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# Chapter 1
# Democracy and the Development of Political Parties in Thailand 1932–1945

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## Introduction

Attempts in Thailand at parliamentary democracy began with the constitutional revolution carried out by the People's Party (*Khana Radsadon*) on 24 June 1932. But political parties, which are an indispensable element in European style democracy, did not exist in Thailand until 1946. During those fourteen years, four general elections took place, but there were no openly organized political parties whatsoever that contested in these elections and campaigned for the support of the people. The first time political parties played a part in elections was in the 5 August 1946 supplementary elections for the National Assembly held in 47 of the provinces. Open political parties demanding seats in the National Assembly began appearing from the end of 1945. The first of these to be organized was the Progressive Party (*Phak Kaona*), headed by Kukrit Pramoj (1911– ), which was set up on 8 November 1945.[1] There followed in early 1946 the organization of the Sahachip Party, then the Constitutional Front Party (*Phak Neo Ratthathamanun*). The former was composed mainly of people who had been in the Free Thai movement and Pridi Phanomyong (1900–1983) was made a party adviser; while the latter was headed by Thamrong Nawasawat (1901–1989), who had belonged to the People's Party clique and had been a principal second-category member in the National Assembly. On 6 April 1946 the Democratic Party (*Phak Prachatipat*) came into existence; headed by Khuang Aphaiwong (1902–1968), it had been organized by anti-Pridi forces.

The People's Party had justified its coup d'état in 1932 saying it seized sovereign power from the monarchy and King Prajadhipok (1893–1941, r.1925–1935) in order to bring about European style democracy in Thailand. However during the thirteen years from 1932 to 1945 that the People's Party held power, it never recognized that principal element of European style democracy, namely the multi-party system. In fact for most of the period that the People's Party controlled government, political parties could not legally exist.

But the government's refusal during the thirteen years after the constitutional

revolution to allow political parties did not mean that there were no attempts to organize parties or that there were no demands for the legalization of a political party system. On the contrary, those years were filled with lively debate about political parties. People who wanted genuine European style democracy called for a political party system as did those who opposed the People's Party clique and the monopoly it held on power. Those thirteen years were a time of groping toward the establishment of a multiparty system. For this reason the whole issue of political parties during the early years of the constitutional period is one of the themes of great interest in modern Thai political history. But in the existing research, very little interest has been directed at this issue.[2]

This paper will trace the course of the political parties issue from the short period of time directly after the constitutional revolution when the People's Party made an attempt at becoming a broad-based mass party, then changed course and abolished itself and entered a period until 1945 when the People's Party clique virtually monopolized political power and the government permitted no political parties to function. At the same time this study will look at the efforts that took place inside and outside of the National Assembly to promote democracy and a multiparty political system.

## Notes

1. *Khao phak kaona, 2 Dec. 1945.*
2. *For example, Professor Chai-anan, the most prolific researcher among Thai political historians, in his volume, Primary Documents* on *the Half Century of Politics Since the Constitutional Revolution*, makes no mention of the moves to organize political parties which are brought out in this study. See Chai-anan Samudhavanija and Phirasak Chanthawarin, *Khomunphunthan kugsatawat hængkanplianplæng kanpokkhrongthai*, Bangkok, 1982.

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# I
# Revolution and Tutelary Democracy

Early on the morning of 24 June 1932, members of the People's Party assembled in the square in front of the Anantha Throne Hall. Earlier they had successfully carried out a surprise attack on the royal cavalry regiment guarding the capital and had called out tanks and issued ammunition to the troops under their command, falsely telling them that they were being sent out to quell a riot that had broken out in the capital. At the head of their group was Phraya Phahonphonphayu-hasena, better known as Colonel Phahon (1888–1947), the deputy inspector-general of military education. They had gathered in the square as part of a military operation planned by another party leader, Colonel Song (Phraya Songsuradet, 1892–1944), superintendent of education in the Army's education section. Soon an artillery unit arrived at the square led by Colonel Rit (Phraya Ritakhane, 1890–1960), a People's Party member and the commander of the local artillery regiment. Also arriving were cadets from the military academy under the direction of Phraya Song. These forces were augmented by a unit of sailors, an infantry battalion, and an engineer battalion.

Having assembled their forces, the People's Party leaders proceeded to arrest the leading royal members of the government. Primary among these was Prince Nakhonsawan (1881–1944), who as Minister of Internal Affairs and a supreme adviser to the king, was the most powerful member of the royal family. Also arrested were Prince Narisa (1863–1947) and Prince Damrong (1862–1943), both supreme advisers to the king. Along with these royal members, the leaders of the army and police were also apprehended. All together fourteen ranking officials of the government were brought to the square and detained as hostages in the Anantha Throne Hall. Having gained control of the capital, the People's Party read out a proclamation that they had seized power from the absolute monarchy and intended to set up a national representative assembly. At the same time they proclaimed six principles of their revolution which were to uphold national independence, maintain internal security, draw up an economic plan to promote the nation's economic well-being, promote equality for all, promote liberty, and promote education for the people.

On the day the People's Party carried out their coup d'état, the king was at his summer residence in Hua Hin, a town 250 kilometers south of Bangkok. Upon seizing power the coup leaders immediately sent representatives down to the king to request that he accept the position of a constitutional monarch. The king was very receptive to the idea of a constitutional monarchy. Like the leaders of the People's Party, he had long experienced living in Europe, and had himself once planned to

promulgate a constitution.[1] He therefore did not hesitate to accept the demands of the People's Party. In so doing he overrode the members of his entourage, notably Major General Phraya Phichaisongkhram (1882–1967), the commander of the First Army, and the deputy defense minister, Prince Alongkot (1880–1952), who wanted to encircle the capital and carry out a counterattack using troops stationed in the outer provinces. On 27 June the king returned to the capital where he met with Pridi Phanomyong (1990–1983, then known by his titular name of Luang Praditmanutham), the leader of the civilian faction within the People's Party. Pridi had earned a doctorate in law while a student in France, and he had been given responsibility for drafting a provisional constitution which would embody the concepts of popular sovereignty. The king accepted the provisional constitution, and upon his signature it was promulgated.

On the following day, 28 June, the first national representative assembly opened. It had a total of seventy members, and all had been appointed by the new military leadership that had taken over responsibility for the capital. Thirty-three of the new representatives were members of the People's Party; most of the remainder were high-ranking officials of the old regime who cooperated with the People's Party. Following appointment of the National Assembly, Phraya Phahon, Phraya Song, and Phraya Rit, the three leaders of the coup d'état who had held all powers since the 24th, turned supreme authority over to the assembly. It then elected as first prime minister the highly experienced Phraya Mano (Manopakonnitithada, 1884–1948), who had studied in England on a government scholarship, had qualified as a British barrister, and had held government positions as under-secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and as a higher court chief justice. Along with Mano's election, the assembly also set up a committee under his direction to draft a permanent constitution. Mano was not a member of the People's Party, but he had been a critic of the royal family's profligate ways, and for this reason he was regarded highly by those in the People's Party. At the same time he was also greatly trusted by the king. Because of the confidence both sides held in him, it was hoped that as prime minister Mano would be able to act as an intermediary between the People's Party and the king. Members of the People's Party also occupied ten of the fifteen seats in Mano's cabinet.

The People's Party, which had succeeded so quickly in carrying out its constitutional revolution, had been organized in Paris in February 1927 by seven young military officers and civilians then studying in France.[2] The four leading organizers were Pridi, Phibun (1897–1964, then a captain named Plæk Khittasankha), Thasanai (1900–1933) and Prayun (1898–1982), the latter two then lieutenants. After returning to Siam they worked to recruit others whose sentiments were similar to their own. By early 1932 they had gained the cooperation of Phraya Phahon and Phraya Song. Both were higher ranking military officers with com-

mand over troops which could be called upon when the time came to carry out the coup d'état. Like the younger military officers in the People's Party, Phraya Phahon and Phraya Song had spent time in Europe. Both had studied in Germany, and both were dissatisfied with the many incompetent royal family members and their hangers-on who filled the highest ranks of the military. Around 1930 the two had begun planning a revolution unbeknown to the younger organizers who had begun in Paris. Thus the principal military members of the People's Party in 1932 were officers who had been sent to study in Europe on funds provided by the monarchy which, since the establishment of the military academy in 1887, had been working to reorganize the Thai Army into a modern military force. With the troops under Phraya Phahon and Phraya Song providing the required military forces, the plans for the coup had moved quickly to completion. During the first months of 1932 the final plans for the revolution were drawn up, and following seven meetings of the key members, the coup d'état was carried out on the 24th of June.[3]

On 2 July the National Assembly held its second meeting. The Mano cabinet, with its People's Party majority, placed before the assembly a bill drafting Regulations for the Defense of the Kingdom. This was approved and the next day the new law was promulgated. The regulations established the new posts of commander-in-chief of the Army and commander-in chief- of the Navy, two positions that had not existed under the old regime. Phraya Phahon was immediately named Army commander-in-chief and Phraya Song was made deputy commander-in-chief. This gave the People's Party secure command over the Army.[4] Then on 9 July a major shakeup of the armed forces took place, and twelve of the fifteen generals and the majority of the 22 colonels were retired from active duty.[5]

Along with securing its grip on the military, the People's Party also incorporated into the constitution a three-stage transitional period in the process of democratization which would guarantee the maintenance of its own authority in the National Assembly and the cabinet. As early as the day of the coup on 24 June, Pridi had called together the undersecretaries of each ministry and explained this three-stage process during which the composition of the National Assembly was to be divided into three periods of development. This three-stage process was clearly set forth in the provisional constitution, and it was again incorporated as the interim provisions, Article 65, of the permanent constitution which was promulgated on 10 December 1932. This article was to remain in effect not longer than ten years from the time of the enforcement of the 1932 provisional constitution, which meant until 27 June 1942; or terminate before this if more than half of the voting constituency completed primary education.

The first stage of the transition process was to last until the first general election took place. During this stage all of the National Assembly members would be appointed by the leader of the People's Party. Thereafter until 1942 would

constitute the second stage during which time the National Assembly was to be made up of first-category members who were to be elected by the people and an equal number of second-category members to be appointed by the king. With the completion of the second stage, the interim provisions set forth in Article 65 would expire, and the third and final stage would begin with the National Assembly made up entirely of popularly elected members. Under the constitution a unicameral assembly was adopted with a cabinet composed of members from and responsible to the assembly. During the second stage the king was given constitutional responsibility for appointing second-category assembly members, but as will be seen, it would be the People's Party that selected the candidates to be appointed. This meant that half of the assembly would be composed of second-category members picked essentially by the People's Party which would assure the party's ability to maintain the political power it acquired after the revolution.

Right from the beginning of the constitutional period, the monopoly of power held by the People's Party under the interim provisions was criticized in the newspapers as "a tool for one faction to reduce the authority of the king",[6] and as "cliquism" (*khanathipatai*).[7] The People's Party countered such criticism saying that the interim provisions were necessary to secure and stabilize the democratic system, and that the party had installed itself as the guardian of democracy in order to serve the good of the people.[8]

The promoters who took part in the coup d'état and who were later officially recognized as members of the People's Party totaled only 99 people; 32 were army officers, 21 were naval officers, and the remaining 46 were civil officials.[9] Most were young men, born during the decade between 1890 and 1910 and now in their twenties and thirties. Phraya Phahon, their leader, had been born in 1888 and was 44 when they carried out the coup, making him one of the oldest members. As will be noted later, for a time after to coup there were plans to expand the membership of the People's Party, but to the end it remained a clique, and the power holders would continue to be limited to those first 99 people who had participated in the coup d'état. The People's Party would receive an new nomenclature in April 1933, becoming the People's Party Club, and the party would be officially terminated. Nevertheless the original clique would continue in power until the interim provisions of the 1932 constitution were voided with the promulgation of a new constitution in 1946.[10] During those fourteen years the People's Party would experience a confrontation between the Phraya Song and Phibun factions, and the Phibun-led army faction would clash with Pridi's civilian faction and with the navy faction. Nevertheless, the principal leaders (a small core composed of Phraya Phahon, Phibun, Pridi, Luang Sin (1901–1976, head of the Navy), Luang Adun (1894–1961, head of the national police), Luang Naryubet (1884–1980, head of the secret police in the early stage of the revolution), Luang Thamrong (1901–1988), Luang

Suphachalasai (1896–1965), and Khuang Aphaiwong (1902–1968)) generally were able to maintain unity amongst themselves, enabling them to decide on whom to select as prime minister and as cabinet ministers and what people should be placed in the assembly as second-category members. Likewise when important bills were brought up, such as the economic plan or the extension of the interim provisions, these were decided upon at meetings of the principal party leaders or after deliberations among the party members.[11]

With its grip on the military, the National Assembly and the cabinet, the People's Party was a clique wielding exclusive power. Despite this however, the party never did away with the image of representative democracy nor ceased looking upon itself as the defender of the constituiton. A number of examples of this appeal to democracy can be cited from statements by Phibun, who was raised to deputy commander-in-chief of the Army in December 1933, then in September 1934 became concurrently minister of defense, and then replaced Phraya Phahon as prime minister at the end of 1938. During a radio address on the second anniversary of the revolution in June 1934, he commented, "On this day a revolution (*patiwat*) took place in Siam, and today should be looked upon as the second anniversary of our democratic system, one where the people rule themseves."[12] On the fourth anniversary of the revolution, again in a radio address, Phibun declared, "I now want to appeal to the Siamese people for all us to work together to promote political progress so that we can emulate the other nations which have constitutional systems. At present there are many deficiencies in our constitutional system. But it is now time for Siam to become a real democracy. If we have democracy, the press laws should be abolished to allow freedom of speech and expression. If this were done, the government would be able to hear the real voice of the people. It is also a good time for political parties to be allowed to organize. It is not good for a nation when the government does not allow political parties. If parties were allowed, we would be able to hear the real voice of the people."[13] On 1 March 1940 at his monthly press conference, Phibun, now prime minister, told reporters, "The government is working to put a domocratic system into practice, and the idea we want to firmly adhere to is for all of the people to have liberty."[14] Then on June 24th of the same year, during the anniversary of the revolution, the prime minister unveiled the Democracy Monument, a huge structure in the heart of Bangkok circled by the capital's main avenue. A month later, in the midst of all the news from Europe reporting the victories of the dictatorships, Phibun told reporters at his monthly press conference that, "Today in every country the democratic system is being abolished. There are also people who suggest that Thailand too should change to a dictatorship (*phadetkan*), but it has been only six or seven years since the start of Thailand's democratic system. Why should we now return to our old dictatorial system. I want to continue with our democratic system as long as

possible. Not enough time has passed for us to become tired of this new system. This system has prevailed for a long time in other countries. Perhaps over there they have become tired of it. In France it has existed for some 150 years, so maybe for them a change should be expected."[15]

On 7 December 1933, Phraya Phahon, the Army commander-in-chief and concurrently prime minister (from June 1933 until December 1938), gave a welcoming speech to the first-category members who had arrived in the capital after being elected in the first general election. In that speech he said, "Our country Siam has entered into association with the other civilized nations, and as those nations have advanced, our government has also had to progress. Our realm is vast and the population great. The eyes and ears of our king, and the eyes and ears of the government officials cannot reach out to all the people. The king connot know the people's joys and sorrows. Thus there arose the need to change the form of our government to that of the civilized countries. The way to do this is to make the joys and sorrows of the people known to the eyes and ears of the administrators. The constitution is the way to do this. Our greatest concern needs to be the joys and sorrows of the people, and the way to do this is to make whatever joys and sorrows the people have known to the upper levels of the administration. Those who rule must fulfill the needs of the people and must rule such that the people are happy. This is the rule of democracy where the people are the master. For this reason the people have their representatives who are their spokesmen."[16]

Government offices also put out publicity on democracy, such as the information issued by the Department of Publicity pertaining to the indirect elections of the first general election. In the literature to the village representatives electing the first-category members to the National Assembly and which also called for candidates to stand in these indirect elections, it was stated that, "Formerly the people did not participate in government; sovereign power in Siam belonged only to the king, and he alone took all responsibility. Now the people govern themselves, and the time has come for the people themselves to take responsibility. Therefore we have newly promulgated a constitution and have changed over to a democratic system."[17]

The building of democracy also became one of the objectives of the *ratthaniyom* movement initiated by the government in June 1939 following Phibun's appointment as prime minister. In a cabinet directive of 24 July 1939 it was decided that, "In order to have the Thai people progress as a civilized nation and to make the advancement of the present system of democratic rule permanent, it is our objective to bring about good habits among the people."[18] Thus this movement became a means for building a national culture which could support democracy.

The members of the People's Party had distinguished themselves as the leaders

of the constitutional revolution. They saw their party as the guardian of the constitution, and its tutelage of democracy in Siam was used to justify the monopoly it held on power. Throughout the period of the interim provisions under Article 65, this tutelary democracy restricted the ability of the people and their elected representatives to voice their views to the ruling People's Party clique, and it allowed no room for competition to change political power. Nevertheless, as shown from the statements above, the party never lost sight, at least outwardly, of its role as defender of the constitution. Even when democracy had ebbed worldwide before the high tide of dictatorship, the People's Party still never discarded the symbol of democracy.

## Notes

1. For information on King Prajadhipok's preparations to enact a constitution prior to the revolution, see Sonthi Techanan, *Phaenphatthanakanmuang paisu kanpokkhrong rabopprachathipatai tamnaew phrarachadamri khong phrabatsomdetphrapokklaochaoyuhua*, Bangkok, 1985, p.266. For information on the attitudes of earlier Thai monarchs towards a constitutional system, see Eiji Murashima, "The Origin of Modern Official State Ideology in Thailand", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. XIX, No.1 (March 1988), and Murashima Eiji "Gendai tai ni okeru koteki kokka idiorogii no keisei" (The Formation of Official State Ideology in Modern Thailand), in *Kokusai seiji* (*International Relations*), ed, by Nihon kokusai seiji gakkai (The Japan Association of International Relations), v.84, March 1987.
2. Pridi Phanomyong, *Bangruang kiaokap kankotang khanaradsadon lae rabopprachathipatai*, Bangkok, 1972, p.1.
3. Kulap Saipradit, *Buanglang kanpatiwat*, Bangkok, 1947, pp.109-118.
4. Wanlop Rochanawisut, *Yangterk khong thai*, Bangkok, 1979, pp.33-34; *Rachakitchanubeksa* (Thai government gazette), Vol. 49, p.190 (6 July 1932).
5. *Thai Mai*, 9 Jul. 1932.
6. *Ibid.*, 27 Aug. 1933.
7. *Ibid.*, 12 Oct. 1932, 27 Oct. 1932, 23 Nov. 1932.
8. *Raigankanprachum saphaphuthaenradsadon (Minutes of the National Assembly), Samaithi 1 Pho. So. 2475*, pp.549-550, for Pridi's explanation of the People's Party stance given on 27 November 1932 during deliberations on the consitution.
9. The records maintained by the Office of the Director of the National Assembly record 99 as the number of people who were officially recognized as members of the People's Party; see Prasert Pasthamasukhon, *Ratthasaphathai nai ropsisipsongpi*, Bangkok, 1974, p.5. Another source, Thawatt Mokarapong, *History of the Thai Revolution*, Bangkok, Chalermnit, 1972, says that there were 114 members. According to Saguan Tularak, a People's Party member and one of Pridi's lieutenants during the early period after the revolution, the reason for the discrepancy between the two above sources was that the fourteen drivers and gangsters and other such people having no education and not in government service, whom Saguan had hired to participate in the revolution, were not accepted after the revolution as party members. (author's interview with Saguan Tularak, 26 June 1988)
10. *Anusonganphrarachathanphlœngsop Phon To To Chalo Sisarakon*, Bangkok, 1987, p.26.
11. Examples of such in camera decision making were the deliberations at the time of Phraya Phahon's reelection as prime minister, reported in *Thai Mai*, 17 Dec. 1937; and the appointment of Phibun as the new prime minister followed by the meeting of the party leaders to organize the cabinet, reported in *ibid.*, 7 Dec. 1938, 15 Dec. 1938, 17 Dec. 1938, 20 Dec. 1938; also the meeting of all the party members called by Phibun to discuss extension of the interim provisions, reported in *ibid.*, 9 Aug. 1940; and the agreement reached to terminate the interim provisions, reported in *ibid.*, 23 Feb. 1946.
12. *Ibid.*, 26 Jun. 1934.
13. *Ibid.*, 26 Jun. 1936.
14. *Ibid.*, 3 Mar. 1940.
15. National Archives of Thailand (hereafter; NAT.), (2) So. Ro. 0201. 92. 1/4.
16. *Thai Mai*, 9 Dec. 1933.
17. *Ibid.*, 25 Aug. 1933.
18. *Tamruat*, Vol. 1 No. 9 (1 Oct. 1939).

# II
# The Call for Democracy and Opposition to the People's Party

## 1. The Nationalist Party's Call for a Multiparty System

The 24 June seizure of power under the aegis of the People's Party was a coup d'état carried out by a small group of people supported by units of the regular army. Prior to the coup, the organizers had feared exposure of their plans and as a consequence had undertaken no activities at all directed at the populace. However, after successfully carried out their coup, they saw expansion of the party's popular base as an urgent task that had to be carried out in order for the People's Party to maintain its hold on power. From the day of the coup, the expansion of the party had been planned, and one of the first moves the party took to protect itself was to begin recruiting party supporters to spy on the activities of people opposing the party.[1] On 4 July, Phraya Phahon, as Army commander-in-chief, announced that active duty military personnel were welcome to enter the People's Party.[2] This brought a flood of inquiries from government workers all around the country expressing interest in joining the party. In early July a party branch office was set up in Bangkok, and Pridi took responsibility for expanding the People's Party at this early stage. On 15 August the party received permission to register legally as an association, becoming the People's Party Association (*Samakhom Khana Radsadon*), and making it the first political organization ever to be registered in Thailand.

According to the charter of the People's Party Association, all of the original party members who had participated in the 24 June coup d'état were known as the promoters. Their objectives in setting up this political assoition were: 1) to protect the constitution and its constitutional monarchy system, 2) to work for the prosperity of the nation and the welfare of the people in compliance with the six principles of the revolution, and 3) to strengthen the unity and patriotism of the Thai people. The association was organized around a committee of representatives with an executive committee responsible to it. During the first three years, covering the first transitional period, the promoters themselves or people selected by them were to hold positions on the representative committee. During the second transitional period, people elected by party members in each of the provincial branches along with an equal number of first-period representatives were to sit on the representative committee.[3] During this second transitional period it was also

planned to have the first-category members of the National Assembly who were elected in the first general election addd to the party's membership and to have them elected by each provincial branch to the party's representative committee.[4] Through this maneuver the party intended to extend its control over both the first-category and second-category members and thereby hold onto power through its absolute majority in the National Assembly.[5] The first chairman of the party's executive committee, Phraya Nitisatphaisan (1888–1967), the presiding chief judge of the criminal court, was not one of the promoters, but after the coup d'état he cooperated totally with the People's Party. Of the fourteen other members on the executive committee, twelve were promoters.

Phraya Nitisatphaisan had qualified as a British barrister, and not long after the coup he gave a radio address entitled "A Comparison of the English Constitution and the Principles of the Siamese Constitution." In this address he spoke about British political party politics, and although saying that the Siamese constitution did not prohibit the formation of political parties, it would be better to wait until the termination of the interim provisions of the constitution, before members of the National Assembly began organizing political parties. He pointed to examples such as China and Turkey and stated that the world trend was toward one-party systems. He tended to be negative toward introducing a multiparty system into Siam and called for restraints on the organization of other parties.[6] At the end of 1932 and the beginning of 1933 the People's Party Association opened provincial branches in each of the provinces, the primary objective being to enroll the local government officials beginning with the provincial governors, provincial court chief judges, and provincial military and police leaders.

While the People's Party was moving to secure its position, there were other people right after the revolution who began calling for the establishment of a multiparty system. One such person was Luang Wichit (Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, 1896–1962), the deputy director of the Political Bureau in the Foreign Ministry and a history professor at Chulalongkorn University. He had long service in France and had already gained fame as a literary artist and pervader of new knowledge from the West. On 9 November 1931, a little over half a year before the revolution, Wichit had delivered a talk on the radio in which he had praised the king as the father of the people who made every effort to promote his people's happiness.[7] Because of this talk, his friends from his days in France had not brought him into their plans for the revolution, something which greatly disappointed him. At the end of July, following the revolution, Wichit wrote a book in which he said that the stipulations of the provisional constitution gave the People's Party total control over half of the members of the National Assembly; moreover, the system of having a veto over assembly members elected to office made it impossible for an opposition party to form a cabinet. (This veto power was dropped from the

permanent constitution following the king's strong opposition to it.) Wichit demanded that the permanent constitution, scheduled to be promulgated in December, be revised to allow a system whereby all assembly members would be chosen through elections. He said that if his proposal were accepted, another two parties at the least, a centrist progressive party and a rightist liberal party, would come into existence in the National Assembly along with the leftist People's Party. Otherwise, he predicted that retention of the interim provisions of the constitution would turn other political parties into secret societies.[8] At the end of August Wichit published *Political Parties* (Khana Kanmuang), the first publication in Thailand dealing with the topic of political parties. In this work Wichit described the state of political parties in 63 nations around the world, saying that the People's Party was the only party existing in Siam, and reported that it had seventy members.[9]

The *Thai Mai* newspaper, which Wichit help manage, began soon after the revolution to sharply criticize the one party system of the People's Party and stressed the need for a multiparty system. In an article entitled "Political Party Politics", the paper divided party politics into the dictatorial type as seen in Italy's Fascist Party and the multiparty democratic type seen in England, France, and the United States. The article went on to say that in Siam since the revolution no multiparty system had yet come into existence, and it was the constitution and its principles that promoted a democratic multiparty system. The article argued that under the principles of a constitutional system, the people give their assent; under a dictatorial system, the people's approval was not obtained.[10] In another article in its 10 August issue, entitled "Political Parties", the paper argued that, "Among countries governed by democracy, there is not a one where there is only one political party. Under Thailand's new system, too, we do not want to have cliquism (*khanathipatai*), and it is natural to expect that a number of parties have to exist. Under a system of government ruled by the voice of the people, a multiparty system is not a matter of right or wrong, of for or against. Political parties comes naturally into existence. Legal political parties need to be registered, but when applications for registration have been submitted, it is natural to expect that a government that is not despotic will approve them. From the recent words of our king as well, we can sense his conviction that there should be a number of political parties allowed to exist. The rumors circulating about the People's Party monopolizing power, about it not allowing people other than its own to be members of the representative assembly, and about government officials who are not connected with the party not being allowed to continue long in their positions, such rumors are an insult to the People's Party. Hearing such rumors is the same as having the People's Party deceive us when it talks of making a democratic government and handing power over to the people. Its rule is no different than despotic domination. There is now an official planning to set up a new Nationalist Party. He is going to

leave the government at the same time he sets up the party and devote his full attention to political work." This article was Luang Wichit's announcement that he would be inaugurating a Nationalist Party.

As the above article also noted, since the revolution, the king had become a supporter of democracy and a multiparty political system. On 12 November 1932, in an address at Wachirawut College, a school patterned on the English public school model, the king commented that Siam had now introduced democracy which was the form of government practiced in England and the other civilized nations, and under this type of representative system, political parties naturally had to exist. The king then said that in a democracy victory or defeat was determined by who had the larger or smaller numbers, and the one getting the support of the majority was the victor. Thus government naturally alternated between parties as the support of the people changed. But it was the responsibility of the majority not to suppress the minority, and the game between the parties had to be carried on in the spirit of sportsmanship. In a democracy, the king told his listeners, this spirit was especially important.[11]

Joining the *Thai Mai* in criticizing the People's Party was the Bangkok Daily Mail, managed by Lui Khiriwat, Phraya Saraphaiphiphat (1890–1968) and others who were arrested the next year during the Boworadet rebellion. This paper also warned against the People's Party Association being the sole political party in the running. It argued that, "When the people commence actually to govern themselves after the manner of democracies, they will naturally divide themselves first of all into two main parties. These parties may be called whatever one wishes to call them, but one will be conservative in thought and in action and the other will be liberal in thought and in action. Thus are the minds of men divided. Other divisions may come into being as time goes on, but these are the two elemental divisions — liberal and conservative. For this reason there is no political justification for the formation of a party at this time by the leaders of the original movement. If they want democracy, if they want government of the people, by the people and for the people, they want not one party, blessed with the membership of the present controllers of the Government and having as its slogan merely patriotism. They want at least two parties, made up of men who think and act differently; who have different opinions and who express different opinions, whose ideals are different, and whose plans for the future policies of the country are different. It is only from this juxtaposition of the thoughts and actions of men that communal wisdom arises.... If there is but one party, there can be no democracy; there can be only autocracy and demagoguery.... We are forced to continue to believe that the People's Party Association has all the potential evils of a fascist organization...."[12]

In October 1932, Luang Wichit resigned from the government and turned his attention to organizing the Nationalist Party (*Khana Chat*). Two months later, on

10 December, the permanent constitution was promulgated. Article 14 of this document recognized the freedom to organize under the law. After confirming the validity of this article, Luang Wichit, on 7 January 1933, submitted the Nationalist Party to be registered in the same way as the People's Party Association. The party listed twelve organizers; the party leader was Phraya Thonawanikmontri (Donavanik Montri, 1895–1972)[13], who had study in the United States and was now a high-level government official with the same ranking as the undersecretary of the Agriculture and Commerce Ministry; Luang Wichit was party secretary-general. Four of the twelve organizers were officials working in the Finance, Interior, and Agriculture and Commerce ministries; five were retired government officials; and the remaining three were private citizens. Among the retired officials were two former high-ranking soldiers who had been retired directly after the revolution. One was Major General Phraya Senasongkhram (1887–1963), former commander of the First Division; the other was the already mentioned Phraya Saraphaiphiphat, who had been a naval captain. One year prior to the revolution, Phraya Saraphaiphiphat had written a piece entitled "The Life of the Country" in which he had endeavored to introduce the concept of democracy. This work had been serialized in the *Thai Mai* news paper.[14]

The Nationalist Party announced that it was a political party founded on democracy and nationalism whose objectives were: 1) national independence and the welfare of the people, 2) the promotion of political education, 3) cooperation among party members on political matters, 4) the support of a basic policy that adhered strictly to the principles of democracy and to the constitutional monarchy system, that maintained military power commensurate with the nation's strength in order to maintain independence, and that upheld the advancement of the nation's religion, education and its glorious traditions, 5) the preservation and promotion of domestically produced goods, 6) priority to the interests of the people over the interests, 7) support of the nation's agriculture and industry. The party also said its immediate efforts were to concentrate on training those people who so desired, whether party members or not, in politics, economics and administrative procedures.[15] This training was to be directed at the people who would be standing as candidates in the election, and the party also intended that if as a result of the election it got the majority, it would seek to form a new government.[16] The *Thai Mai* newspaper, which became the Nationalist Party's semi-official party organ, argued that, "The Nationalist Party has the constitutional right to function openly and legally. Now is a good opportunity to accept the party's application to be registered in the same way as the People's Party Association, and to be recognized as the second political party. Now is the time to give up this misconception of cliquism (*khanathipatai*) which up to now has been pinned on the government of the People's Party, and instead confirm that we have a domocracy."[17]

Meanwhile, the newspaper *Satchang*, known to be a mouthpiece of the People's Party[18] and edited by Sim Wirawaithaya (1909–1943), who was a lawyer, one of Pridi's ablest students and one of the 99 members of the People's Party, carried a series caustic articles that were filled with malice and hostility towards the Nationalist Party and its attempt to be registered. Perceiving in the Nationalist Party the danger of a rebellion and the overthrow of the People's Party government by force, this newspaper argued that, "The organizers of the Nationalist Party are dissatisfied anti-government elements who had been dismissed and retired by the present government. Looking at this cast of characters, one cannot call the Nationalist Party a political party for a civilized country, and there is something devious behind the words they speak. Just because the freedom to organize is in the constitution does not mean we should accept whatever comes along."[19] Later the paper said that, "Under the rule of a democratic system, all citizens possess complete freedom, and equality is guaranteed by the constitution. The fate of the government too depends on having the support of the majority of the people. However the Nationalist Party is a party for a small number of rich people; it is a party dangerous to the workers and peasants. The People's Party exists as the real representative of the people and is representing all of the people, therefore there is no need now for another political party. Surely there is no one looking forward to the formation of the Nationalist Party. Worse still, the Nationalist Party is training a military force, making it possible for them to take up arms against the government. To allow this party to be registered is only inviting needless unrest."[20] Joining with the *Satchang*, another newspaper, 24 *Mithuna* (*The 24th of June*), edited by Saguan Tularak (1902–), who, like Sim Wirawaithaya, was a member of the People's Party, was one of Pridi's best students and a lawyer, also opposed the Nationalist Party for similar reasons. But other newspapers remained silent about the issue or looked favorably on the Nationalist Party.[21]

The government also regarded the Nationalist Party with a distrustful eye. It viewed the group as a royalist faction, and sent out spies to report on the movements of the principal leaders.[22] Nevertheless the government agreed to open negotiations with the party organizers over their application to register, and these began from 20 January 1933.[23] On the 25th there was an incident when Phraya Senasongkhram, one of the Nationalist Party organizers, was shot at while returning home after attending a party meeting which had been called to prepare for negotiations with the government.[24]

## 2. The Royalists Oppose the People's Party Clique

The king's quick acceptance of the demands of the People's Party at the time of the coup d'état had started relations off well between the king and the party. During the drafting of the permanent constitution, Prime Minister Mano, the chairman of the drafting subcommittee, consulted the king on every aspect of the draft, and the fact that he could report to the National Assembly on 16 November 1932 that he had received the king's complete approval and had gained his majesty's complete satisfaction[25] indicates that up to the time of the enactment of the constitution, relations between the king and the People's Party were generally smooth. Following the promulgation of the permanent constitution, the National Assembly reelected Mano as prime minister, and he formed a new twenty-man cabinet, ten of whom were members of the People's Party.

With the formation of the new cabinet, Pridi commenced work on the draft of his cherished economic plan. This plan was one of the six principles of the revolution, and if left unfulfilled would, in Pridi's words, leave the revolution unfinished.[26] But it quickly caused a confrontation in the cabinet. The conservative faction, led by the prime minister, the foreign minister, Phraya Siwisanwacha (Srivisar Vacha, 1897–1968), and by Phraya Song, a minister without portfolio, clashed with the radical faction of young People's Party members represented by Pridi in the Cabinet. Based on his French socialist training, Pridi had outlined a plan calling for the state to buy up agricultural land and organize impoverished peasants into general cooperatives.[27] The conservatives close to the king denounced the plan as communist. But many young People's Party members in the cabinet and assembly remained united in their support of Pridi and his economic plan. This situation caused a good deal of apprehension among the conservatives. Cracks quickly appeared in relations between the two sides and these rapidly widened. In the midst of this increasingly uncertain political situation, the Nationalist Party suddenly appeared with its request for registration.

In the negotiations that took place after January 20th between the government and the Nationalist Party organizers, the latter pressed the government to accept a multiparty system. If such a system were not accepted, then out of fairness they wanted the government to abolish the one-party system under the People's Party and make a genuine no-party system where no one party or faction would monopolized power.[28] This proposal by the Nationalist Party caught the king's attention, and he began arguing for the total abolition of political parties. On 31 January 1933, the king addressed a letter to Mano in which he wrote that at a time when the people had but a brief history with the constitution and still did not have enough understanding of constitutional politics, competition between political parties would arise and intensify thereby harming the tranquility of the state. Only

after the people had come to understand constitutional politics would political parties begin to be a benefit to the people. He then told the prime minister that during the period of the interim provisions, the People's Party and all other parties were to be abolished, and following the first general elections, the appointed second-category members were to be selected from intellectuals unaffiliated with parties and factions.[29] Thus the king's attitude had taken a 180 degree turn from his call three months earlier for a multiparty system. The primary objective of the king's announcement was not to withhold permission for the Nationalist Party to organize, but was aimed at getting the People's Party disbanded. In making his appeal, the king was attempting to directly challenge the domination of the People's Party clique and its control over the army, the National Assembly, and the cabinet.

Contradictory explanations were later given by the People's Party and the king concerning events leading up to the latter's turnabout on political parties. On 31 January 1935, during deliberations in the National Assembly on the king's nine demands at the time of his abdication (which will be discussed later), the government's explanation was that prior to the Nationalist Party's application for registration, Luang Wichit had conferred with Pridi on the matter, and the latter had made no objection. Later at a meeting of the People's Party, a majority of the members had also approved of allowing the Nationalist Party to organize, and Prime Minister Mano too had expressed his approval to Pridi. Pridi had even gone so far as to instruct the People's Party Association to make prepartions for contesting the upcoming election against the Nationalist Party. Then for some reason Mano completely reversed his stand and began arguing for the end of political parties. He called in Luang Wichit telling him that if the Nationalist Party would withdraw its application, the People's Party would also be abolished. The prime minister then made his report to the king, following which the king issued his letter abolishing all political parties.[30] The king countered this explanation by the People's Party arguing that he had not been opposed to political parties, that his feeling had been that political parties were fundamental to democracy and had to exist. But the People's Party was intent on rejecting the Nationalist Party's application to be registered, and for this reason the king said he addressed his letter to Mano to have all parties abolished rather than allow the People's Party to continue as the sole legal party.[31] The People's Party held the king and Mano totally responsible for abolishing political parties, but as already pointed out, members of the Pridi faction in the People's Party had voiced strong disapproval of the Nationalist Party and had shown no inclination to accommodate the organization of another political party.

Having received the king's letter, Mano made the decision at a cabinet meeting held on 16 February 1933 to have military and civilian officials as well as the

appointed members of the National Assembly (at the time all members of the assembly were still appointees) resign from all political organizations which in effect meant from the People's Party since it was the only political organization functioning. However it was also decided that these officials would be able to postpone their withdrawals from the People's Party Association until replacements could be found who could take over their party duties.[32] The cabinet's decision was then passed through the ministries and departments where members were urged to withdraw from the People's Party. Phraya Phahon, as both Army commander-in-chief and a minister without portfolio, explained the cabinet decision to the military officers in the party saying that the original purpose for having soldiers enter the People's Party Association was because the transition into the constitutional period had been a time of upheaval, and it had been necessary to strengthen the association in order to uphold the security of the nation. Now order existed in the nation, and there was no longer the need for soldiers to be members of the association. Phraya Phahon told his officers that hereafter the army together with the king, the supreme commander of the nation's forces, would remain neutral, would be prepared to sacrifice their lives for the people and the nation, and would not become the military wing of any party or faction. Should any group cause a disturbance, or should any danger threaten the nation, religion, or king, then it was the duty of the army to suppress it. Henceforth the army had to truly gain the trust of the people.[33]

The decision to order government officials to withdraw from the People's Party Association was not strongly opposed by the People's Party members in the cabinet. This along with Phraya Phahon's explanation to the Army, that the time had now ended when the primary responsibility of the party was to support the government during its unstable stage at the start of the revolution, would indicate that the People's Party Association no longer strongly felt that it had to maintain a broad base. It would also seem there was a strong feeling of deference to the king and to Mano. Despite this acquiescence however, the leaders of the People's Party had no intention of sanctioning the dissolution of their party clique and its grip on the government which was the ultimate aim of Mano and the king.

In March 1933 Pridi completed the outline draft of his economic plan, but it was rejected by the conservative leadership of the government, which escalated the criticism coming from the radical faction in the People's Party. The conservative faction declared that such an important policy change as that advocated by the economic plan required the consent of the people. On 1 April, with the king's support,[34] the conservatives overrode the constitution and adjourned the National Assembly in what they said was a move to prepare for a general election which was to choose representatives genuinely elected by the people. The constitution was partially suspended and the cabinet given legislative authority. The entire cabinet

resigned, and a new Mano cabinet was installed without Pridi and his supports. But the new eighteen-member cabinet still included eight members of the people's party; seven were military leaders: Phraya Phahon, Phraya Song, Phraya Rit, Phra Prasatphithayayut (Phra Prasasna, 1894–1949), Phibun, Luang Sin, and Luang Suphachalasai; the eighth was Prayun Phamonmontri, a minister without portfolio. The next day, 2 April, the new cabinet used its legislative powers to enact anti-communist legislation intended to deal with the Pridi faction. With this Pridi had no choice but to leave the country, and on the 12th he departed for France. On that same day the king's criticism of Pridi's economic plan was also published.[35] The king and his conservative allies led by the prime minister had closed down the National Assembly declaring that they had done so for the true good of the people; but in so doing, they had also eliminated one of the principal power bases of the People's Party.

Mano now moved quickly to eliminate the entire People's Party Association. On 14 April he canceled the agreement allowing government officials to postpone their withdrawals from the association until replacements had been found. Instead the prime minister ordered all officials to withdraw within the next seven days.[36] Since the members of the People's Party Association were by and large government officials and military officers, this order virtually forced the association to cease functioning. To overcome the situation, the leaders of the People's Party Association decided on 22 April to change the association into the People's Party Club, a friendship organization having no political objectives.[37] With this move legal political organizations disappeared from Thailand, and the country entered a period with no political parties.

By disbanding the People's Party Association, which had been a legal political party, and by pushing through the adjournment of the National Assembly, which was one of the power bases of the People's Party, the conservatives were able to banish Pridi's civilian radical faction from Thailand's political world. But this did not mean that the king and Mano had achieved their aim of disolving the People's Party clique. The military faction of the party under Phraya Phahon and Phibun still held control over the army.

## 3. The 20 June Coup d'état to Preserve the Constitution

With the civilian faction in disarray, the conservatives moved against the military faction of the People's Party, and during June 1933 the party found itself confronting a challenge to its control over the army. According to the 14 June issue of *Thai Mai,* the four top Army leaders in the People's Party, namely Phraya Phahon, the commander-in-chief, Phraya Song, the deputy commander-in-chief, Praya Rit, the commander of the artillery, and Phra Prasatphithayayut, superintendent of the Army education section, had already submitted letters of resignation postdated to 24 June with the intention of resigning entirely from their public offices and from their commissions in the Army. The paper reported that the four had already taken leaves of absence, and the reason for their actions was not known.[38] At the special court trials of the Phraya Song faction in 1939, it was concluded that these resignations had been part of a conspiracy involving Phraya Song. He had been against Pridi's economic plan; he had opposed the civilian faction and had been an opponent of Phibun and his faction of young officers in the People's Party; and according to testimony at the trails, Phraya Song had been competing for leadership over the Army. He had therefore joined with Mano to help the prime minister reestablish the old monarchic system, and in this endeavor had brought about the resignation of all four military leaders in order to force Phraya Phahon to resign.[39].

After the four military leaders had submitted their letters of resignation, the Mano government immediately appointed the former commander of the First Army, Phraya Phichaisongkhram, as acting commander-in-chief, and the former chief of staff of the First Army, Phraya Sisithisongkhram (1891-1933), as chief of operations. With the reinstatement of the top military leadership under the old regime, the young officers in the People's Party realized that they all were going to be swept away in the coming crisis.[40] Headed by lieutenant-colonel Phibun and Navy commander Luang Suphachalasai, these young People's Party members prevailed upon Phraya Phahon to lead them in a move against the resurgent old regime. On 20 June they issued a condemnation of the government's anti-constitutional conduct, then carried out a military coup demanding the reopening of the National Assembly and forcing the Mano cabinet to resign. On the 21st, following a conference with the chairman of the National Assembly, the king issued a royal command reopening the assembly and appointing Phraya Phahon as the new prime minister. Phahon was also reinstated as commander-in-chief of the Army. Meanwhile Phibun, who was assistant to the commander-in-chief and who had played a leading role in the coup to uphold the constitution, stepped in to become virtually the commander of the Army. The unconstitutional Mano government, which had come to power eighty days earlier, was swept aside; the People's Party

clique once again had control of the military; and the National Assembly had been reopened. But the disbanded People's Party Association was not revived.

Following the 20 June coup d'état, the biggest fear of the new Phahon government was that it would be denounced by the king and the conservatives as communist for having overthrown the conservative government and for being close to Pridi who had been chastised as a communist. On the day of the coup, Phraya Phahon called together the foreign business community in Bangkok and told them that the new government was not going to pursue a communist policy.[41] Then on the 22nd at the hall of the reopened National Assembly, Prime Minister Phahon told reporters that the memory of Pridi's economic plan and the king's criticism of it needed to be erased from everyone's mind, and that he abhorred communism more than anything else.[42] During August there were numerous articles in the Bangkok newspapers on whether or not Pridi should be allowed to return to Thailand. Then on 1 September the Department of Publicity announced that Pridi had declared he would follow the government's decisions regarding economic policy and that he was prepared to cooperate with the government; he had therefore received the king's permission to return to Thailand.[43] At the end of September Pridi arrived back in Bangkok.

With the 20 June coup d'état, the People's Party clique had reasserted its control over the military; it had reopened of the National Assembly which it controlled; and its continued one-sided suppress of other political parties meant that the only means for anti-People's Party groups to oppose the government was by military force. Bangkok was filled with rumors of plots against the government, and on 16 July Phibun and Suphachalasai sent warnings to eight individuals including Prince Boworadet (1878–1953), defense minister under the old regime, as well as M.C. Wongnirachon Thewakul, a former director-general of the secret police, and Phraya Saraphaiphiphat, ordering them to cease their conspiring and other machinations against the government.[44]

At the end of August 1933 the government began accepting candidates for village representative who would cast votes in the upcoming first general election (this was to be indirect election) to elect first-category members to the National Assembly. At the same time the government also began accepting candidates for first-category members. Starting in October elections took place in each province, some holding elections on 1 October; most provinces holding theirs during November; and all elections were concluded by 28 November.[45]

In the midst of the elections, on 11 October, at 17:30 in the afternoon, in Khorat, gateway to Thailand's Northeast, a pro-royalist army of five battalions began an advance on Bangkok. Leading this rebel army was Prince Boworadet. During his youth this prince had spent twelve years studying in England and was known as one of the enlightened members of the royal family. In June 1931 as

defense minister, Boworadet had resigned from the cabinet in protest after his request for a raise in pay for the military had been rejected. The cabinet had insisted that the government's straitened circumstances and its revenue shortfall due to the depression would not permit such a raise. Thereafter increasingly dissatisfied with the conservative elders of the royal family, Boworadet had begun searching for a way to bring about a constitutional monarchy.[46] The People's Party had come to power, but the prince had grown increasingly alarmed at the course its government was taking, and in October 1933 he was aroused to action by a core of officers in the Khorat region who planned to attack the government in Bangkok.

Boworadet took up command of the pro-royalist forces only a few days before their advance on the capital began. Their plan was to assemble forces from the outlying provinces in the capital which they expected would compel the government forces to retreat, thereby forcing the government to step down without a fight.[47] On 12 October, the day after leaving Khorat, at 9:00 in the morning, the train carrying Boworadet's army reached Don Muang on the northern outskirts of Bangkok. It set up its command post in the Air Force headquarters. Earlier on that same morning the deputy commander of the royalist troops, Phraya Sisithisongkhram, had led two engineer battalions from Ayutthaya down to Don Muang and was already occupying the Air Force headquarters. Phraya Sisithisongkhram had studied in Germany together with Phraya Phahon and prior to the 1932 revolution had been invited to participate in the coup d'état. He was an proponent of constitutionalism but did not agree with forcing a constitution on the king through a coup d'état.[48] On the 12th, at 14:00, Phraya Sisithisongkhram sent a message in the name of the National Salvation Party (*Khana Ku Banmuang*) to Prime Minister Phahon demanding the resignation of the entire cabinet. The demand in essence said that the government had failed to do anything at all about acts which had harmed the regal dignity of the king,[49] the supreme commander of all Siamese military forces. Moreover the government had let Pridi return home without showing proof of his innocence, thus causing misgivings among the people that in the future the government of Siam was likely to promote communism. The message then announced that the govenrment was hereby being given one hour to resign; and until the king had appointed a new cabinet, the National Salvation Party would take control of the government. No military officers then on active duty would be allowed to join the new cabinet.[50] The next day, 13 October, Prince Boworadet sent Phraya Phahon a note setting forth six demand: 1) a firm commitment to the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, 2) guarantees that government would be based on the constitutional principle of majority rule and not on the use of military force as had been done with the 20 June coup d'état, and to this end political parties were to be legally recognized, 3) ordinary civilian and military government officials were to be prohibited from participating in politics, and Army and Navy officers from

the commander-in-chief on down were not to concurrently hold different political posts, 4) the appointment of government officials was to be made based on ability and not on political connections, 5) the appointment of second-category members had to be the genuine prerogative of the king, and 6) the Army was not to concentrate its armaments in one place, but was to disperse them among the forces in the provinces. Boworadet added that if the government accepted these six demands which were intended to uphold peace and bring about a truly democratic government, then his forces would withdraw.[51]

Boworadet's forces also distributed leaflets which set forth their reasons for attacking the government. These said, "When the king granted us the constitution, we expected that Thailand would progress, but the Pridi faction used it as a tool to make the National Assembly comply with their selfish ideas and their efforts to introduce a communist economic policy. Because of this the king adjourned the assembly, enacted anti-communist laws, and banished Pridi from the country. After this however, the Pridi faction grabbed power through a coup d'état, reopened the National Assembly where they occupied most of the seats, and they have used their military power to suppress innocent people. In forcing the king to let Pridi return to the country, the government also has failed to do anything about the unconstitutional acts of some people who have insulted the king. These facts show that this clique government is intent on trying to hang permanently onto power, and that furthermore it intends to dethrone the king and open the way for implementing a communist policy. Throughout the country officials in the government and the military have recognized the danger posed to the country by Pridi, Phraya Phahon, Phibun and Suphachalasai and have now brought them and their faction to justice."[52]

The six demands of the National Salvation Party, its declaration to the people denouncing the government as moving towards communism, the suppression of communists used by the royalist forces as their reason for mobilizing troops,[53] all these show that the rebellion was connected in an unbroken line to events at the beginning of the year when the king and the conservatives close to him first criticized Pridi's economic plan. Their criticism against communists was also inseparable from criticism of the anti-democratic nature of the People's Party. Inherent in Boworadet's six demands was the denunciation the way the People's Party used the interim provisions of the constitution as grounds for its arbitrary decision-making in the National Assembly and the cabinet, and for its reliance on military force to maintain its power. The six demands called for majority rule, the freedom to organize political parties, and the non-interference of the military in politics.

The government responded to Boworadet's demands on 15 October in its Proclamation No.20. Taking up the issue of freedom to organize political parties,

the government said in its proclamation that, "Political parties will naturally come about in the National Assembly following the general election. The present government is not at all a one-party clique government; however the appearance of parties too quickly will harm the stability of the constitution." Regarding the demand that the military remain uninvolved in politics, the government responded that, "At this early stage of the revolution with the constitution only recently enacted, were the military to remain uninvolved in politics, the stability of the constitution would be endangered."[54] Thus the government rejected the demands with the reason that it was protecting the constitution and went on to charge in its proclamation that the pro-royalist forces were going to abolish the constitution and bring back the old absolute monarchy. The government continued its attack saying that in such an eventuality it was possible that Boworadet would make himself the new king.[55] In this way the government countered Boworadet's principal demand for representative democracy by charging that the prince and the other leaders of the rebellion were a reactionary force out to reinstate the old order. In contrast the People's Party and its government were the force preserving the constitution. The government had taken a strong stand against the rebellion and left no room for compromise.

On 13 October the government reached a decision to suppress the rebellion by force, and on the evening of the game day troops under Phibun's command began the attack. On the 16th Boworadet's forces pulled out of Don Muang and retreated to Khorat. On the 25th they also abandoned Khorat, and the major leaders of the rebellion, including Prince Boworadet and Phraya Senasongkhram, who had been in direct command of the troops, fled to Indo-China. In the rebellion the govenment lost fifteen soldiers and two policemen, while on the pro-royalist side Phraya Sisithisongkhram was killed and two or three officers committed suicide. During the ensuing investigation 560 military officers, Interior Ministry officials and national railroad officials were arrested on suspicion of having participated in the rebellion.[56] Included among these were a number of the organizers of the Nationalist Party notably Phraya Saraphaiphiphat, Phraya Thonawanikmontri and his wife, and Phra Sængsitthikan.[57]

## 4. Legislation to Protect the Constitution

Following suppression of the rebellion, the government had the National Assembly prepare a new law setting up a special court to try all the people arrested on suspicion of complicity in the rebellion. The decisions of the new special court were final; those found guilty had no right of appeal. The court immediately went into session, and from the beginning of December 1933 until September the following year, it handed down a succession of death and life imprisonment sentences, all of which were later reduced.

During the Boworadet rebellion the government also applied a law passed by the monarchy which prohibited criticism of the king's government. In 1927 the monarchy had added to this law the "Crime of Speech and Actions Causing Hatred of the Government". With the Boworadet rebellion, the government began applying this law against government workers who were caught saying the government was communist or that the government's radio announcements were untrue. These people were taken before the special court and prosecuted along with the participants of the rebellion.[58] The government then extended the application of this crime to include the first-category assembly members. In early September 1934, during questioning in the assembly, Phraya Thephahasadin (1878–1951), a first-category member and the deputy chairman of the National Assembly, criticized the government saying that the English textbook used in the public middle schools contained materials teaching communism, and the government was thus approving of communism. He complained too that the government was unable to control crime, and that it was incapable of planning for the betterment of the nation's economic life. The government was using the nation's taxes simply to protect its own power, and therefore it should resign.[59] Phraya Thephahasadin was prosecuted under the "Crime of Speech and Actions Causing Hatred of the Government" despite the fact that he was a retired lieutenant-general and well known in Thailand as the commander of the Thai forces sent to Europe to participate in the First World War. Before the revolution he had been a supporter of constitutionalism, and for this reason he had not been on good terms with a number of the members of the royal family.[60] Thus questioning in the assembly, even by highly influential first-category members like Phraya Thephahasadin, was strictly controlled, and freedom to criticize the government became virtually nonexistent.

Government leaders also severely attacked their critics outside of government. In a radio address on the second anniversary of the revolution in June 1934, Phibun called anti-government groups "a bunch of constitution haters", and Pridi called them "enemies of the constitution."[61] Immediately after settling the rebellion, the government drew up a new Law for the Preservation of the Constitution which the still totally appointed National Assembly passed unanimously on 2 November

1933. This law empowered the authorities to move beforehand against persons whom the government suspected might commit acts creating fear or antagonism in the people towards the constitution. Following an investigation by an administrative committee, the interior minister could order such persons restricted to their place of residence. If the government suspected that a rebellion was being plotted, it could on the basis of this suspicion alone have people banished to remote regions of the kingdom, one place being Mæhongson province, known as the "Siberia of Thailand". On 6 October 1934, Pridi, as interior minister, had nine people banished to remote regions of the kingdom. Two of these were retired Rear Admiral Phraya Winaisunthon and Chot Khumphan (1899–1971), holder of a doctorate in economics from Germany and who had devised the plan for the unsuccessful revolution during the Sixth Reign.[62] On 16 April 1935 retired Major General Phraya Anuphaptraiphop was banished along with two other people.[63].

The government did not only use the pretext of protecting the constitution to strengthen its position. On 2 December 1933, Prime Minister Phahon gathered together nine officers from both of the military services and another nine civilian government officials, a total of 27 people, and all agreed to form the Society for the Constitution (*Samakhom Khana Ratthathamanun*). After receiving the king's consent, the new society was registered on 14 December. Its objectives were to protect the constitution and to promote unity among the people. To achieve these the society intended to organize down to the village level. The rules and regulations of the new society resembled those which had been drafted by Pridi for the now defunct People's Party Association. Pridi was named chairman of the new group, Phraya Nitisatphaisan was made deputy chairman, and Luang Wichit was named secretary-general.[64] The organizers of the new society explained that it was a body set up to protect the constitution, that it was politically neutral, and therefore it was not a political party.[65] But it was clear that the purpose of the Society for the Constitution was to broaden the base of support for the People's Party clique. In semi-coercive fashion the society enrolled the first-category members of the assembly into its membership. From April 1934 it began recruiting ordinary members, and in August of that year it had copies of the constitution reproduced which were distributed to all of the provinces. During 1934 and 1935 the Society for the Constitution opened branches in each of the provinces, and like the People's Party Association before it, the leaders of these branch offices were the provincial governors, the provincial court chief justices, and other high-ranking provincial officials.[66]

The government used the opportunity of the Boworadet rebellion to arrest and punish many of its critics; and again using the pretext of protecting the constitution, it enacted laws to deal with government critics and also to set up the Society for the Constitution which further strengthened the control the People's Party

clique held on the government. One of the clearest indicators of the clique-like nature of the People's Party came during the appointment of second-category assembly members following the first general election.[67] This was the first time after an election that second-category members were appointed, and the way these people were to be selected was, as suggested by the king's letter at the beginning of the year abolishing all political parties and by Boworadet's six demands, a matter of great interest to groups opposed to the People's Party. Because the second-category members appointed at this time would sit in the assembly for the duration of the interim provisions, who controlled the government for the next ten years at least would be decided by these appointments. During the process of selecting candidates, the king repeatedly asked to see the list of people the government intended to propose for second-category membership, but the government continually put him off, finally sending him the list on 9 December, one day before the opening ceremony of the National Assembly.[68] In so doing, the People's Party had given the king absolutely no leeway to interpose his opinion which he had hoped to do through his appointment of second-category members. Among the nine demands that the king would submit prior to his abdication (which will be discussed below) was one demanding reform of the procedure for appointing second-category members. As it turned out these posts were monopolized by the People's Party. The government countered criticism of its apparent monopoly arguing that of the 76 second-category members in the assembly only 47 were People's Party members.[69] These 47 acknowledged party members had been appointed from the original 99 members who had participated in the 24 June 1932 coup d'état, but most of the remaining 31 second-category members were soldiers and other people who had cooperated with the People's Party in the 20 June 1933 coup to preserve the constitution and during the Boworadet rebellion and as such could be regarded as quasi-People's Party members. The People's Party was also careful to bring elected first-category members into their fold, and following the first general election, two first-category members were appointed to the new Phahon cabinet as ministers without portfolio.

## 5. The King Abdicates

On 12 January 1934, hard on the heels of the government's blatantly manipulated selection of second-category members, the king suddenly departed from the country saying he needed to seek treatment for a chronic eye ailment. The king did not accept the second-category members selected by the People's Party clique as true national representatives, and from his exile outside the country he used his constitutional veto powers to reject bills drafted by the government controlled National Assembly. His first veto came on 15 February when he rejected the draft of an inheritance law the assembly had drawn up. The king wanted the bill amended to clearly state that crown property would not be taxed under the new law. The government had already declared that crown property was exempt from taxation which made the king's demand for a clearly written exemption appear less like a genuine demand and more like part of his battle over honor against the People's Party. On 4 August the National Assembly overrode the king's veto 89 to 35 and with it his demand for an amendment.[70] Thereafter a bill revising the criminal codes, approved by the assembly on 20 August, and bills revising the law on criminal procedure and the military criminal code, approved on 22 August, were all vetoed by the king. The revision of these three laws removed the clause which up until then stipulated that in cases where the court handed down sentences of death or life imprisonment, the minister of justice could bring such cases before the king and request that his majesty, as the judge of last resort, make the final judgement. This revision was vetoed by the king. During the deliberations on the three bills, many of the first-category members were opposed to eliminating the clause in question as it was pointed out that the king had often reduced the sentences brought before him. Eliminating this royal prerogative, it was argued, would curtail the rights of the people. Such debate gave the king encouragement, and in vetoing the bills he reasoned that the government could not ignore the opposition coming from the elected and therefore true representatives of the people as this would make the government appear to be opposing the true will of the people. This could generate criticism that the government was railroading the law revisions through the assembly, and it could easily be suspected that revisions were meant to facilitate the prosecution of political crimes. Nevertheless, on 29 September the National Assembly again approved the three bills by a 75 to 36 margin, thereby again overturning the king's veto.[71]

Following the selection of the second-category members and Prajadhipok's retreat into exile in England, relations between the king and the People's Party government deteriorated to the point where the king looked upon the government as his enemy.[72] On 20 September 1934 he submitted via the Thai legation in Paris a list of demands for negotiating with the government in Bangkok; then on 10

October, before the government had answered, the king sent a telegram to the regency in Bangkok indicating his intention to abdicate. The government, he said in his telegram, never consulting him at all on matters of government and was simply forcing its decisions through the assembly. Were he to remain on the throne, the government would use him simply as its enemy to further its own designs. The government immediately dispatched a group of representatives to England under the chairman of the National Assembly, Chaophraya Si Thamathibet (1885–1976) and Luang Thamrong in an attempt to work out a mutual understanding. On 21 December the king handed this group his nine demands which if accepted could, he said, lay the groundwork for a working relationship. In the first of his demands the king pointed out that when the People's Party had carried out their coup d'état and demanded a constitution, it had been the king's understanding that the People's Party wanted to set up a British form of democracy, and this is what he had conceded to. Instead however, the People's Party was intent on holding onto power for ten years. It had picked the second-category members and was using the system it had created to limit power only to its own clique and to impose its despotic rule on the country. This had created opposition groups who wanted to overthrow the government by force thereby creating a situation that endangered the internal peace and tranquility of the country. Consequently during the period of the interim provisions, the system of second-category members should be abolished forthwith and replaced by a system of selecting representatives through elections. The king's second demand was that for the duration of the existence of the appointed second-category members, the constitution should be amended to require a three-quarters majority to override the king's veto instead of the simple majority then stipulated. His third demand was for respecting the constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of speech, expression, assembly, and political organization. The forth called for abolition of the Law for the Preservation of the Constitution; the fifth demanded commutation of sentences for political crimes; the sixth demanded that pensions be paid to government officials who had been dismissed for political reasons; the seventh demanded the release of people prosecuted for rebellion and the dropping of all cases being prepared for prosecution; the eight demand was that the size of the royal guard and its budget be maintained at the status quo. The king's nine and last demand was that the procedures for petitioning his majesty be set down and legislated in a manner acceptable to the king.[73]

In setting forth his demands, Prajadhipok was standing on his position as king in a direct challenge to the authority of the People's Party clique. These demands to amend the constitution and revise the laws would have destroyed the power base of the ruling clique, and the government refused to make any concessions. Grasping at the faint hope that he might be able to gain the support of the elected first-category members, the king called on the government to placed his nine demands before the

National Assembly to be debated. On 31 January 1935 the government suddenly presented to the assembly a draft of its answer rejecting the king's demands and hurriedly pushed through the debate. That same day, without allowing the first-category members sufficient time to debate the draft, the assembly gave its approval of the government's reply with no opposition voiced. What would be the king's last note to the government was delivered on 17 February. On the 21st the government rejected it. With this the king's abdication was sealed. On 2 March 1935 the King Prajadhipok handed his letter of abdication to the representatives of the government. In it he said, "I have never had any objection to handing over to all the people the sovereign power I have held. But I never intended to hand this sovereignty over to an individual or a party who did not listen to the true voice of the people and who tried to wield absolute power."[74] During the 1970s these words became a rallying cry for the democratic movement which rose up in opposition to the military government. At the time of his abdication, Prajadhipok named no successor, and in accordance with the line of ascent set forth in the royal household codes, the succession fell to Anantha Mahidon (1925–1946), a nine year old prince then living in Switzerland.

## Notes

1. NAT. So. Ro. 201. 16/2.
2. NAT. So. Ro. 201. 16/36.
3. *Sayamkanmuang,* Vol.1, No.3 (28 Aug 1932), pp.43-46.
4. NAT. So. Ro. 3. 10/1.
5. *Raigankanprachum saphaphuthænradsadon Samaithi 1 Pho. So. 2476,* p.283, containing Pridi's correspondence to Leng Srisomwong which shows that he had the idea of a party that would span both first- and second-category assembly members.
6. *Botbandit,* vol.7, no.5 (Aug. 1932).
7. *Duang prathip,* vol.1, no.10 (11 Nov. 1931).
8. Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, *Kanmuang kanpokkhrong khong Krungsayam,* Bangkok, Thai Mai, 1932, p.169.
9. Idem, *Khanakanmuang,* Bangkok, Thai Mai, 1923, p.169.
10. *Thai Mai,* 23 Jul. 1932, 25 Jul. 1932.
11. King Prajadhipok, *Phraboromrachowat phrarachathan nai kanprachampi khong wachirawuthayalai,* Bangkok, 1932.
12. *Bangkok Daily Mail,* 12 Jul. 1932.
13. *Phya Donavanik Montri,* Bangkok, 1973, p.33.
14. Phraya Saraphaiphiphat, *Chiwit khong prathet,* 1933, Siam Free Press.
15. *Thai Mai,* 10 Jan. 1933.
16. *Ibid.,* 16 Jan. 1933.
17. *Ibid.,* 10 Jan. 1933.
18. Chamlong Ittharong, *Lakhonkanmuang,* Bangkok, 1949, p.153.
19. *Satchang chabapphiset thi 6,* 18 Jan. 1933.
20. *Satchang chabapphiset thi 7,* 25 Jan. 1933.
21. *Thai Mai,* 14 Jan. 1933, 17 Jan. 1933, 18 Jan. 1933.
22. NAT. So. Ro. 201. 16/35.
23. *Thai Mai,* 24 Jan. 1933, 26 Jan. 1933.
24. *Ibid.,* 28 Jan. 1933.
25. *Raigankanprachum saphaphuthænradsadon Samaithi 1 Pho. So. 2475,* pp.359-360.
26. *Thai Mai,* 20 Mar. 1933.
27. Thiphawan Jiamthirasakul, *Pathomthai thangkanmuang khong Pridi Phanomyong,* Bangkok, Aksonsan, 1988, pp.269-346.
28. *Thai Mai,* 18 Mar. 1933.
29. *Thalængkan ruang Phrabatsomdetphraboromintora Mahaprachathipok Prapokklaochaoyuhua songsala Rachasombat* (announcement of Rama VII's abdication), Bangkok, Rongphimphrachan, 1935, pp.176-178.
30. *Ibid.,* pp.200-201, p.285.
31. *Ibid.,* p.194.
32. NAT. So. Ro. 3. 10/1.
33. NAT. So. Ro. 201. 16/36.
34. Krom Khosanakan, *Khamphiphaksa sanphiset Pho. So. 2482 ruang Kabot* (text of the 1939 judgment on the rebellion), Bangkok, 1939, p.23.
35. *Banthuk phrabotomarachawinitchai ruang khao khrongkan setthakit khong Luang Praditmanutham,* 12 April 1933, Rongphim Lahuthot.
36. NAT. So. Ro. 201. 16/36.
37. NAT. So. Ro. 201. 16/37.
38. *Thai Mai,* 14 June 1933.

39. Krom Khosanakan, *Khamphiphaksa sanphiset Pho. So. 2482 ruang Kabot*, pp.24-25.
40. Anan Phibunsongkhram, *Chomphon P. Phibunsongkharam lem 1*, Bangkok, 1975, p.217; *Anusonnaikanphrarachathanplœngsop Phon To Luang Adun Detcharat*, Bangkok, 1970, which contains the memoirs of General Adun.
41. *Thai Mai*, 22 Jun. 1933.
42. *Ibid.*, 23 Jun. 1933.
43. *Ibid.*, 2 Sep. 1933.
44. *Ibid.*, 21 Jul. 1933.
45. NAT. So. Ro. 201. 35. 1/4. Much of the literature says that the first general election took place throughout the country on 15 November, but this is incorrect.
46. Krom Khosanakan, *Khamphiphaksa sanphiset Pho. So. 2482 ruang Kabot*, pp.27-28.
47. Luang Homronran, *Mua Khaphachao kokankabot*, Bangkok, 1949, pp.60-63, p.94.
48. Chongkol Krairiksh, *Tuatai tæ chuyang* Bangkok, 1965, p.48.
49. There was, for example, the 15 September 1933 incident where the leader of the railway union, Thawat Ritdej, accused the king of damaging his (Thawat's) honor.
50. NAT. So. Ro. 0201. 1. 1/1.
51. *Ibid.* The articles of the six demands were drafted by Phraya Songakson who had been deputy undersecretary of defense before the 1932 revolution.
52. NAT So. Ro. 0201. 1. 1/1.
53. *Thai Mai*, 28 Mar. 1934.
54. *Ruapruam khamthalængkan læ prakattangtang sung Ratthaban khong Phrabatsomdetphr a-chaoyuhua hængkrungsayam daiprakat kæ kharachakanfaithahan phonlaruan læ radsadon tuapai* (a compilation of the king's announcements and proclamations to the civilian and military government officials as well as to the public at large), Bangkok, Rongphim Sikrung, 1934, p.20.
55. *Ibid.*, p.17, 24, 34.
56. NAT. So. Ro. 0201. 1. 4/6.; So. Ro. 0201. 1.4/4.
57. At the time Mano adjourned the National Assembly, the organizers of the Nationalist Party split, one faction supporting the closure, the other opposing it. Luang Wichit joined with those opposing and moved closer to the People's Party. In June he rejoined the Foreign Ministry as a director-general and was later also appointed as a second-category member to the National Assembly. Thereafter he became active in the government as the ideological leader of Thai nationalism. See *Thai Mai*, 12 Nov. 1933, 7 Sep. 1934.
58. *Ibid.*, 14 Jan. 1934, 1 May 1934, 14 Jun. 1934, 7 Sep. 1934.
59. *Ibid.*, 4 Oct. 1934.
60. *Ibid.*, 4 Apr. 1934. Ultimately it was decided that he had acted within the rights allowed a member of the National Assembly, and he was found innocent (see *ibid.*, 7 Nov. 1935). However he declined to join the government's Society for the Constitution, and he continued to be against the government. In 1939 he along with his two sons were brought before the special court and sentenced to death.
61. *Ibid.*, 29 Jun. 1934, 3 Jul. 1934.
62. *Ratthathamanun chabappathomarœkchonthungpatchuban nai kanphrarachathanphlœngsop Chote Khumbhan*, Bangkok, 1971.
63. *Thai Mai*, 9 Oct. 1934, 19 Apr. 1935.
64. See endnote 57 regarding Wichit's shift over to supporting the People's Party government.
65. *Thai Mai*, 30 Aug. 1934.
66. According to NAT. (2) So. Ro. 0201. 52/19, the activities of the Society for the Constitution ceased completely in 1940.
67. Five of the original 99 members of the People's Party who were candidates in the first general election failed to be elected. These five were: Saguan Tularak, Sim Wirawaithaya, Bunlom Phungsunthon, Chalio Pathumrot, and Chittasen Pancha. See NAT. So. Ro. 201. 35. 1/5.

68. *Thalængkan ruang Phrabatsomdetphraborominlora Mahaprachathipok Prapokklaochaoyuhua songsala Rachasombat, p.191.*
69. *Ibid.*, p.121.
70. *Raigankanprachum saphaphuthænradsadon Samaithi 2 (Wisaman) Pho. So. 2477*, p.66.
71. Ibid., pp.2183-2185, p.2235.
72. Thalængkan *ruang Phrabatsomdephraborominlora Mahaprachathipok Prapokklaochaoyuhua songsala Rachasombat*, p.2.
73. *Ibid.*, pp.99-113, p.31.
74. *Ibid.*, p.383.

# III
# Calls for Democracy in the National Assembly

## 1. A Proposal to Allow Political Parties

The first debate in the National Assembly on a law permitting political parties came on 31 January 1935 at the time of the deliberations on the king's nine demands. During this debate the government explained its positon that the king had been responsible for the demise of political parties because as a consequence of his letter of 31 January 1933 the People's Party had been disbanded and the Nationalist Party had not been able to register. However in his nine demands now before the assembly, the king was calling on the government to uphold the freedom to organize political parties. When asked by one of the first-category members if the government was going to recognized the right to organize as the king was demanding, Prime Minister Phahon replied, "We are now at a critical turning point, and this question calls for mature deliberation," thus indicating a less than positive attitude on the question. When pressed further on the issue, the prime minister responded, "before political parties can be allowed to organize, we must first revise and amend the laws. There would be great cause for worry were this not done. However once the laws have been revised, I will have no objections because I have no intention of trying to keep my grip on everything."[1]

This response from the prime minister followed the reasoning of Prince Wan (Wanwaithayakon, 1891–1976), Phraya Phahon's most trusted adviser in the Prime Minister's office. Educated at Oxford, the prince combined a wideranging knowledge of the world with a practical business sense. Before the revolution he had acquired experience as the undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and as Siam's minister to Britain. Following the revolution Prince Wan, together with the regent, the Cambridge educated Prince Athit (1904–1946), cooperated with the People's Party, and these two men became the outstanding members of the royal family to participated in the new government. Prince Wan's thoughts on political parties had been set forth in a lecture he had given on 2 September 1934. In essence the prince had said that once a constitution had been introduced and a national assembly set up, in principle it was also appropriate for political parties to be organized. The government had affirmed that it did not question this principle. This being the case, the prince commented that people would ask him why the government did not allow political parties; was the government not violating Article 14 of the constitution whcih recognized the freedom to organize. In answer he would tell them that this was not a violation, because political parties were a

special type of organization, and that moreover it was clearly stipulated in Article 14 of the constitution that every person enjoyed full liberty to assemble, to associate and to organize subject to the provisions of the law. What this meant was that the conditions for using these freedoms were determined by the law.[2]

The Phahon government had proclaimed that it was founded on the doctrine of democracy and therefore in principle could not disallow political parties. But the government argued that laws complying with Article 14 of the constitution had still to be enacted, and on this basis it limited the freedom to organize which in effect disallowed political parties. Its attitude toward the question was that the time still had not come for legislation to be enacted. The thinking of the Phahon government about political freedom could be seen in Pridi's comment made over the radio on the second anniversary of the revolution. He said, "When compared with other governments right after a revolutin, there is none that has been more tolerant than the present government of Siam, and I can state firmly that the present government is providing freedom consistent with our constitutional system,"[3] which meant essentially that the government's attitude in the years right after the revolution was that freedom had to be curtailed.

Confronted with this negative government attitude towards officially recognizing political parties, first-category assembly members began trying to enact legislation to legalize parties. The first such effort in Thai history was the political parties bill that Rep. Yukiang Thonglongya brought before the National Assembly. He first tabled it for discussion on 19 February 1935, and it was discussed again on the 23rd. In explaining his reasons for bringing his bill before the assembly, Yukiang argued that Thailand had adopted the doctrine of democracy which had its foundations in the social contract theory, and under the rule of democracy political parties had to exist, otherwise it was no different from dictatorship (*phadetkan*). He went on to cite a 30 September 1933 lecture by Prince Wan wherein the prince had commented that political organizations had to be created in order to keep the political world in good order.[4] Yukiang argued further that political parties took responsibility for politically educating the public, and that political parties were the very best organizations for assembly members to pursue policies that would bring progress to the nation. Eight other first-category members including Luang Natnitithada, a former chief judge, Thongin Phuriphat (1906–1949), a former district officer, and Liang Chaiyakan (1902–1986), a former middle school teacher, expressed views supporting the bill, while five other first-category members expressed opposing views saying the time was still premature. Those expressing support for the bill insisted that it was unfair for people who already virtually had a political party to refuse to let others have a party, that they should let others also have the opportunity to enter the arena of politics, and that there was no law existing that prohibited political parties; therefore it was illegal for the

government not to allow parties. They criticized the People's Party government for having formed a clique all the while it kept saying it was not a political party. Meanwhile the opinion for opposing the bill was that during the ten years of the interim provisions, the framers of the constitution (meaning the People's Party) had been given responsibility for government; this had even been stipulated in the constitution. Therefore it was preferable to wait until after the ten years to organize political parties. None of the second-category members made any statements, as was the custom, but after being urged by first-category members to speak up, Khuang Aphaiwong voiced his support of the government's argument that the time was premature.[5] Phraya Phahon, not fond of settling issues by a vote and wanting to handle the issue prudently, left the assembly saying he wished to take the bill back with him for closer study and to discuss it privately with other members of the assembly.

## 2. Moves by First-category Members to Organize Political Parties

Despite the government's pledge to discuss the question of political parties with the first-category members, throughout 1935 the issue was not debated at all in the National Assembly. Relations between the government and the first-category members remained far from satisfactory, and on 12 October three of these members, Liang Chaiyakan, Thongin Phuriphat, and Mongkhon Ratanawichit, supported by 22 other first-category members, brought forward a motion of no confidence against the cabinet, criticizing the government for its failure to present any economic policy.[6] Three months before this, on 3 August, fifteen non-commissioned officers of the Second and Third Infantry battalions stationed in Bangkok were arrested for plotting to assassinate Phraya Phahon, the prime minister and concurrent commander-in-chief of the Army, Phibun, the defense minister and concurrent deputy army commander-in-chief, and Pridi, the interior minister, along with prince Athit, the regent, and Prince Wan, adviser to the prime minister, both members of royalty who were cooperating with the government. The plotters then intended to bring back Prajadhipok or make Prince Nakhonsawasn king. The government immediately brought before the National Assembly legislation setting up a special court, and under the legislation this court sentenced one of the conspirators to death and the other twelve to life in prison.[7] Then on 10 January 1936, Am Bunthai, a former teacher who tried to organize the Thai Nation Society (*Samakhom Prathetchat*) without having it registered, was prosecuted for the crime of rebellion. For his campaign in 1933 as candidate from the province of Ubon, he had published a work entitled *Kridakan bon thirap sung* (*Completing Preparations on the Plateau*) in which he had set forth his personal beliefs and convictions. This work had appeared on 7 October 1933, immediately prior to the Boworadet rebellion; it was censured, and Am Bunthai himself was implicated in that rebellion. In this new case against him, he was suspected of enlisting between September and November of 1935 fellow instigators who planned to seize political power by force, put King Prajadhipok back on the throne, and establish a two-chambered national assembly.[8]

What appeared to be a change in the government's severe stance on political parties was indicated in June 1936 in Phibun's radio address at the time of the fourth anniversary of the revolution. His statement, quoted in the first section above, in this address was in effect that it was a good time to recognize political parties. There was a report later that at the time the government had decided to temporarily support the creation of a political party within the National Assembly, and as a result a number of first- and second-category members got together, rented an office, and began preliminary discussions on drafting bills to present to the National Assembly.[9] But no political party eventuated from this experiment,

and the 1936 National Assembly session ended with no debate on a law for political parties.

The next year, 1937, was the year of the next general election. On March 25th five men walked into the office of the national police in the Interior Ministry. Three of the five were the aforementioned Liang Chaiyakan, Thongin Phuriphat, and Mongkhon Ratanawichit, who had led in tabling the no-confidence motion five months earlier. With them were two other first-category members, Tai Panikabut and Bunthæm Pityanon. The five approached the chief of the appropriate section and suddenly informed him that they had come to register the People's Party. Up to that time there had been anti-government groups and other critics of the government whom the authorities watched over and severely controlled; there had also existed among first-category members demands for the official recognition of political parties and opposition groups opposing the government; but until now none of these people had ever openly tried to call themselves a political organization. Moreover this was the first time an official application had been made to register a party since the old People's Party Association had been disbanded in April 1933. The party name the five had presented was the same in form as that of the old abolished People's Party, and its objectives also were to uphold the six principles of the revolution that the old People's Party had championed, and to preserve the existing constitution and promote the unity of the Thai people.[10] From the above points it would seem that this new party did not intend to openly oppose the government or the People's Party clique.

At the time of the 19 February 1935 deliberations on the political parties bill, Prime Minister Phahon had commented that even if the government were asked if it would or would not allow political parties, it could not give a definite answer because there had not yet ever been an actual application submitted. But with the application the five assembly members to register the People's Party, which was soon followed by the application of a group led by Phra Chalamphisaiseni, a former Navy commander, and Chamrat Soprawisut to register the Labor Party (*Phak Kammakon*), the government was finally going to have to take a clear, unequivocal stance on the question of political parties. On 10 April Luang Adun, director-general of the national police, also concurrently a cabinet minister without portfolio and a principal leader in the People's Party clique, and who was ultimately responsible for the issue at hand, submitted a memorandum to the interior minister, Luang Thamrong, in which he expressed the following opinion. The applicants' purposes for organizing political parties and trying to realize the principles of democracy at an early stage showed good intentions but lacked prudence. Rather than such hastiness, it was better to set a time period and then move gradually, as this approach was more certain to bring about the fullfillment of democracy. If the period of the interim provisions were at an end or nearing an

end, it would be all right for political parties to exist. But it had been only five years since Thailand's democratic system had begun; the country was still in the learning stage, and there were many people who still did not understand the new system. At such a time, people should not hastily demand all the attributes of a complete democracy. The note then cautioned that the government needed to consider all the possible dangers. Laws were needed to oversee political parties, but these had not yet been legislated. This showed that the government had not yet established a policy for allowing political parties. However this was not to say that the government should totally disallow parties. Adun's opinion, like that of other top leaders in the government, was that when the appropriate time had come, parties should certainly be allowed. The government ultimately wanted to allow political parties in order to achieve fully developed democratic rule. But under the present circumstances there was still the possibility of rebellion, and Adun warned the interior minister that were the government to error in its timing for legalizing parties, democracy itself would totally cease to exist.[11]

Adun's memorandum was passed from the interior minister to the cabinet, and at the 19 May cabinet meeting, a two-hour debate ensued on the question of legalizing politcal parties. Most of the ministers spoke against it. Allowing parties led to internal unrest, and the Spanish Civil War was brought up as the example of a situation where the rise of parties had brought about rebellion.[12] On 22 May Adun, as director general of the national police, informed all the applicants of the cabinet's final decision. This had declared that the time for political parties was still premature. In coming to this conclusion however, the cabinet was not in principle disallowed parties. It accepted that political parties were a part of the constitutional system, and if it was to observe the six principles of the People's Party revolution, the government had an obligation to give the people that part of the constitutional system, i.e. political parties, even if the ten-year period of the interim provisions had still not ended. The cabinet's conclusion went on to declare that a political parties law would be enacted in time for the scheduled 1941 general elections, and the people would be able to attain a fully developed constitutional government when the interim provisions were brought to an end.[13] Far from cooling any enthusiasm for organizing political parties, this government announcement that a political parties law would be enacted by 1941 accelerated politcal organizing among the first-category members and stimulated more demands for an early promulgation of a political parties law.

On 27July 1937 in the National Assembly Rep. Liang proposed having an open discussion in the assembly on the matter of government leaders in the People's Party clique purchasing residential property from the Bureau of Crown Property at unduly low prices. On this occasion the entire Phahon cabinet resigned, but after agian receiving the support of both the first- and second-category members, Phraya

Phahon formed a new cabinet.

On 7 November the four-year term of the National Assembly finished, and the second general election took place. This was the first direct election. In October 1937 it was reported that there were about 40 candidate. They planned to present a common policy in the elections and make preparations for organizing a political party in the future. According to the same report, even Prime Minister Phahon did not object to this activity.[14] On 19 September, directly prior to the elections, an adviser to the Interior Ministry, M.C. Sakonwannakon, stated in a radio talk that direct elections helped in the formation of political partis (*chomrom kanmuang*) because candidates needed campaign organization to reach the electorate.[15]

After the elections, the elected members to the assembly gathered around Phraya Withunthamphinet (1894–1971),[16] one of the students who had been sent to study in the United States and the former head of the Legislative Bureau, to discuss the organizing of political parties. In these discussions questions were raised about such matters as how party funds were to be raised, or the extent of party authority to control the freedom of assemly members to speak in the assembly. If this latter problem arose, it might appear to the majority of the electorate who still did not understand the meaning of political parties that assembly members just sat and did nothing. No agreement was reached on organizing a party that time, but all the members present at the meeting mutually agreed that they had to start preparing for political parties now so that the foundation for parties would be firmly established by the start of the era of party politics in four years time. To do this they all agreed it was urgent that a political parties law be put into effect.[17]

Following the elections, on 16 December at a meeting of the nine top leaders of the People's Party clique, Phraya Phahon's reappointement as prime ministers was confirmed. On the following day, Phibun, the defense minister, chaired a joint meeting of the second-category members and members of the People's Party, at which it was agreed to support the reelection of Phraya Phahon as prime minister for the next four years.[18] Whith this Phraya Phahon was once again made prime minister.

In the middle of 1938, on 26 July, Tiang Sirikhan (1909–1952), a former middle school vice principal, brought a bill before the National Assembly to abolish the Law for the Preservation of the Constituion. This act by a newly elected representative was a daring proposal coming from among the National Assembly members, most of whom were apprehensive about being "shipped off to Siberia" if they went against the government. Tiang gave three reasons for tabling his bill: 1) to more fully develop the system of democratic rule under the constitution, 2) to protect people who publicly voiced opinions meant for the benefit of the government and society, and 3) as a first step in learning how to organize politcal parties. He then tacitly criticized the People's Party clique by saying that as long as this law existed,

it would invite suspicion that a certain surreptitiously existing party was using this law as a means to monopolize power. He closed his statement saying that the rise of political parties was supposed to be a natural part of a constitutional system, but as long as this law existed, political parties could not come into being. To show that the government and the National Assembly were prepared to welcome the organization of political parties, this law had to be abolished. Luang Chawengsaksongkhram (1900–1962), actiong for the minister of the interior and who was also representing the government, responded saying that, "Decisions on how bills are handled is the responsibility of the assembly. The interior Ministry does not want the political parties question left as it is and thinks that a political parties bill should be drawn up. When it has been judged that the existence of political parties will not upset the stability of the constitutional system, the ministry will bring a bill before the National Assembly. The ministry understands that this is a matter to be dealt with during the tenure of the present assembly members." The bill to abolish the Law for the Preservation of the Constitution narrowly passed the first reading by a 59 to 56 margin, and was approved.[19]

During August 1938 a confrontation surfaced between the first- and second-category members in the National Assembly followed an incident where second-category members tossed Rep. Liang into the pond on the National Assembly compound. The incident had begun when Liang attempted to press the issue of a speech by Luang Wichit in which he had said "the Chinese are worse than the Jews".[20] Then in September a proposal by Rep. Thawin Udon (1909–1949) to amend Regulation No.68 of the parliamentary code intensified the confrontation between the government and the first-category members. The proposed amendment called for the government to submit detailed drafts of the budget to the National Assembly. When Thawin's proposal was approved on 10 September by a vote of 45 to 31, Prime Minister Phahon responded the next day by dissolving the assembly saying that the amendment would excessively restrict the government. Following the dissolution of the National Assembly, 43 of the first-category members who had supported Thawin's proposal signed a joint declaration setting forth the reasons for the dissolution and called on the electorate for their support. They then had their declaration printed up passed out in a direct appeal to the voters.[21]

## 3. The 1939 Special Court

The dissolution of the National Assembly greatly upset the hitherto anticipated course of political events. The previous year at the time of Phraya Phahon's reelection as prime minister, it had been expected that his new term and the terms of the first-category members would continue together for the next four-year, and it had also been anticipated that by the end of the four years a political parties law would have been enacted. Above all else it had been expected that by June 1942 with the end of the ten-year period of the interim provisions a full-fledged democracy would come into existence, a view that Phraya Phahon himself had expressed.[22] But after dissolving assembly, Phraya Phahon positively declined to accept the premiership again, and Phibun, having garnered the support of the second-category members, was installed as the next prime minister. Long the virtual leader of the People's Party clique, upon becoming prime minister, Phibun also took over from Phraya Phahon the post of Army commander-in-chief, thereby becoming the acknowledged supreme leader of the country.

The coming of the Phibun premiership brought about a change in the heretofore government promise regarding the interim provisions and the political parties law. The first signs of this change came on 29 January 1939, one month after Phibun had become prime minister, when Adun, the director-general of the national police and Phibun's intimate colleague, began the wholesale arrest of the prime minister's political enemies. Since the dissolution of the assembly the previous September, Phibun had been the target of numerous threats; then on 9 November he was shot and wounded by one of his households servants, and a month later, on 9 December, his food was poisoned in another attempt on his life. Included in these wholesale arrests were the soldiers and first-category assembly members connected with Phraya Song. The phraya had long been suspected as a ringleader in the plots against Phibun and had been kept under constant police surveillance. One of the prime movers of the constitutional revolution, Phraya Song had never liked having to stand in the shadows of his- one-time subordinate, Phibun, which the former had been compelled to do following his resignation from government office in 1933. He had refused to accept a new post in the cabinet, and since 1936 had been the head of an army combat school that he had founded in Chieng Mai. Phraya Song continued to have numerous adherents in the Army; this along with his illustrious career made him an outstanding symbol of opposition to the Phibun faction. Following his arrest he was expelled from the country and sent to Phnom Penh at the end of January. Also arrested was Prince Chainat (1885–1951), son of King Chulalongkorn and to whom King Anantha Mahidon's father, Prince Songkhlanakharin, had entrusted all affairs upon the prince's untimely death.

Following the sweep of arrests, 51 people were brought for prosecution before a new special court. Heading the court was one of Phibun's right-hand men, Colonel Luang Phromyothi (1896–1966), a People's Party member and who concurrently held the posts of deputy defense minister and deputy commander-in-chief of the Army. The court sentenced eighteen people to death and another 25 to life imprisonment. During four days at the end of November 1939, the eighteen death sentences were carried out. The majority of those executed were said to have been Phraya Song followers whom the court stated had joined in an attempted assassination of Phibun. But in the judgment of the court it was emphasized that the conspiracy had been the work of the former king, Prajadhipok. According to the the findings of the court, Phibun and other important leaders of government were to be assassinated, following which there was to be coup d'état and Phraya Song made prime minister. Then Prajadhipok, who was still in exile in Britain, or Prince Nakhonsawan, then living in Java, was to be invited back to be king and the old monarchic system restored. The findings also reprimanded Prajadhipok saying that the former king had used Prime Minister Mano to force the People's Party from power and close down the National Assembly in order to bring back the old system, that he had played a direct part in the Boworadet rebellion, and that his decision to abdicate had also been because he had failed to recover his former power. The findings went on to say that even after the abdication the royalist faction did not end its efforts to overthrow the constitutional government, and the attempts between 1935 and 1938 to assassinate Phibun were manifestations of these efforts.[23] In essence the special court was used by the Phibun/Pridi-led faction in the People's Party, which saw itself as upholding the constitution and democratic government, to attack its political enemies by accusing them of being royalists and attempting to reestablish the old order.

The special court of 1939 relied solely on the testimonies of witnesses for the prosecution for much of its evidence, and because solid proof was lacking, there existed in some cricles strong feelings that the court had carried out political trials unconcerned with the facts, the primary objective being to beat down the government's political enemies and send a warning to the democrats in the National Assembly.[24]

Whether there had or had not been a conspiracy, the fact was that those arrested were critical of the dictatorial methods used by the People's Party clique. Rep. Nonen Talak, one of the first-category members who was executed, had made a comment during the elections to the effect that the government was tormenting the people and the faction running the government was doing whatever it pleased whenever it pleased. Such government was the way of dictatorship. Nonen then stated that he was running as a candidate to help the people and the workers.[25] This was used at his trials as testimony against him. The evidence against Prince

Chainat, whose sentence was later reduced from death to life imprisonment, was the testimony that he had told his chauffeur, "The government has insulted the royal family and expelled us from our positions. The govenment treats only the people in its own faction favorably; it holds military power and carries on a dictational government."[26] Another example was M.R. Nimitmongkhon Nawarat (1908–1948) who was sentenced to life in prison because he was in possesion of large number of one of his own hand-written works which was critical of the government. He had just published another work, *Political Parties in Siam and Foreign Countries*, at the start of 1939 in expectation that after the interim provisions had expired, the era would start for political parties and for government by political parties under a genuine democracy.[27]

On 22 July 1939, while the special court was in session, the National Assembly held deliberations on a political parties bill presented by Rep. Tiang, the same man who had successfully moved the year before to have the Law for the Preservation of the Constitution abolished. Tiang explained to the assembly that his objectives in submitting the bill were that: 1) democracy and political parties were an indivisuble unit, and if political parties did not exist, a country was not a democracy; 2) the People's Party government had publicly expressed that its intention was to make Thailand a truly democratic country, and he had submitted his bill to help realize that intention; 3) organizations were needed to encompass the people, the assembly representatives, and the government; 4) political parties had the educational function of making the people conscious of their political rights; 5) after the interim provisions had terminated, it would be political parties that would be able to draw up policies that conformed to the popular will; and 6) the mutual criticisms of the party in power and the opposition parties made development of the nation all the more possible. Tiang then added that he would withdraw his bill if the government did not extend the period of the interim provisions and pledged to officially allow political parties as soon as the interim provisions expired. Six first-category members supported the bill, among whom were Phraya Si Thammarat (1884–1954), the former governor of Nakhon Si Thammarat circle (whose various proposals for democratic reforms had appeared in the newspapers since the early 1920s under the pen name "Hermit"), and Phraya Withunthamphinet who had previously tried to organize a political party.

Opposing the bill on the government's side was the second-category member Sim Wirawaithaya, the editor of the newspaper *Satchang* whose commentaries back in 1933 had been a self-justifying defense of the People's Party Association. With the same malicious slander that had characterized his paper, Sim charged that hidden in Tiang's bill was an attempt to let members of royalty participate in politics and political parties which was prohibited under Article 11 of the constitution, and if such a law were allowed, another royalist rebellion would break out.

Joining Sim was acting minister of the interior, Chawengsaksongkhram. During the previous session of the National Assembly when Phraya Phahon had been prime minister, he had stated that political parties should be legalized even before the interim provisions terminated. Now his remarks were a series of rejections: political battling between parties would bring on the downfall of the state; there were many people even among the educated who still did not understand democracy; the country was still at the stage of nation building (*sang chat*) which called for unity and solidarity; the smoke of royalist despotism still lingered, and the power of wealth that royalty wielded, which was appreciably more than the people's, posed a danger were funds from this wealth to flow into political parties. Like Sim, Chawengsaksongkhram used the specter of the royalist threat to oppose legalization of political parties. The bill was then put to a vote and rejected 82 to 21.[28]

Phibun too was against allowing political parties during the period of the interim provisions, and at his monthly press conference in March 1940, he brought up several troubling points that made him oppose parties: 1) the Thai people still did not understand democracy, 2) there was still the possibility of a rebellion if parties were legalized, and 3) preventing the wealthy (members of royalty and the Chinese) from using the power of money to acquire political power.[29] However only a couple of months later, in May and June, the content of Phibun's words changed and seemed to indicate that political parties might be allowed. At his monthly press conference on 3 May he said, "It's all right to let parties organize, but it's also necessary to have regulations controlling them." Then at his next press conference on 7 June, Phibun set forth three specific conditions that would be needed for supervising political parties: 1) requiring strict qualifications and requisites for party heads, 2) preventing those with the power of money from getting political power by fixing an upper limit on the number of members a party could have, thereby preventing the formation of large political parties, and 3) allowing no more than about three political parties.[30] During July and August the Legislative Bureau drafted a government proposal for a political parties law based on the prime minister's three conditions;[31] but in end the proposal was never brought before the National Assembly, and in fact it seems to have been part of another Phibun maneuver at the time to extend the interim provisions. The prime minister was trying to get a bill from the first-category members to bring a motion for an amendment to the constitution which would allow the extension. Thus it would seem that the change in Phibun's words was simply "lip service" directed at the first-category members.

## 4. Extension of the Interim Provisions

The interim provisions were to expire as of 27 June 1942. On that day members of the People's Party clique who had not stood as candidates in the elections and been voted into office would have to resign from the National Assembly and the cabinet. In such an eventuality, the ruling clique would find it difficult to maintain its strong grip on the military, and it therefore had to come up with ideas for coping with developments. Following the dissolution of the National Assembly in September 1938, a story appeared in *Thai Mai* that the People's Party had already made the decision to extend the interim provisions.[32] One man who sensed the hidden hand of the People's Party behind this story was Phra Sarasas (1889–?), an enigmatic political loner who had spent many years living in France and who also claimed to have laid down his own plans for a constitutional revolution independent of the People's Party.[33] An eminent economist, after the 1932 revolution his articles appeared in the newspapers arguing strongly against dictatorship, and in 1934 he worked for a short time as the minister of economics. Phra Sarasas saw this story as a trial balloon sent up by the People's Party to test reaction to an extension, and he immediately wrote an article against it charging that the People's Party would be violating its own six principles. Were it to do this, trust in the People's Party, both internally and externally, would disappear immediately which would shake the underpinnings of Thai politics which had just begun to stabilize.[34]

On 2 February 1939, following the elections, one of the members of the National Assembly asked the government if it was planning to extend the interim provisions. He also asked the government to comment on how much truth there was in the rumors going around that it intended to establish an upper chamber to the assembly. The govenment's response was that it would listen to the voice of the people; this was important in its policies.[35] But nothing specific was said to deny the rumors.

In a radio address on 31 March 1939, Phibun said that there were questions circulationg among the people about the future of Thailand's political system, and he wanted to answer these. He then brought up the matter of extending the interim provisions, and the essence of his talk was that his government would continue to uphold the system of always listening to the will of the people when carrying out its policies. However the prime minister also said that the nation's internal and external situation had to be taken into consideration, and democracy on the order of that practiced in the advanced nations could not be realized in Thailand in a short period of time. On the contrary, if it were introduced too quickly, it would be inviting the destruction of democracy. Thailand had oly six years of experience with democracy, meaning the politics of listening to the will of the people, in contrast it had a history of several thousand years under a system of despotism.

For this reason there were groups among the people who held deeply rooted anti-democratic ideas, a fact he said was clearly apparent from the cases being brought before the ongoing special court.[36]

Luang Wichit argued similarly in a lecture entitled "Human Revolution" which he gave at the Defense Ministry club on 16 November 1939, and wherein he assessed the Phibun cabinet's *ratthaniyom* movement and the part it played in the revolution. In this lecture he stated that ten years was too short a time for the fulfillment of the revolution.[37] He was thus trying to justify the extension of the interim provision (which limited democracy) saying it was a means of accomplishing the revolution (which had been carried out to establish democracy). Luang Wichit later took this logic of limiting democracy as a means of accomplishing the revolution and made it the basis for the ideology of the Sarit revolution.

With the coming of July 1940, preparations for extending the interim provisions of the constitution were rapidly finalized. The government under the People's Party clique worked skillfully, and by the "voice of the people",[38] meaning by 65 of the 91 first-category members, a bill to amend the constitution extending the interim provisions was laid before the National Assembly. From the start the government had planned to use carrot-and-stick methods on the first-category members to bring them around to the government's side. During Phraya Phahon's prime ministership, except for his last cabinet, two to four first-category members had been appointed as ministers to the cabinet, and a large number of these members had always been made secretaries to the cabinet ministers. With the coming of the Phibun government the number of People's Party members in the cabinet increased and only one first-category member was appointed, but many still worked as secretaries to the cabinet ministers. In all likelihood too a sizable amount of funds had since Phraya Phahon's days passed from the government to first-category members. One of Phibun's early acts on becoming prime minister was to acquire funds from the proceeds of the Bureau of Crown Property. He had 500 thousand baht presented to the People's Party for its distinguished service to the country, and part of this royal money was used in the government's maneuvers to get the interim provisions extended.[39]

The first reading to debate the amendment bill took place on 15 August 1940. Reps. Thongin, Tiang, and Phraya Si Thammarat, a threesome of democrats among the first-category members, opposed the amendment saying they did so further the development of democracy. They recommended instead that Phibun and the other members of the People's Party stand as candidates in the election. They had a record of outstanding service to the nation, and there was certainly no doubt that they would be elected. Thus it was better to let the interim provisions terminate and stand in the election. At the same time they proposed the creation of an upper chamber for the second-category members as a compromise to attract

these members to their cause. (Pridi also had made a secret study for the proposal of a bicameral assembly.[40]) In countering the opposition, the pro-amendment first-category members contended that the king's closing of the National Assembly in April 1933, followed by the Boworadet rebellion in October, then last year's conspiracy and the execution of eighteen people were a series of damaging blows to democratic rule. Moreover the people's education level still remained low,[41] and they still did not understand democracy. To have the People's Party withdraw from the political arena at a time like this would bring the entire constitutional system onto the verge of crisis. The second-category members again offered no comments as was the custom. Finally Phibun, as prime minister, was asked to comment. He stated forthrightly that he had no intention of making himself the center of power, and that at the start of the revolution his intention had been to abolish the interim provisions in around ten years time or earlier. But when after the revolution the forces of the old system (*rabop kao*) caused a number of incidents in their attempt to regain power, the government could not help but feel a great deal of apprehension about the future development and peace of the nation after the interim provisions came to an end. Phibun told the assembly that if the interim provisions were done away with, the old regime would surely return. Thailand's revolution had not used the methods of the French revolution where the old regime had been executed and swept away. Instead these people remained free, and therefore the struggle between the old and new regimes continued. Were there to be no counterattack by the old regime, Phibun thought that it would be all right to let the interim provisions terminate; but there was no assurance that the old regime would not strike back.[42] As during the special court of 1939, the leaders of People's Party were once again raising the specter of the old regime to attack their political enemies and at the same time to justify the disallowing of political parties and the extension of the interim provisions. Three first-category members opposed the amendment bill; six abstained; but the rest of the first-category members along with all of the second-category members approved it, and the bill passed its first reading with the support of 164 members, an overwhelming majority of the assembly.

Between the time of first reading and the second and third readings which took place on 19 September, conditions changed significantly as France's surrender to Gemany altered the status quo between Thailand and Indo-China. Popular opinion rose quickly demanding the return of land from Indo-China that France had forcibly seized from Siam at the end of the nineteenth century. Rep. Tiang and the other first-category members who had opposed amending the constitution were caught up with the rest of the assembly in the fervor to reclaim the lost lands. They broke off their opposition and in an overwhelming show of national unity, all 173 members present passed the bill on its third reading,[43] giving the government unanimous approval to extend the interim provisions.

## Notes

1. *Thalængkan ruang Phrabatsomdeptphraboromintora Mahaprachathipok Prapokklao-chaoyuhua songsala Rachasombat,* pp.282–284.
2. M.C. Wanwaithayakon Worawan. *Pathakatha ruang Samakhom*, Bangkok, 1934, pp.35–36.
3. *Thai Mai*, 3 Jul. 1934.
4. *Ibid.*, 3 Oct. 1933.
5. *Raigankanprachum saphaphuthænradsadon Samaithi 2 (Saman) Pho. So*2477, pp.1532–1538, p.1671.
6. *Thai Mai*, 12 Oct. 1935.
7. Nai Honhuai, *Kabotnaisip pi 2478*, Bangkok, 1949
8. *Thai Mai*, 11 Jan. 1936.
9. *Ibid.*, 27 Mar. 1937.
10. *Ibid.*, 26 Mar. 1937, 27 Mar. 1937
11. *Ibid.*, 13 Apr. 1937.
12. *Ibid.*, 20 May 1937, 21 May 1937.
13. *Ibid.*, 23 May 1937. This view taken by the government was also confirmed at the 1 February 1938 session of the National Assembly. See *Raikankanprachum saphaphuthænradsadon Samaithi 2 Chutthi 2 (Saman) Ph. So. 2480 lem 2*, pp.809–811.
14. *Thai Mai*, 16 Oct. 1937.
15. *Sunthonphot khong ratthamontriwakan Krasuwang Mahatttai læ Pathakatha khong thiprukasa Krasuwang Mahatthai,* 1937, Rongphim Sayam Aksonkit, pp.63–64.
16. *Anuson Phya Vidura-Dharmabinet*, Bangkok, 1971. In 1944 he brought before that National Assembly a new bill for political parties law.
17. *Thai Mai*, 1 Jan. 1938.
18. *Ibid.*, 21 Dec. 1937, 22 Dec. 1937.
19. *Raigankanprachum saphaphuthænradsadon Samaithi 2 Chutthi 2 (Saman) Pho. So. 2481 lem 2*, pp.523–529.
20. Eiji Murashima, "Taikoku ni okeru chugoku jin no taijinka" (The Thai-ification of the Chinese in Thailand), in *ASEAN ni okeru kokumin togo to chiiki togo (National Integration and Regional Integration in ASEAN),* ed. by Tatsumi Okabe, The Japan Institute of International Affairs, 1989, pp. 119–234.
21. NAT. So. Ro. 201. 35. 1/14.
22. *Thai Mai*, 8 Dec. 1937.
23. Krom Khosanakan, *Khamphiphaksa sanphiset Pho. So. 2482 ruang Kabot*, pp.22–27, 353–354.
24. See for example Phayap Rochanavibhata, *Yukthamil*, 1946.
25. Krom Khosanakan, *Khamphiphaksa sanphiset Pho. So. 2482 ruang Kabot*, p.196.
26. *Ibid.*, p.219.
27. M.R. Songsucharit Nawarat, M.R. Nimitmongkon Nawarat, *Nangsu Phakkanmuangsayam lae tangprathet*, Bangkok, 1939.
28. *Raigankanprachum saphaphuthænradsadon Samaithi 2 Chutthi 3 (Saman) Pho. So.2482 lem 1*, pp.118–188.
29. *Thai Mai*, 3 Mar. 1940.
30. NAT. (2) So. Ro. 0201.92. 1/1–2.
31. NAT. (2) So. Ro. 0201.92, 1/4; *Thai Mai*, 21 Aug. 1940.
32. *Thai Mai*, 27 Oct. 1938.
33. Phra Sarasas published his revolutionary experiences in Japanese. See, Phra Sarasas, *Tai Kakumei no Omoide (Reminiscences of Thailand's Revolution)*, Thai Room Sankoshiryo no.82, no date.
34. *Prachachat*, 5 Nov. 1938. Perhaps because of this newspaper article, his book Monetary

Economics (*Setthasat waduai Setthakitkangen*) was confiscated in December of that year, the government claiming that it contained comments ridiculing the military. See NAT, So. Ro. 9.2.3/2, p.41.

35. *Raigankanprachum saphaphuthænradsadon Samaithi 2 Chutthi 3 (Saman) Pho. So.2481 lem 1*, p.423.
36. Krom Khosanakan, *Pramuan khaprasai læ sunthonphot khong nayokratthamontri*, 1940, pp.22–25.
37. Luang Wichit Watthakan (Vichitr Vadakarn), *Manutsapatiwat*, Rongphimphrachan, 1939, pp.4–5.
38. Among the newspapers, both *Suphapburut* (edited by Kulap Saipradit) and *Prachachat* (edited by Sanit Charenrat) carried on a vigorous campaign supporting democracy and opposing the constitutional amendment.
39. NAT. So. Ro. 9.2.3/6, p.194.
40. NAT. (2) So. Ro.0201.92.1/5.
41. According to the census of 1937/38, the literacy rate in Thailand for people ten years old and older was 31.1%, and the percentage of people over ten years of age who had completed four years of elementary school was only 11.6%. Cited in *Prachachat*, 12 Aug. 1940.
42. *Raigankanprachum saphaphuthænradsadon Samaithi 2 Chutthi 3 (Saman) Pho. So. 2483 lem 1*, pp.367–451.
43. *Raigankanprachum saphaphuthænradsadon Samaithi 2 Chutthi 3 (Saman) Pho. So.2483 lem 2*, p.423.

## Conclusion

This study traced the course of parliamentary democracy in Thailand during the period of the interim provisions under the constitution following the June 1932 coup d'état. It drew a sketch of the People's Party as a clique, many of whose principal members comprised the military elite of the new constitutional period. This political group legitimized the idea of parliamentary democracy in Thailand, but then proceeded to set itself up as the sole guardian of the new constitutional system leading the way toward the attainment of democracy. As the self-appointed protector of Thailand's constitutional system, the People's Party clique used interim provisions, which it had incorporated into the constitution, to justify the maintenance of its grip on power.

This study also looked at the activitis of groups and individuals opposing the People's Party clique and its monopoly on power, relating their demands and their efforts inside and outside of the National Assembly to democratize Thailand's post-June 1932 political system. This opposition took two forms, one appearing before and the other after the first general election that took place during October and November of 1933. The former was represented by the efforts of the Nationalist Party, the king, Prime Minister Mano, and Prince Boworadet; the latter centered around the elected first-category members in the National Assembly who called for the legalization of political parties.

These two forms of opposition differed in their composition and methods. The first derived much of its leadership from the old regime and demanded the quick implementation of a full-blown British style of democracy. These people opposed the existence of the interim provisions which underpinned the power of the People's Party clique, and they were willing to use military force to press their demands. In response the government did not hesitate to vigorously suppress these opponents. Two views can be taken of this opposition by the king and the old regime elite, one being that which was taken by the People's Party and which was set forth in the government's declarations during the Boworadet rebellion in 1933 and in the judgement of the 1939 special court. This view was that the royalists and their supporters, who had lost power, were intent upon restoring the old order. The other view is that the old elite was carrying on a fight against the clique government of the People's Party and was demanding the democratization of Thailand's political system and the creation of a multiparty system that would truly speak for and benefit the people. This view was set forth most clearly in the king's letters and demands to the government, but also found expression in the demands that arose from the Boworadet rebellion. Adding weight to this latter view is the fact that these old elite leaders of the opposition had been educated in the West and had experienced life in Europe and the United States to a far greater extent than most

of the leaders of the People's Party.

The other form of opposition was that coming from first-category assembly members who demanded the legalization of political parties and the establishment of a multiparty system. Much of their effort took the form of attempts to prepare the way for government by political parties under a parliamentary system which the People's Party had publicly said was to come about after the termination of the interim provisions. In its deliberations on the draft of a political parties law in 1939, and also in the judgement of the special court of the same year, the government had attacked the first-category members who were calling for democratization as being co-conspirators aiding in the restoration of the old regime, but in general the government dealt with the first-category members in a conciliatory manner. The People's Party clique needed the support of the majority of the first-category members to give legitimacy to its rule. To get this support the government between 1935 and 1938 continually expressed its intentions to further democracy and legalize political parties. Behind these expressions of intent however, the People's Party clique stalled for time and sought to lengthen the interim period before political parties would be legalized. During 1939 the government appeared to make real concessions toward a multiparty system; then in 1940 it skillfully maneuvered the "voice of the people", meaning the first-category assembly members, into proposing the extension of the interim provisions.

The expressions of democracy that emanated from the government of the People's Party clique did not change even during the war when the Phibun regime was stressing the need for building up the nation through national unity. On 8 December 1942, regarding the law extending the terms of the first-categorty assembly members, the government issued an statement which in essence said that in normal times the way of deciding who would take up the burden of national government was for the different political parties to present their policies and compete for the support of the people. The party garnering the greatest support became the party to form the government. But in time of war, even in foreign countries this competition between parties was stopped, a cabinet of national unity was formed, and elections postponed. Under wartime conditions it had to be the same in Thailand. The whole nation, whether as members of political parties or not, had to stand united in cooperation with the government.[1] This explanation could be interpreted as the government recognizing that when normal times returned, it would also be normal for political parties to exist. But dynamic changes in Thailand's political system toward government by political parties pursuing party politics did not finally begin until 1946 following the disbanding of the People's Party and the enactment of a new constitution which abolished the interim provisions.

# Note

1. *Rachakitchanubeksa* (Thai government gazette), Vol.59 (1942), no.76. pp.2442–2446.

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