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NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 OMB-01 DRC-01 /139 W

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PR  220818Z DEC 73
FM AMEMBASSY BANGkok
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9240
INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
AMCONSUL UDORN
DIA
CINCPAC
USSAG,NKP
13TH ADVON UDORN

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH
SUBJECT: NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION RESULTS

REFS: (A) BANGKOK 19395; (B) FBIS BANGKOK D161414Z DEC 73;
(C) FBIS BANGKOK D180402Z DEC 73; (D) FBIS BANGKOK D210233Z
DEC 73; (E) BANGKOK A-382

SUMMARY: CREATIVELY INTERPRETING THE 1972 INTERIM CONSTITU-
TION, THE KING DISSOLVED THE OLD NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE
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ASSEMBLY (NLA). HE THEN GAVE AN OPENING ADDRESS TO THE
NATIONAL CONVENTION WHICH HE HAD PREVIOUSLY SELECTED AND
CHARGED WITH CHOOSING THE NEW NLA MEMBERSHIP (REF A).
BLOC LOBBYING LEAVENED THE DELEGATES' EVENINGS AND THEY
VOTED FOR ESSENTIALLY PREDICTABLE CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE
AND REPUTATIONS. THE RESULTS REFLECTED THE SHIFT TOWARD
CIVILIAN TECHNOCRATS, INTELLECTURALS AND ADMINISTRATORS.
VOTING AS DISCIPLINED BLOCS THE ARMY AND POLICE SELECTED
THEIR SENIOR LEADERS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE KING DISSOLVED THE THANOM APPOINTED NATIONAL LEGIS-
LATIVE ASSEMBLY (NLA) WITH A QUICK CONSTITUTIONAL SLIGHT OF
HAND (REF B). HE BASED HIS MOVE ON ARTICLE 16 OF THE 1972
CONSTITUTION WHICH STATES THAT THE MONARCH "HAS THE
PREROGATIVE TO ISSUE A ROYAL DECREED WHICH IS NOT CONTRARY TO THE
LAW." THIS MOVE STARTS THE NEW NLA AFRESH AND AVOIDS LEGAL
COMPULSIONS SUCH AS EXILED COLONEL NARONG KITTICHAKORN'S
FAILURE TO RESIGN.

2. THE KING OPENED THE CONVENTION DECEMBER 18 WITH A NATIONALLY
TELEVISED SPEECH WHICH CALLED ON THE DELEGATES TO RETURN A
NLA REPRESENTING A BROAD SPECTRUM OF INTERESTS AND OPINIONS
(REF C).

3. LOBBYING BEGAN FROM THE TIME THE DELEGATES ARRIVED IN
BANGKOK. ACCORDING TO THE THAI LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER
"PRACHATHIPATAI'S" ANALYSIS TAMBI AND VILLAGE LEADERS WERE
THE LARGEST GROUP IN THE CONVENTION WITH 651 MEMBERS.
OTHER MAJOR GROUPS INCLUDED MILITARY OFFICER, 341; CIVILIAN
OFFICIALS, 319; TEACHERS, 273; BUSINESSMEN, 259; LAWYERS,
143; FARMERS, 111; SKILLED WORKERS, 102; JOURNALISTS, 83;
AND MEDICAL DOCTORS, 65.

4. THE RESULTS (REFS D AND E) SUGGEST THAT THE MILITARY AND
CIVIL SERVANT BLOC WERE BETTER DISCIPLINED THAN OTHERS. THE
LARGE GROUP OF VILLAGE AND TAMBI LEADERS ONLY ELECTED ELEVEN
REPRESENTATIVES DUE TO SPLITS IN THEIR RANKS AND THEIR
PROPENSITY TO VOTE FOR THEIR CIVIL SERVICE SUPERIORS IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION (DOLA); OTHER GROUPS
APPARENTLY SUFFERED FROM THE SAME FAULT SINCE THE 299TH
MAN ON THE LIST RECEIVED 159 VOTES OF THE 2,000
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PLUS POSSIBLE VOTES. ALTHOUGH THEY CONSTITUTED ONLY 13
PERCENT OF THE CONVENTION, THE DOLA REPRESENTATIVES RETURNED
23 PERCENT OF THE NOMINATIONS TO THE NLA, BEGINNING WITH THE
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF DOLA. THE ARMED FORCES ONLY ELECTED 23
REPRESENTATIVES BUT THE VOTE SPREAD SUGGESTED THAT THE
MILITARY BLOC VOTED WITH DELIBERATE INTENT. THE ARMY
OBVIOUSLY VOTED BY SENIORITY, RETURNING RANKING OFFICERS AND
PICKING TROOP COMMANDERS OVER STAFF OFFICERS.
5. THE TOP POLICE LEADERSHIP WAS ALSO ELECTED BEGINNING WITH A DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL, TWO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-Generals, THE COMMANDER OF THE BANGKOK METROPOLITAN POLICE, AND NINE OTHER KEY OFFICERS.


7. CONTROVERSY ALREADY SURROUNDS THE SITTING OF THE NEW NLA. ARTICLE 6 OF THE 1972 CONSTITUTION REQUIRES THAT THE ASSEMBLYMEN BE AT LEAST 35 YEARS OF AGE AND A THAI CITIZEN BY BIRTH. FOUR NOMINEES, FROM THE VERY INTELLECTUAL GROUP WHICH CREATED THIS DEMOCRATIC OPPORTUNITY, ARE UNDER AGE - DR. PONGPEN SUTUNTAPHAI AND DR. CHAI-ANAND SAMUTTHAWANICH, MEMBERS OF CONSTITUTIONAL APDRAFTING COMMITTEE; KHANCHAI BOONPON, COLUMNIST FOR "THAI RATH" NEWSPAPER; AND SUTHICHAI YOON, MANAGING EDITOR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE "NATION" NEWSPAPER AND COLUMNIST TO PRESTIGIOUS "SIAM RATH." IF THESE MEN ARE TO SIT, THE CONSTITUTION HAS TO BE REMOLDED. ONE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR NOMINEE SUGGESTED TO US THAT THE KING MAY TEMPORARILY REPLACE THESE CONFIDENTIAL

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USIA-15 AID-20 OMB-01 DRC-01 /139 W

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PR 220818Z DEC 73
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9241
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8. COMMENT: ELECTION TO THE NLA HAS BROUGHT NEW AND YOUNGER PEOPLE INTO THE POLITICAL SYSTEM. THE MEDIUM AGE HAS SHIFTED FROM MID-50S TO MID-40S. ONCE HAVING HAD A TASTE OF POLITICS THESE PEOPLE MAY BE THE SOURCE OF NEW CANDIDATES IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS. CERTAINLY THE PRESTIGE OF ROYAL SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT TO THE NLA WILL BE A CAMPAIGN ASSET. IN ONE STROKE THE KING'S MOVE CREATED A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE SUFFICIENT PRESTIGE TO COMPETE WITH THE PREVIOUS POLITICIANS.

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9. THE NEW NLA WILL BE THE FOCUS OF CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL MOMENTUM IN THE NEAR FUTURE WHICH COULD UPSTAGE OTHER ACTORS. THIS IS PARTLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE LONG OUTSPOKEN DISSENTERS IT CONTAINS, ARE NOW LEGITIMIZED. FURTHERMORE, THE ASSEMBLY CONTAINS A PREDOMINANCE OF DOLA CIVIL SERVANTS. DOLA, ALTHOUGH IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DAILY ADMINISTRATION
OF THE GOVERNMENT, HAS NOT NECESSARILY BEEN ON THE INSIDE OF
POLITICAL RESOURCE ALLOCATION DECISIONS IN THAILAND. THE
LARGE DOLA BLOC CAN BE EXPECTED TO USE ITS NEW ACCESS TO
POWER TO BETTER DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST THE MILITARY OR THE
POLICE.

10. ISSUES THAT WILL BE RAISED IN THE NEW NLA INCLUDE A
MOVE TO RELEASE THE THREE FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
THE THANOM GOVERNMENT IMPRISONED FOR TREASON, A SCRUTINI-
ZATION OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT'S DECREES AND LAWS WITH THE
SPECIFIC INTENT OF ABOLISHING MARTIAL LAW.

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