

How did the Communist Party of Thailand extend a United Front? : The Case of the National Liberation Movement during 1951-1952

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The Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) formed a united front of the peace movement against American imperialism and the Korean War. The united front consisted of students, journalists, laborers, farmers, monks, etc. The CPT members had important roles in organizing the peace movement in each group and bringing them together. They also organized groups and individuals that were dissatisfied with the Thai government. However, the CPT failed in bringing the National Liberation Movement (Khabuankan Ku Chat) into the united front of the peace movement.

The National Liberation Movement was an anti-government movement whose purpose was to topple the government by coup and take state power. The idea was similar to the failed coups by Pridi Phanomyong's group and the Navy officials in those days. The rounding up during November 1952, the so-called Peace Rebellion (Kabot Santiphap), dissolved the National Liberation Movement. The Peace Rebellion was followed by the promulgation of the Anti-Communist Act on November 13, 1952.

The communist movement, the National Liberation Movement and the peace movement in Thailand against the Korean War has already been touched upon by a number of researchers, including Suthachai Yimprasaet, Somsak Jeamteerasakul, Wiwat Khatithammanit, Daniel Fineman and Kasian Tejapira. Their research has brought about a greater understanding of the larger historical circumstances surrounding the peace movement in Thailand¹. However, Wiwat, Suthachai and Fineman did not argue the relations the CPT and the National Liberation Movement.

Kasian Tejapira argued that some CPT² members were spontaneously involved in the National Liberation Movement in accordance with their own ideological convictions, personal friendships, professional acquaintances, and their regional background rather than being organized or designated in any specific way by the Party. Kasian gave two reasons for this. First, the CPT-backed Peace Committee rejected the National Liberation Movement's proposal of cooperation. Second, its neutral and non-aligned foreign policy was incompatible with the CPT's pro-Soviet policy (Kasian 2001, 121). Kasian also referred to the

¹ See the reference.

² The Party changed its name from the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) to the Thai Communist Party (TCP) in 1952, but the author uses the CPT in this essay.

Thai National Liberation Organization (Ongkan Thai Ku Chat). He said it was a communist front organization of peasants focused in the Northeast, set up by the CPT at the end of 1949, “in preparation for a coordinated military operation with the Indochinese communists against both the French and American imperialists” (ibid., 62, 70). However, he did not refer to the relations between the National Liberation Movement and the Thai National Liberation Organization. While, Somsak Jeamteerasakul doubted if a CPT member’s involvement³ with the National Liberation Movement was really a party policy and not simply due to his personal relationship (Somsak 1993, 342).

In this essay, I analyze the CPT’s united front, examining its work on the National Liberation Movement. First, I explained the CPT policy. Secondly, describe the National Liberation Movement. Thirdly, I consider the CPT’s attempt to approach the National Liberation Movement. Finally, I examine the relationship between the National Liberation Movement and the peace movement.

The Platform of the Communist Party of Thailand

During WWII, the main activity of the CPT was anti-Japanese movement on the basis of Chinese laborers. After WWII, the CPT could expand the influence under the pro-Pridi government. Thanks to Pridi’s leadership, the CPT could organize laborers and students in Bangkok. Therefore the CPT was dependent on Pridi. However, the coup which toppled the government in November 1947 threatened the CPT activities. On the first phase, the CPT gave up the struggle in the Parliament. The CPT then expected Pridi’s group to make a counterattack on the new government. The CPT had an intention to assist the Pridi’s group to overthrow the government by arms, but the Pridi’s group did not ask the CPT to assist the coup. The so-called Palace Rebellion by Pridi failed in February 1949. This failure taught the CPT a lesson that military power was necessary for the maintenance and overthrow of a government. That is to say, the dissolution of the Free Thai Movement and the renunciation of military force caused Pridi’s downfall (Somsak 1993, 243-54; Wanchai & Thanapon 2004, 76-77).

On the second phase, the CPT began to think of the organizing of peasants in the countryside and armed struggles in 1948. The model was the works of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in the agricultural areas. Since the overseas Chinese communists led the CPT, the Party was loyal to the CPC. The course

³ He was Pan Keomat, who was in charge of the united front work of the CPT.

which the CPC took should be followed by the CPT. The CPT adhered the Maoism and understood that Thailand was under the semi-colonialism and semi-feudalism as China was. After Phibun made a comeback as a Prime Minister in April 1948, the government began to oppress the overseas pro-communist Chinese. The CPT sent the members to observe farming villages. After the Palace Rebellion, the CPT began to organize peasants. The victory of the CPC in October 1949 encouraged the CPT to work in the farming areas.

On the third phase, the Korean War had impact on the policy of the CPT because the Thai government concluded the Thai-US Military Aid Agreement and sent troops to Korea. The CPT set up and two united fronts: the Thai National Liberation Organization and the Peace Committee of Thailand. The former was clandestine and the latter was open. These activities followed the International Communist Movement⁴.

The Thai National Liberation Organization was set up to oppose American imperialism and the Phibun government. Its four principles were independence, democracy, peace and well-being just like the CPC. Besides, the Thai National Liberation Organization had four objectives: to oust the American imperialism from Thailand, to overthrow the fascist dictatorial government, to improve the economic condition and to oppose the war of aggression by the American imperialism and cooperate with people to maintain peace (Somsak 1993, 263; Banlue 1959, 148-150).

The CPT also took the initiative in the peace movement in response to people's opposition to war, though it continued to act in secret. The peace movement in Thailand, like many others throughout Asia and the rest of the world, collected signatures against atomic bombs, the so-called Stockholm Appeal. The issue of peace was already in the public spotlight with the recent outbreak of the Korean War and the Thai government's agreement to send soldiers to Korea to aid the United States. The success of the Stockholm Appeal caused the CPT to set up the Peace Committee of Thailand. As part of their activities the Peace

⁴ The Cominform, an information agency created to reestablish information exchanges among the European Communist parties, regarded "American Imperialists" as their greatest enemy and advanced antiwar/peace as their slogan. The third and last conference in Hungary in November 1949 adopted a resolution calling for the defense of peace in the struggle against those who would promote war. In the same month, the World Federation of Trade Unions held the Conference of Trade Unions of Asia and Oceania in Peking. The chairman, Liu Shaoqi, appealed to the communist parties in Asia to follow China and launch the armed struggle.

Committee contacted China to attend an upcoming peace conference in Beijing, an act which embarrassed and angered the Thai government.

Anti-government Activities of the National Liberation Movement: Coup as a Means of Taking Power

Two young journalists, Suphot Dantrakun (1923-2009)⁵ and Samut Surakkhaka, launched the National Liberation Movement at the end of November 1951⁶. Suphot worked for *Siam Mai* (New Siam) newspaper and Samut worked for *Kiattisak* (Honor) newspaper at the time. In contrast to the previous failed coup attempts, the Army General Staff Plot, the Palace Rebellion, and the Manhattan Rebellion, was the distance from power. In other words, the core leaders were neither officers nor civil servants. They tried to make contact with influential people, and penetrated into the military in order to expand their activities. As a result, Suphat Sukhonthaphirom⁷, Air Force Maj. Phrangphet Bunyarattaphan⁸, and Army Lieutenant Colonel Sali Thanawibun participated in the movement. The expansion of the National Liberation Movement into the military drew the attention of the government. The National Liberation Movement held Marxism-Leninism as an ideology. They had an idea of staging a

⁵ Suphot Dantrakun had worked as a clerk in the warehouse of the Japanese army in Ranong (South Thailand) during World War II. He participated in the Free Thai Movement and investigated activities of the Japanese army and their shipment. He was arrested on suspicion of rebellion in November 1952, convicted of it and released in 1957. He was re-arrested on suspicion of communist and rebellion in 1958.

⁶ Personal interview with Suphot, December 8, 2006 (telephone).

⁷ Suphat Sukhonthaphirom earned a master's degree in economics from Thammasat University in 1943. During World War II, Wijiit Lulitanon (1906-87) asked him to join the Free Thai Movement and go to Ceylon in order to cooperate with the Allies. After the war he worked as section head of the accounting department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After the coup in 1947, Phraya Siwisanwaja, the Foreign Minister, prohibited sending newspapers criticizing the "coup group" to the Thai Embassies abroad. Some newspapers criticized Foreign Minister for it. He dismissed Suphat because he had a suspicion that Suphat leaked to newspaper reporters the matter of sending newspapers. Then, Suphat worked for the Soviet Embassy in Bangkok and engaged in interpretation, translation and editing public relations bulletin (Suthachai 1991, 276).

⁸ Phrangphet Bunyarattaphan was promising Air Force personnel and was interested in Marxism. He contributed articles to *Kiattisak* under the penname "intelligentsia". However, he joined the oppression of the Manhattan Rebellion (Suthachai 1991, 299-300).

coup against the government, which was corrupted, abused powers, implemented the wrong foreign policy, and was submissive to the United States (Suthachai 1991, 299-300).

Suphot Dantrakun was a former member of the Free Thai movement. After the War, he discovered corruption as a newspaper reporter but was not allowed to report on it. Therefore, he distributed leaflets accusing the government of fraud with friends, launched the National Liberation Movement, and recruited liberal people⁹.

Suphat Sukhonthaphirom was a theorist for the National Liberation Movement. He was a former member of the Free Thai Movement and was involved in the previous coups in order to overthrow the Phibun regime. He served in the three attempts as a liaison, but he had never been arrested each time on lack of evidence. It appeared that he would overthrow the government with Thais abroad in the same way as the Free Thai Movement. He anticipated the leadership of Pridi, who was in China (Somsak 2002, 197-98).

The core members of the National Liberation Movement consisted of representatives from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and civilians, all of whom determined the policy (Suphot 1979, 151-52). About 100 people joined this Movement. Many Navy members joined them because they were frustrated with the treatment by the government after the failure of the Manhattan Rebellion. For example, Rear Admiral Thahan Khamhiran¹⁰, who was involved in the Palace Rebellion and fled from Thailand, agreed to participate in the National Liberation Movement. However, it is unclear how well he understood the National Liberation Movement. By using the name Thahan, members of the National Liberation Movement were recruiting others to join them. Meanwhile, Major General Net Khemayothin (1909-85), who was the leader of the Army General Staff Plot, was invited after his release, but refused to join the National Liberation Movement (Somsak 2002, 199). According to the police, Net was afraid that the National Liberation Movement would lead to a war and cause extensive damage because they expected Chinese military aid (Banlue 1959, 83-84).

The noticeable activity of the National Liberation Movement was to distribute handbills against the government. However, they distributed only five issues, and each issue printed about 500 copies. The first issue was distributed in November 1951 and criticized the corruption and foreign policy which followed

⁹ Personal interview with Suphot, August 4, 1998.

¹⁰ Thahan Khamhiran was a member of Khana Ratsadon (People's Party, The Promoters), which staged a coup and established the constitutional monarchy in 1932.

that of the United States. The handbills were distributed on May Day, June 24 (National Day), and June 29 in 1952. Through the handbills, the National Liberation Movement intended to spread Marxism and insisted that Thailand was a colony of the United States. The handbills were distributed on June 29, 1952, the first anniversary of the Manhattan Rebellion, to recruit Navy members¹¹.

The National Liberation Movement failed in the attempt to make contact with China. In June 1952, Navy Lieutenant Commander Manat Jarupha, the leader of the Manhattan Rebellion, was returned to Thailand from Burma where he had fled. Suphat Sukhonthaphirom decided to send Manat to make contact with Pridi Phanomyong in China for the National Liberation Movement (Somsak 2002, 202-03)¹². Suphat asked Suchart Phumiborirak (1927-), a candidate for the CPT member and a reporter for the *Kiatissak*, to take Manat to China via Laos¹³. At the time, Manat was wanted and a reward was being offered for him. Suchart himself wanted to flee from Thailand because he was afraid that he would be arrested due to his editorial, which supported the peace movement. Even though Suchart had political ideas that were different from Suphat and Manat, all of them stood against the government. Suchart had a plan to assist the Lao Issara, which was fighting against French rule, before going to China. Suchart and Manat left Bangkok for Nong Khai by train on July 17, 1952. They met Chao Khamla (1925-2005), who was a sister of Souphanouvong (1909-95) and a member of the Lao Issara, in Nong Khai. Suchart presented a letter of introduction, which he obtained in Bangkok. Khamla brought it to the leader of the Viet Minh, but there was no stamp to prove the letter's veracity. Therefore, they were not allowed to enter the liberated areas of the Lao Issara. Suchart went back to Bangkok to report this matter to Suphat. While Manat was waiting in Laos for Suchart to return, Manat met fugitive Second Lieutenant Nuang Sukphun who was involved in the Palace Rebellion and was hiding out. Nuang decided to join them to flee from Thailand. After Suchart returned, they decided

¹¹ Personal interview with Suphot, August 4, 1998.

¹² According to the interrogation, Manat was concerned about his own safety and had no intention of making contact with Pridi (Banlue 1959, 58). Manat published the detailed record about the Manhattan Rebellion. According to his book, he met Poonsuk Phanomyong, Pridi's wife, eight times at the court for the extension of the detention period because they were arrested on the same day. However, Manat did not express any feelings for her in this book (Manat 2001, 475, 495). In addition, there is no reference to Pridi and flight to China.

¹³ The CPT could arrange a clandestine trip from Thailand to China (Kasian 2001, 271-72).

to go to the home village of Suchart in Chaiyaphum Province (northeast Thailand) to hide. Suchart went to Bangkok again to earn money. Because the police were searching for thieves in the village, Manat and Nuang became uneasy and fled to Bangkok (Manat 2001, 406-62). After all, the contact with Pridi failed because everyone was arrested in Bangkok.

The government cracked down on the National Liberation Movement soon after Thahan Khamhiran was arrested in July 1952. His letters from Suphat Sukhonthaphirom were also seized. One of the letters not only instructed Thahan to burn the letter after reading to destroy the evidence but also stated that Suphat could escape punishments for lack of evidence so far. The arrest of Thahan was caused by Samut, who leaked information to the police. In the beginning, the police made a deal with Wibunwan Manjit, whose husband was Major Wirasak, behind the scenes. Wirasak fled to Burma together with Manat Jarupha after he was involved in the Manhattan Rebellion. Wibunwan made contact with Samut and provided the police with information on the National Liberation Movement obtained from him (Suphot 1979a, 71)¹⁴. The arrest of Thahan, the seizure of his letters, and the information leakage from Samut provided important clues leading to the rounding up of National Liberation Movement members in November 1952.

Communist Party of Thailand Making Contact with the National Liberation Movement

The author met Chavalit Thapkhwa (1925-)¹⁵ who had joined the Thai National Liberation Organization and was a former leader of the Communist Party of Thailand. According to him, the leaders of the Thai National Liberation Organization were Udom Sisuwan (1920-93), who was a CPT member, and Suphot Dantrakun. At the time, Chavalit was an elementary school teacher in Maha Sarakham Province of northeast Thailand. As a member of the Thai

¹⁴ Moreover, Samut only among the core members of the National Liberation Movement could escape the imprisonment and standing in the dock because he chose to cooperate with police as a witness after his arrest.

¹⁵ Chavalit Thapkhwa was born in the family of peasants of Mahasarakham Province. During World War II, he became an elementary schoolteacher and then joined the Free Thai Movement. He also participated in the Thai National Liberation Organization and collected signatures against the Korean War. In 1961 he resigned a teacher to participate in the CPT. He was a member of the CPT's Central Committee during 1982-85. He surrendered in 1985 (At 1990).

National Liberation Organization, Chavalit learned its policy and tried to expand the organization among teachers and farmers. Rather than Marxism, the Thai National Liberation Organization spread propaganda of patriotism and was against the exploitation by the United States. Although they had no weapons, they claimed an armed struggle. The organization was dissolved after Suphot Dantrakun was arrested in November 1952¹⁶. For this reason, I assumed that the CPT recognized the National Liberation Movement under the united front of the Thai National Liberation Organization and some local members recognized both as the same organization.

According to Udom Sisuwat, Khrong Jandawong (1909-61) , who was a former member of the Free Thai Movement and was executed for being a communist in 1961, organized and led the Thai National Liberation Organization of Farmers in Sakon Nakhon Province of northeast Thailand. This organization was an underground anti-American movement, which was similar to the anti-Japanese Free Thai Movement during WWII. This organization regarded American imperialism as an enemy. The CPT dissolved the organization since it went to the “extreme left” (Pho 2000, 72-73).

The CPT would not leave the National Liberation Movement, which advocated Marxism, as it was. I assumed the CPT tried to make the best use of the National Liberation Movement. The CPT took advantage of every opportunity to gain more influence. The CPT placed the National Liberation Movement under the Thai National Liberation Organization, that is, the united front, but members of the National Liberation Movement did not know this. Therefore, members of the CPT often made contact with the leaders of the National Liberation Movement and attempted to persuade them to abandon the coup to topple the government and to join the peace movement, but it was in vain.

Suchart Pumiborirak had been a newspaper reporter of *Kiatissak* and his article about peace caught the eye of Sak Supakasem, who was a member of the CPT and the editor-in-chief of the party newspaper, *Mahachon* (The Masses) ¹⁷.. Then, Suchart made a connection with the CPT. Suchart was close to leaders of the National Liberation Movement and was arrested as a member. He tried to recruit Suphot Dantrakun and Samut Surakkhaka, who were the founders of the National Liberation Movement, to the CPT. Both Suphot and Samut espoused Marxism-Leninism. However, Suphot refused to join the CPT for two reasons.

¹⁶ Personal interview with Chavalit Thapkhwa, May 4, 2011.

¹⁷ Although Suchart studied at night course of newspaper, Chulalongkorn University, he dropped out with Sack's advice. Sack told Suchart that practice was more important than study.

First, he thought that the CPT was subordinate to the Communist Party of China (CPC). Second, he heard from his Chinese friends that there was no personal liberty in the CPC. Meanwhile, Samut testified on July 7, 1953, “Suchart gave me leftist books such as the writings of Mao Zedong. After I read them, Suchart gave me an explanation. Then, he held out the application for the CPT, but I did not fill it out” (Minzhu Wanbao, July 8, 1953).

Suphat Sukhonthaphirom was also influenced by the CPT. A member of the CPT, Pan Kaewmat, gave Suphat a book entitled *New Democracy* and materials on Marxism in 1951 and invited him to a study group on Marxism. It was the typical way to recruit new members of the CPT—fellow sympathizers read literature on communism, then asked questions, and attended the political study group. Since Pan Kaewmat must have tried to recruit Suphat to the CPT in vain, he persuaded Suphat to join the united front. According to Suphat, the way to recruit members of the National Liberation Movement followed that of the CPT (Somsak 2002, 200).

Somsak assumed that Pan Keomat made contact with the National Liberation Movement in accordance with the policy of the CPT rather than his personal relationship with Suphat Sukontapirom (Somsak 2002, 201-02). According to my interview with Suchart Phumiborirak, Pan Keomat, who was in charge of the united front work of the CPT, told Suphat Sukontapirom to give up the idea of armed struggle again and again¹⁸. Pluang Wannasi (1923-96), who was a member of the CPT, also held meetings with journalists, writers, students, and members of the National Liberation Movement including Suphat in the guise of lunch or dinner with great caution against police detection¹⁹. They discussed the political situation, social problems, political thought, and Marxism-Leninism. Pan and Pluang made efforts to make the National Liberation Movement act in concert with CPT’s policy.

The members of the CPT met members of the National Liberation Movement and tried to incorporate them into the united front of the peace movement. Suchart, who attended the meetings several times, told me the following:

The CPT did not have the idea of coup. The CPT educated the public,

¹⁸ Personal interview with Suchart, November 9, 2005 (telephone).

¹⁹ Those attending these meetings were arrested as members of the National Liberation Movement, even though they were not the members. According to the interrogation of Samut, they discussed communism in the meeting. They also talked about the Thai government, American imperialism and the peace campaign in Thailand.

opposed to wars, and supported peace. Pan Keomat was familiar with the National Liberation Movement and opposed their idea of coup. He wanted them to understand the Marxism-Leninism correctly. Pan and Pluang Wanasi thought they could persuade Suphat to abandon the idea of coup because he was working at the Soviet Embassy. They made an effort to win the National Liberation Movement over to the united front of peace movement. However, before the success, the National Liberation Movement was suppressed²⁰.

Suchart Phumiborirak compared the strategy of the Communist Party of Thailand and the National Liberation Movement in my interview as follows:

The National Liberation Movement tried to seize power by coup, but they did not have a plan to change the system. On the other hand, the CPT was aiming at the revolution and its goal was the change in system. However, the CPT supported the peace movement and had not undertaken the armed struggle at the time. The armed struggle is tactical and depends on the circumstance²¹.

Bunmi Latthiprasat (b. 1903)²², who was also arrested as a member of the National Liberation Movement, criticized the movement later as follows (actually, he was not a member of the movement but he was a CPT member):

The National Liberation Movement proclaimed itself a leader of the revolution, but they did not understand the meaning of the revolution. What class makes a revolution? The revolution which does not refer to class is not a revolution. The revolution that the National Liberation Movement advocated was just a coup which intended to overthrow the old government and establish the new government that would exploit people again. Besides, one of the leaders hated the revolution and aimed at the coup. (Khom 1981, 102)

²⁰ Personal interview with Suchart, January 19, 2005 (telephone).

²¹ Personal interview with Suchart, November 9, 2005 (telephone).

²² Bunmi Latthiprasat was born in Nakhon Nayok Province in 1903. He finished secondary education at the prestigious Wat Debsirin School. Kulap Saipradit, a journalist and vice chairman of the Peace Committee of Thailand, was his classmate. He studied at Thammasat University. He worked for several newspapers such as *Siam Review*, *Shiang Thai* (Voice of Thai), *Satianraphap* (Stability) (Maekhwankhao 1981, 89-91).

Suphat Sukhonthaphirom wrote handbills for the National Liberation Movement and drafted its charter entitled “New Democracy.” The title is the same as that of Mao Zedong’s idea, which was the first phase before entering socialism. The draft was influenced by the ideas of the CPT²³. The National Liberation Movement also recognized Thailand as a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society like the CPT. The National Liberation Movement aimed at the people’s liberation from fascism and imperialism in the same way as did the CPT. Suphat mentioned the relationship of the National Liberation Movement and the CPT in the letter for Thahan on June 5, 1952.

In this National Liberation Movement, we will cooperate with the CPT in terms of the political strategy. But the military strategy and tactics are our own since we do not yet trust the skill of the CPT in these matters - this is the instruction of our teacher [Pridi-Somsak’s note] (Somsak 2002, 199-201)

The Communist Party of Thailand failed in the recruitment of key members of the National Liberation Movement to the CPT. The organization under the united front did not have to agree with every policy of the CPT. However, the CPT was not able to make concessions to the National Liberation Movement for the idea of a coup. Key members of the National Liberation Movement such as Phrangphet Bunyarattaphan supported the coup without reason. According to Suphot, members of the National Liberation Movement were still in training and were not familiar with theories such as Marxism. It was unlikely that they would stage a coup in the near future because they had not yet collected weapons²⁴. The CPT had attempted to make the National Liberation Movement abandon the idea of a coup and put them under the united front of the peace movement until the wholesale arrest in November 1952. In the next chapter, I will discuss the relations between the National Liberation Movement and the Peace Committee of Thailand.

Conflict between the National Liberation Movement and the Peace Committee of Thailand

The National Liberation Movement opposed the war policy of the government and claimed neutrality (Suphot 1986, 94). This claim itself was similar to the

²³ According to Suthachai, “New Democracy” by Suphat was printed and distributed to members to promote understanding the policy of the National Liberation Movement (Suthachai 1991, 301).

²⁴ Personal interview with Suphot, February 17, 2006.

Peace Committee of Thailand. Some members of the National Liberation Movement and Peace Committee of Thailand knew each other. Actually, Suphat Sukontapirom collected signatures for peace in accordance with the Peace Committee of Thailand²⁵. Suphat also issued a statement of support for the Peace Committee of Thailand. However, the Peace Committee of Thailand did not accept it (Suphot 1979a, 118). Suphot Dantrakun signed it, but did not collect signatures for peace. Although he was not invited to the Conference of Peace Committee of Thailand, he was at the scene to cover the story²⁶.

On June 26, 1952, the Peace Committee of Thailand held a press conference. Jaroen Suepsaeng, a chairman of the Committee, was asked about the relation with the National Liberation Movement because the movement referred to the peace movement in the handbill. Jaroen affirmed that “The Peace Committee of Thailand has nothing to do with the National Liberation Movement.” But, he also issued a criticism, stating,

The National Liberation Movement has a right to mention the issue of peace. However, the National Liberation Movement inclines toward the coup. It is different from the idea of the Peace Committee of Thailand...The idea is no good for peace, people and the state. (So. 1952, 28-29)

The Peace Committee of Thailand issued a statement after the wholesale arrest in November 1952 as follows:

Many people support the Peace Committee of Thailand. The group of Pibun tried to confuse pacifists with the coup mongers. They could not get the support of the people. The attempts would ruin the Pibun regime²⁷.

“Pacifists” in this statement referred to activists of the Peace Committee of Thailand and “the coup mongers” meant members of the National Liberation Movement. The Peace Committee criticized the National Liberation Movement as well as the government, which identified the Peace Committee with the National Liberation Movement intentionally. This statement was published in *Shiang Thai*, but authorities confiscated it²⁸.

Jaroen Suepsaeng, a chairman of Peace Committee, complained to

²⁵ Suphat asked Karuna Kutsalasai (1920-2009) to sign for peace (Personal interview with Karuna, December 14, 2001).

²⁶ Personal interview with Suphot, December 8, 2006.

²⁷ Xinhua News, January 20, 1953 (中国華僑僑務 (CD) 信息資源庫).

²⁸ Ibid.

members of the National Liberation Movement in prison, “The National Liberation Movement aimed at the overthrow of the government and caused the wholesale arrest including pacifists because of its relations with the Peace Committee.” The “relation with the Peace Committee,” which Jaroen mentioned, meant the support expressed for the Peace Committee by the National Liberation Movement as described above (Suphot 1979a, 118)²⁹.

Samphat Phungpuradit (1926-), who was an activist at Thammasat University and was arrested as well, mentioned that

the CPT had the conflicting views with the National Liberation Movement. The CPT struggled peacefully and opposed to the use of force. However, the National Liberation Movement wanted the coup. Both members quarreled still in jail after being arrested (Somsak 2002, 201-02).

The Peace Committee of Thailand claimed the innocence of arrested people and tried to protect the peace movement by issuing the statement as mentioned above after the wholesale arrest, clearly distinguishing itself from the National Liberation Movement.

Conclusion

The Korean War caused the CPT to promote the peace movement in the cities and to arm at the armed struggle in rural areas in accordance with policies of the international communist movement. The former is the Peace Committee of Thailand and the latter is the Thai National Liberation Organization. However, the failures of coups by the pro- Pridi group made the CPT criticize that the coup would be unlikely to win. The CPT believed that the armed struggle would be premature and gave priority to the expansion of the Party.

Indeed, the peace movement was the best opportunity for the CPT to present a united front, recruit able people into the Party, expand their influence to more people, and to publicize anti-American sentiment. The CPT took the initiative in the peace movement in response to people’s opposition to war, though it continued to act in secret. With the shift in CPT activities to the countryside, the peace movement even took hold in rural farm villages.

The CPT took advantage of every opportunity in order to expand its influence. That means is a united front. The National Liberation Movement became its target. The CPT could not leave the National Liberation Movement,

²⁹ Personal interview with Suphot Dantrakun in Nonthaburi on June 16, 2002.

which advocated Marxism, as it was. The CPT positioned the National Liberation Movement as a branch of the Thai National Liberation Organization, which was already deployed as the united front. However, the CPT shifted the emphasis from the armed struggle to the peace movement. Consequently, the National Liberation Movement, which aimed at the coup, was ahead of the CPT and beyond the platform of the united front. Therefore, some members of the CPT met the core leader of the National Liberation Movement and tried to change the policy of the Movement, but failed to incorporate into the united front of the peace movement. As a result, the roundup dissolved the National Liberation Movement, the Peace Committee of Thailand and the Thai National Liberation organization.

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