

Head of Chancery

SITUATION IN THAILAND

1. I had an interesting talk today with the Danish Ambassador. As you know, the Prime Minister's wife is Danish and he has known her and her husband well for a long time. He has asked me to a private dinner which he is giving for Mr Thanin.
2. He told me the following:
  - i. He has spoken to Mr Thanin on the telephone a number of times and stressed to him the importance of overseas opinion, about which the Prime Minister is now concerned.
  - ii. The King, though not as far to the right as the Queen, has been involved in recent events to a very deep extent.
  - iii. The King has told Mr Thanin (and the Danish Ambassador stressed the delicacy of this) several months before 6 October that he had him in mind for the Prime Ministership, if and when the need arose. (Comment: but personally I suspect that there was a short list on which Mr Thanin was included).
  - iv. Mr Thanin would have been ready to be conscripted earlier, but as things turned out, the actual events of 6 October had taken everybody by surprise; the top military had acted on the spur of the moment and had used earlier contingency plans.
  - v. There had been a concurrent conspiracy by Pramarn which had served as an additional incentive to the military to take over. The Pramarn plan had not been attached to 6 October as regards timing and it did not really envisage a military coup; it was an underhand political plot to bring about the total collapse of the Seni Government and its replacement under the then existing constitution by a government led by General Pramarn.
  - vi. It was true that Mr Thanin had had some difficulty in creating a Cabinet, since a number of good men who had been offered posts had declined.
  - vii. The military had already been showing some signs of restiveness with the Thanin Cabinet and had complained particularly about the vagueness of its policy statement.

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3. The Danish Ambassador, for what this is worth, shared Kukrit's view that the present Government would last only a few months. He also believes that although the left have been clobbered for the time being, there will be a serious left-wing backlash within three years. (I only mention these comments because the Danish Ambassador, having a Thai wife and knowing the Prime Minister, is pretty well plugged-in, though I have not on the whole found his judgment very good.)

4. The Danish Ambassador also told me that Mr Thanin, changed his residence immediately he became Prime Minister; and that he and his wife live very simply with hardly any servants.

D L Cole

5 November 1976.

cc  
Mr Simons,  
SEAD, FCO

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