intention to “seek peace and understanding among nations.” Whitewashing the true intentions of the Soviet-backed controllers of these groups, he declared, “Most of these organizations are for peace, they oppose nuclear weapons and they don’t have any intention of breaking with NATO.”

One of the most important inputs into “peace week” in Bangkok was the participation of pro-Chinese Communist Party elements. Thaweeep Voradilok, a long-time Chinese Communist sympathizer, took part in a debate on the history of the peace movement in Thailand. The peace movement started in the 1950s, as an outgrowth of Bertrand Russell’s Peace Tribunal and the Stockholm ban-the-bomb call. This coincided with growing pressure on the Thai government not to participate in the war against North Korea. The leading members of this current were Kulab Saipradit, Krong Chandawong, Suveat Voradilok (Thaweeep’s older brother), and Prasert Sabsunthorn—all later determined to be prominent members of the Communist Party of Thailand. They were arrested by the Thai government of Prime Minister Marshal P. Piboonsongkarm, along with editors of Chinese-language newspapers and directors of a major Chinese school in Bangkok.

The subversive Professor Sulak

The real “godfather” of the “peace week” was Prof. Sulak Sivalak, an Oxford-trained lawyer who became known in Thailand and internationally as an expert on Theravada Buddhism. Professor Sulak has often been invited to give lectures in Japan, China, the United States, and Western Europe. In the United States, he has frequently been invited to speak at the Harvard Divinity School and the East-West Center in Hawaii. He has established contacts with the Green and “peace” movements in Western Europe. He has close contacts with Swiss “dissident” theologian Hans Küng and the Thai-German Dialogue group at Tübingen University in West Germany. He was a participant in the 1983 Vancouver World Council of Churches conference, which representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church attended *en masse*, to condemn the United States and President Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative.

Professor Sulak was arrested last year on the charge of *lèse majesté*, for his attacks against the Royal Family. When released, he found his popularity boosted among students and political activists. According to an inside source, the Thai government was pressured to release him by U.S. State Department Undersecretary Richard Armitage, who told the Thai government that it would be dangerous to keep Sulak in jail, because this could create riots among students. Professor Sulak is active in sending Thai activists abroad to work with sundry religious organizations; in a recent case, he sent a former communist defector to study with the Comité Catholique Contre la Fain et pour le Développement in France, an

outfit controlled by the Jesuits and known to be giving support to terrorists in the Third World.

In a public conference in Bangkok recently, Professor Sulak launched an attack against the so-called Gang of Four rapidly developing countries—South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore—as a bad model for development, saying that Thailand should look instead toward the Burmese model of self-reliance. He called for stopping all industrial projects and turning Thailand toward rural, small-unit development.

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Just a week later, on July 25, a high-ranking official of the World Bank, Andrew Speer, stated in a press conference that the major problem the World Bank had to confront among the Pacific rim countries was that everybody wanted to imitate the “Gang of Four”!

The emergence of the peace movement in Thailand shows just the tip of the iceberg of the faction fights brewing inside various institutions of the country. The fact that the Thai government has ignored repeated scurrilous attacks from “peace movement” figures against high-ranking military officials shows that some high officials in the government are trying to use the peaceniks in their own political power game. Moreover, there are rumors that the Department of Social Welfare will take active part in a similar, if not more spectacular, “peace offensive” next year. This in turn will open the way to different religious groups to rally support from the student movements which would, in the near future, turn against the government itself.

These developments occur amid the recent break-up of the ANZUS military pact by the Labour governments of New Zealand and Australia, and the Soviet bid for domination of the southern Pacific. The Philippines government of President Ferdinand Marcos is under heavy attack, with the object, in part, of removing the most important U.S. bases, the Clark Air Base and the Subic Bay Naval Base. The spread of the “peace movement” and the destabilization of Thailand will only aggravate the U.S. position and allow the Soviet Union, with little effort, to gain major influence in the Pacific region as a whole.