

Southeast Asia by Linda de Hoyos

Kriangsak free on bail

The Feb. 18 decision is a slap in the face to the Kissinger-International Monetary Fund crowd.

In a slap in the face to Henry Kissinger, former Thai Prime Minister Gen. Kriangsak Chamanon and four other generals were released on bail on Feb. 18, on indirect orders from the government of Prime Minister Prem Tinsulamond. The five military generals are on trial on charges of having instigated the Sept. 9 coup attempt in Thailand.

The freeing of Kriangsak is a setback to the Kissinger crowd, which is scheming to turn over Asia to Soviet hegemony. As *EIR* reported in its Oct. 25, 1985 issue, Kissinger was overheard telling Prem at a New York City luncheon last October that "Kriangsak is dangerous and should be eliminated."

By the time Kissinger got to Bangkok on Nov. 21, *EIR*'s charges had spread through the Thai media. The Prem government vigorously denied any conspiracy with Kissinger for Kriangsak's "judicial murder." Kissinger himself was grilled on the subject by the Bangkok press. Ever since, Prem has been on the spot to disprove the plot to "eliminate" Kriangsak, as charged by *EIR*.

The real issue of the "show trial" is whether the International Monetary Fund and World Bank will be allowed to wreck Thailand's economy. As is usual with Kissinger's victims, Kriangsak, a member of the Thai Parliament, was in a position to take the point in the growing battle against the IMF begun by another ex-premier, Kukrit Pramoj.

Acting on IMF orders, the Prem government has gutted the Thai mili-

tary budget, and caused the closing of many firms. In the last year, 47,000 textile workers have been laid off, as a result of the IMF-imposed devaluation of the baht.

It seems that Prime Minister Prem has realized that the trial of Kriangsak, who is accused of sedition with 40 other defendants, could backfire against his own government.

The trial, which began in mid-January, has raised the big question now the subject of conversation throughout Thailand: "Who are the *ai mong*—the hooded ones—who really pulled off the Sept. 9 coup bid?"

"An amnesty may be the only choice for the government if it wants to end the ongoing coup trial which is threatening to spark a major political conflict," wrote the *Bangkok World* on Jan. 19, citing a conversation with an unnamed senior cabinet minister. "The minister warned," reported the *World*, "that if the trial continued, allegations could be made concerning the identity of an alleged mastermind, which, he said, could lead to a serious political conflict. To ease these tensions and avert the threat of violence, the government is likely to propose an amnesty for the coup suspects. Only then can we avoid a major confrontation."

The rumors of amnesty were officially denied almost as fast as the *World* hit the streets. A spokesman for Prem's office declared no amnesty was under consideration because the case is "in the hands of the court."

In the courtroom, the prosecution's case was turned into a farce with

the calling of its "star witness," Air Force Commander in Chief ACM Praphan Dhupatemiya. Praphan's testimony that he had been dragged to coup headquarters by army officers early on the morning of Sept. 9, and his report on his activities there, established that there was in fact no difference between Praphan's own actions and those of the retired generals standing trial for treason.

Upon cross examination, the judge had to warn ACM Praphan that he should be careful with his answers, or he might find himself a defendant. The defense established that it was illegal for the retired senior officers at the rebel headquarters, such as General Kriangsak or former Supreme Commander Gen. Serm Na Nakhon, to issue orders to the officers carrying out the coup. The defense then demonstrated that ACM Praphan, as with the defendants at the headquarters, had read over the rebel documents. ACM Praphan also admitted that no one at the rebel headquarters was armed, and therefore he presumably could have escaped at any point.

But the final questioning exposed Praphan's lack of credibility as a "star prosecution witness." As reported in the Jan. 15 *Bangkok World*: "Asked about a note to the Royal Thai Embassy in Jakarta instructing Prime Minister Prem not to return, ACM Praphan said that this note was drafted by General Kriangsak. After reading the note, he [Praphan] said that it was good. Praphan said that he said 'good' not because it was good for General Prem not to return home, but 'good in the sense that the draft was well-written, informative, and concise.'"

Praphan then hastily added: "How could I say the note was badly written when I was under pressure and the man who wrote it was General Kriangsak?"