Trying to poison minds with a pen

The attention of the public is being drawn to certain leaflets reported to have been widely distributed in the city. Gossip has grown like a cancer around the contents of these leaflets. The author or authors behind them are unknown as are their intentions, but their very anonymity has destroyed any shreds of credibility they would wish to be attached to their clandestine and illegal publication.

We in Thailand of all people should realise that our country is a place where the habit of writing ignominiously about fellow beings, be they employers, supervisors, enemies, friends, even relatives, anyone the writer hates or envies or dislikes for whatever reason, and carefully hiding their identity has become something of a national sport or indulgence.

People who receive such leaflets should treat them with the disrespect and contempt with which the author has shown by failing to say who he or she is, and by trying to poison their minds with sensational accusations. The writer or writers of the leaflets had evidently hoped to gain a widespread audience for the fanciful stories, and appeared to have judged more or less correctly the reception such fairy tales would get.

The leaflets were distributed at strategic points to quickly catch public curiosity and scrutiny. They seemed to capture the imagination of unthinking and non-critical minds. It was even reported that some of them were so fascinated by the groundless charges that they used copying machines in their offices to make duplicates to give to their acquaintances. These persons forget that such actions would make them accomplices in the unlawful distribution of material meant to spark disorder and riots.

What is even more astounding is that people have gone on to embellish by word of mouth what they claimed to have read in the leaflets, with exaggeration complicating the confusion. Such verbal transmissions could be destructive and could get the gossips into real trouble with the law.

It must be emphasised that most of the public acted sensibly, after the initial sense of excitement. They began to see that there were holes in the stories which they found could not hold water. They refused to be stirred up to any protest or any other activity which could have served the interests of the author or authors, but could have been detrimental to national interests.

We the public should be more wary of anonymous letters written by obvious cowards who dare not back up their allegations by coming out into the open to reveal who they are. The only way to handle these leaflets is to ignore them and the only place to put them is in wastepaper baskets or other garbage disposal units.

Army appeal to help catch ‘subversives’

The military yesterday called on the people to help find the sources of leaflets and rumours which it said had seriously damaged the monarchy.

The call came in a joint statement by the Supreme Command, Army, Air Force, Navy and the Police Department broadcast on all television and Army radio stations last night.

Urging the public not to believe the contents of the leaflets and to stop listening to the rumours, the statement said the armed forces would take every measure to destroy the movement which was behind the campaign.

The statement said a “group of the Kingdom’s enemies” has taken the opportunity while the country is celebrating His Majesty the King’s 60th birthday anniversary to undermine the country’s highest institution.

“The armed forces, which are directly responsible for protecting the monarchy, therefore, could not sit idle to allow these aggressive and dangerous actions to go on without taking any action,” the statement said.

The statement did not give details of the leaflets or the rumours, saying the spread of such material was part of repeated attempts to cause the people to lose respect for the monarchy.

Supreme Commander Gen Chavalit Yongchaiyut said the armed forces have monitored developments for several days but had not acted until yesterday because the people were celebrating one of the country’s most important occasions.

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ข้าราชการบุคคลภิลัย สมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว ทรงพระกรุณาโปรดเกล้าฯ ให้บุคคลภิลัยที่ทรงพระกรุณาโปรดเกล้าฯ ถวาย
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ประชาชนทั่วประเทศ ด้วยการบริจาคเงินให้
Critics of the crown

Anti-monarchy leaflets provoke strong government response

By Paisal Sricharatchanya in Bangkok

The government has moved to act against what appears to be a series of organised underground campaigns to discredit members of Thailand's royal family. Before leaving Bangkok to attend the Asean summit in Manila in mid-December, Prime Minister Prem Tinsutonond was understood to have issued strict instructions to the police to make every effort to arrest and prosecute those behind an assortment of anti-monarchy leaflets which have been circulating in Bangkok and upcountry provinces in recent weeks.

Understood to be in circulation since the end of November, the leaflets are considered damaging to Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn. But what surprised Thai and foreign diplomatic observers was a subsequent batch, believed to be in limited circulation, which purportedly criticised the monarchy and the widely revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Security analysts believe the two batches originated from different sources.

Believed to have been timed to coincide with the massive nationwide celebrations commemorating the king's 60th birthday (REVIEW, 10 Dec.), the anti-monarchy leaflets in particular prompted strong resentment here, in view of the deep respect and reverence the Thais have for the king.

The initial official response was unprecedented. Interrupting normal TV programmes on the evening of 8 December, a strongly worded statement by the three armed services and national police blamed the leaflets on "a group of enemies of the nation belonging to a movement bent on undermining the monarchy." It pledged that all measures would be taken to stop and destroy the movement in a "decisive and most severe manner."

Army commander and acting supreme commander Gen. Chaoavit Yongchayut said the armed forces originally intended to issue the warning several days earlier, but did not want to mar the atmosphere during the king's birthday celebrations. He said the authorities already had some clues and promised tough action those behind the smear campaign.

Public criticism of the royal family is a criminal offence under Thai laws, and carries penalties ranging from three to 15 years' imprisonment. Anant Senakhan, a former police major who was also a political activist, sought and was granted a royal pardon last month after serving nearly five of a six-year lese majeste sentence. Two other politicians who received the document in their pigeonholes at parliament.

According to Thai sources, one of the investigation leads is focused on a former member of the outlawed Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), who later defected and is currently in Europe studying under a scholarship. Said to have been a student leader at the time of the October 1973 student-led uprising which toppled the then military dictatorship, this person is suspected of collaborating with anti-monarchist Thai elements in Scandinavian countries.

Security agencies are also probing separate reports that some elements behind the various campaigns may be connected with the pro-Soviet Pak Mai (New Party, a breakaway faction of the CPT) which is known to have been quietly active in recent years in trying to erode the Thai public's faith in the monarchy.
Four held on lese majeste charge

Pol Gen Pow Sarasin examines the confiscated leaflets and copying machine at the Police Department yesterday.

TWO university students, a Rayong kindergarten owner and her husband were charged yesterday with printing and distributing leaflets defaming the monarchy.

Police Department director-general Pol Gen Pow Sarasin said the students were arrested early yesterday morning with 760 copies of the leaflet they allegedly tried to leave in a toilet at Amphorn Gardens.

Pol Gen Pow said the Amphorn Gardens conference hall was the venue for the presentation of degrees to graduates of Sukhothai Thammathirat University yesterday afternoon.

The four were charged with defaming the King and Queen and Royal Family members and expressing malicious intentions against the monarchy.

Section 112 of the Penal Code stipulates that whoever defames, insults or threatens the King, the Queen, the heir-apparent or the regent shall be liable to imprisonment of three to 15 years.

The four suspects were identified as Winpol "Pe" Cherdchoochom, 36, and Miss Sifa Sawangyen, 26, both Ramkhamhaeng University law students and natives of Surat Thani, and Mrs Wasuthee Suksong, an owner of a kindergarten in Rayong, and her 36-year-old husband, Wakan Neethabandhu.

Pol Gen Pow said another suspect was booked for questioning yesterday but no charge has been filed against him.

Sources said the suspect, identified as Phahol "Nol" Promthong, was apprehended at his apartment room in Khlong Chan.

Mrs Wasuthee and her husband were arrested in Rayong at the same time as police apprehended Winpol and Sifa at about 5:30 a.m., Pol Gen Pow said.

Police seized a portable typewriter, a copying machine and 36 blank paper sheets from the couple's house during the arrest.

Pol Gen Pow said the swoop followed three months of extensive military and police investigation into the distribution of the leaflets.

"The military and the police have been investigating the case for three months before today's arrests," Pol Gen Pow said.

Police were yet to establish if the four suspects were responsible for leaflets widely distributed in public places earlier, he said.

Police were expanding the investigation, he said, and more arrests could be expected.

Police deputy director Pol Lt-Gen Sawang Thirasawat said the suspects yesterday implicated a number of others.

Pol Gen Pow has set up a special investigation panel to probe the case further.

The investigation team will be led by Assistant Metropolitan Police Commissioner Maj-Gen Viroj Poonin and will comprise members of the Special Branch Division.

Sources said Pol Gen Pow set up a special task force about a month ago.
Tight security for suspects

and typists from those collected earlier.

Gen Prachut said there was no indication that the suspects, who are all students, have any connection with groups in foreign countries.

He said one of the suspects, Mr Nuttawat, was a former student activist who fled since the October 6 crackdown and Mr Wannaphat is a student club president currently running in a student election at Ramkhamhaeng University.

Gen Prachut said he believed the suspects had nothing to do with communists outside Thailand.

The suspects were taken back to Bangkok, where they were detained separately in Chanthaburi, Saraburi, and Nakhon Pathom police stations. Visits by relatives and friends were forbidden, the source said.

Another suspect, Nuttawat, left his wife's house and was detained at Nakhon Pathom police station.

Mr Wannaphat's lawyer tried to visit him but was barred from entering the police station.

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Gen Prachut said it was yet known if the four suspects were connected with the perpetration of earlier leaflets denouncing the monarchy.

Police said the leaflets were made by a different type of paper.
RU rector asked to bail out 2 student activists

Subhin Pulkayan.

Somboon said student activists want the rector to seek bail for Vimol and Srisra so that they could take their upcoming exams. Vimol is going to graduate this semester, he said.

The students will consider the university administration’s reaction in the case before deciding on further moves, he said.

Virat Kleekayorn, an adviser to San Saeng Thong student party, said the party is seeking a lawyer to defend Vimol, who is its member.

The student activist said he believed Vimol is innocent.

Virat said party members may submit a letter to the government or the Parliament to seek help for Vimol and may also contact foreign human rights groups for assistance.

The student activists charged that the arrest of their two friends was an attempt by the authorities to destroy the image of the student movement.

THE NATION,
JAN 28,
1998

Students say leaflet arrests ‘a frame-up’

University student leaders charged yesterday that the four lifts arrested on Monday were "innocent" and "victims of a police frame-up".

They also announced at a press conference that they will demand the university administration set the release of two students of students said to be "innocent" and "victims of a police frame-up".

They also announced at a press conference that they will demand the university administration return the release of two students who are being questioned.

The students’ reaction came to Army Command-in-Chief Gen Chavara, who spoke on the incident, saying that the students who are trying to help their friends should be able to help them.

This students are making a move on this issue calling a press conference because their friends have done something wrong," he said.

"If there are more people like the student suspects, where would we stand?" he asked.

Gen Chawara added that no one can do as they please as the country will fall into anarchy.

He said government officials did not want to get involved and had been restrained, but they could no longer do so.

Describing the distribution of leaflets, which allegedly incite and defame the legal system as an act of a small group, Gen Chawara said that the leaflets were distributed by students in an attempt toblur the case because they are worried for their friends and want to know the details and evidence connected with the case.

Somboon Chawana, president of the Ramkhamhaeng University Students Union, told reporters that the student leaders will formally request the university’s rector, Theppamasoon Esarn, to bail out the two Ramkhamhaeng students implicated in the case.

Mr Theppamasoon said yesterday that the university would not be able to help bail out the two arrested students because they had been accused of activities that could not be identified by the uni-
Leaflet arrests: Study suspects false charges

The Nation, June 9, 1986

Police, however, countered that they have strong evidence implicating the four suspects.

The students also charged that investigators turned Paiboon, who allegedly played the most significant role in producing the underground leaflets, into a state witness because he was a easy man to secure the arrests of the other four suspects.

But police said Paiboon was exempted from charges because he had given useful information for the investigation.

The students then asked the House subcommittee to launch an inquiry into the case.

Police, however, did not implicate Hathai in the production of the anti-monarchy leaflets, he said.

The students and faculty members in the audience were agitated by the charges, according to the university administration.

The students then asked the House subcommittee to launch an inquiry into the case.

Police arrested five people last January with anti-monarchy leaflets and printing equipment.

The four suspects, Virul Cherdchakプレート、Sanit Chuansurin、Nopphat Nakasang and his wife, Natcha Nakasang, were charged with abetting the royal family and expressing cruelty towards the monarchy.

Virul and Sanit are law students at Ramkhamhaeng.

Immediately after the arrests, the university administration expressed their concern to police about the treatment of their students, who were arrested.

Police, however, did not arrest anyone for possessing the leaflets.

Counsel members, however, will try to expose this underground movement, he added.

The criminal court yesterday accepted the case against three suspects arrested Sunday while distributing leaflets that allegedly offended the royal family.

The three suspects — Montri Aksorn-in, Sanit Chandruangneri and Chana Luangvitho — denied the charge in the first hearing at the court yesterday.

State prosecutors have requested the judges to conduct closed-door hearings on the case.

According to police, the three admitted to planning to distribute the leaflets when they were arrested at the Prachan near Thammasat University, while the Ratchamangkhala park was being celebrated at nearby Samut Sakhon.

The Nation, June 9, 1986
3 held on lese majeste

POLICE have arrested three persons on lese majeste charges after they were caught with a bundle of leaflets that offend the Royal Family, police sources said yesterday.

The sources said the arrest took place on July 3 at Ta Phrachan, near Thammasat University, while the Ratchanangkalapisek was being celebrated at nearby Senam Luang.

The three suspects were identified only as Montri, Sanit and Ra.

The sources said police did not publicize the case.

The suspects were quoted as saying they were planning to distribute the leaflets which they said were printed at a printing house in Bangkrabue.

But police could not locate the printing house, the sources said.

The sources said one of the suspects was carrying a paper bag containing about 100 copies of anti-monarchy leaflets.

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Lese majeste charges dropped

THE Criminal Court dropped lese majeste charges yesterday against three suspects in the much-publicized case of underground leaflets slandering the Royal Family.

The court ruled that evidence presented by police and public prosecutors is inadequate to implicate Wimon Cherdchoochon, Srisa Sawangyen, both Ramkhamhaeng University students, and Wasuthee Sukkasang, the owner of a kindergarten in the eastern province of Rayong, as producers of the slanderous leaflets.

Police arrested the three suspects in January this year after having seized bundles of leaflets containing slanderous messages to the Royal Family from Pahol Promthong, also a Ramkhamhaeng University student, at Amporn Garden beside the Royal Plaza.

Similar leaflets were earlier distributed in December 1987, in several public places in Bangkok.

Police, however, withheld charges against Pahol and kept him as a witness, reasoning that he was merely asked to distribute the leaflets and gave useful information implicating the culprits.

Police’s action then prompted a protest by Ramkhamhaeng University students, who charged that Pahol was a police’s decoy and the three arrestees were mere “scapegoats” Public prosecutors filed lese majeste charges against the three suspects on March 4.

The court said yesterday that acquired evidence showed that Pahol was solely responsible for the production of the leaflets and suggested that police file charges against him.