

EIR Investigation

Kissinger orders Thailand's former premier eliminated

by Linda de Hoyos

General Kriangsak Chamnon, a parliamentarian and former prime minister of Thailand now in jail on charges of treason for his alleged role in the aborted coup attempt of Sept. 9, has become the next name on Henry A. Kissinger's list of national and international leaders targeted for "elimination." An order for Kriangsak's judicial murder was handed down by Kissinger during a luncheon in New York City in early October. Kissinger, along with David Rockefeller and other luminaries of the Eastern financial and policy establishment, greeted Thailand's Prime Minister Prem Tinsulamond, according to sources in New York and in Bangkok, and in the course of the luncheon, Kissinger stated to Prem: "Kriangsak is dangerous and should be eliminated."

Such words from Kissinger are not to be taken lightly. He has issued similar threats to national leaders, threats which were made good. Italian authorities have attempted to question the former U.S. secretary of state regarding his threats to former Italian Premier Aldo Moro, after which the Italian leader was kidnaped and murdered by the terrorist Red Brigades in 1978. And it is well known that Kissinger's words to Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977—"I will make a terrible example of you"—were the signal for Bhutto's overthrow and subsequent judicial murder.

For Thailand, as for all the U.S. Asian allies, national security rests upon economic growth and internal stability. Since the devaluation of the Thai baht last November, Thailand's economy has gone on the skids. Thailand has been put into the same double-bind as the Philippines, with the same threat to U.S. and ASEAN security interests.

The Kissinger targeting of Kriangsak is the signal for a major assault on the Thai military as an institution. Although its role in politics has diminished over the last decade, the Thai military is the core nationalist institution in the country,

setting the reality parameters for policy. The devaluation, which effectively cut the military budget by an equivalent 17%, and the downward slide of the economy poses a challenge which the military is compelled to answer.

Kissinger-Chase plans for the looting of Thailand and withdrawal of U.S. strategic defense from the region, requires that the U.S.-tied Thai military be discredited and destroyed.

Beginning Oct. 16, General Kriangsak and three other retired and active senior military officers face trial proceedings for their alleged role in the Sept. 9 coup bid. The coup attempt was carried out by Col. Manoon Rappakorn (ret.), the leader of the Young Turk faction that led a similarly failed coup against Prem in 1981. Rappakorn and his brother, Wing Commander Manas, were permitted to flee the country. Kriangsak maintains that he was forced by the Young Turk leaders to come to their command headquarters on the morning of Sept. 9, and from there made every attempt to negotiate an end to the coup attempt as soon as possible.

Insistence on full punishment for the alleged coup perpetrators was led by Vice-Premier Bhichai Rattakul, who travels in Socialist International circles and has aspirations of becoming prime minister himself.

Diplomatic observers in Bangkok are inclined to believe Kriangsak's version of events; he was the first prime minister of Thailand to resign—rather than be forced out by a military show of strength. "A coup is just not his profile," said one well-informed diplomat.

According to sources at the special branch of the police charged with investigating the coup, there exists no evidence with which to bring General Kriangsak to trial. However, the case has been turned over to the Crime Suppression Commission, composed of police and military officers hand-

picked by Prem and Bhichai.

No matter what Kriangsak's role, the handling of his case by the Prem government has already broken precedent. In the 15 coups or coup attempts that have taken place in Thailand since the country became a constitutional monarchy in 1932, never has a leader of the military been brought before a civilian court. Rarely has a military leader been jailed for his alleged role in a coup attempt. In the case of Kriangsak, he has not only been jailed, but his repeated requests for bail have been denied.

There is a precision in Kissinger's targeting of Kriangsak. The former prime minister is regarded in Washington and Bangkok as the potential rallying figure for a counterattack on the World Bank-IMF technocrats who have been imposing the austerity plan on Thailand.

Like President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, as prime minister of Thailand from 1978-80, Kriangsak brought into office with him a list of 14 projects designed to bring about the industrialization of the country. These included a natural-gas project to be completed by mid-1981; the conversion of the Sattahip naval port into a commercial deep-sea port; a rail link to this port; the improvement of the Don Muang airport; development of lignite mining in Lampang Province for electricity generation in the north; irrigation projects for the underdeveloped north; the development of zinc smelting and

ect as the basis for building a heavy-industry sector. These projects, and others on the table, have been ruled out of order by the technocrats of the National Economic and Social Development Board, who have been elevated in status and power under the Prem administration.

Kriangsak also came into power precisely at the point that the United States, playing out Henry Kissinger's China-card policy during the Carter administration, was rapidly withdrawing from the region. Kriangsak's foreign policy was an attempt to forge an independent course for Thailand amid the manipulations of Moscow, Peking, and Washington. Under Kriangsak, Thailand re-established relations and trade with Laos and opened the possibility for direct talks with the Vietnamese. Kriangsak continued this outlook as a parliamentarian, leading a delegation to Hanoi for preliminary discussions in 1983.

But most dangerous to Kissinger has been Kriangsak's insistence that the solution to the Indochina conflict must be regional cooperation in the development of the Mekong River Delta—a great infrastructural project that would finally set Cambodia back on its feet. It is this project, promised by the 1973 Paris Treaty, which has been vetoed by Kissinger.

As an officer who fought in the Korean War and later the Vietnam War, Kriangsak regards himself as a loyal ally and friend of the Americans. Kissinger's treatment of him and of Thailand is one indication of the degree to which Washington's policy is being shaped by considerations dictated by the Anglo-Soviet "New Yalta" deal against the United States.

Prem's program is a World Bank hoax

by Sophie Tanapura and Linda de Hoyos

On Oct. 17, Dr. Virapongsa Ramangkura, economic adviser to the prime minister's office, declared after an eight-hour meeting of the Thai government's cabinet committee, that he has given up on his attempts to halt a plan to support the price of rice. After eight hours of bitter argument, he said, he had been overruled and was forced to abide by the majority.

Virapongsa, one of the key spokesman for the pro-IMF technocrats in the finance ministry, the prime minister's office, and the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), has been fighting to permit the price of rice to be controlled by "market forces," with the expected slide in prices, already at their lowest after the devaluation of last year. He has also been demanding that the rice export premium and stockholding requirement, measures designed to protect the farmer, be eliminated.

As *EIR* has reported, Article 67 of the Thai constitution states that it is a duty of the government to uphold the price of rice, to ensure the survival of the country's agriculture.

That Dr. Virapongsa, along with Finance Minister Sommai Hoonratkul, should have attempted to scrap the protective mechanisms for Thailand's rice farmers, is a barometer of how ferocious the technocratic attack on the Thai economy and national sovereignty has become. There is no support for such policies inside the country; diplomatic sources in Bangkok report their fears that if the economy continues to spiral downward at the hands of Virapongsa et al., there will be a full-scale revolt of the farmers, trade unions, and students against the government.

Dr. Virapongsa is one of a troupe of technocrats ensconced at the prime minister's office, the NESDB, and the finance ministry, trained at Wharton or Harvard, who are, as one Chase Manhattan analyst puts it, "the IMF men." Convincing Prime Minister Prem that Thailand's economic performance must please the international financial community, these technocrats have succeeded in bringing a total halt to the economic growth of the country.

In his Sept. 23 speech on the eve of his departure for New York to address the United Nations General Assembly, Prem showed that the technocrats had already convinced him of *their* concept of national sovereignty: It is better to cut your own throat than let others do it for you.

Prem declared, "The lingering economic problem which has been worrying us during the past 20 years is that of the trade deficit," and "We have now reached the point at which the problem cannot be left any longer"—even though the