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The Student-Led Democratic Movement after the 14 October 1973 Incident and Its Relations with the Communist Party of Thailand*

Pornpirom Iamtham

Introduction

This article presents a post-14 October 1973 historical profile of the student movement, which is here depicted as a democratic force opposing elitist dictatorial rule and aspiring to develop a new democratic and creative political culture. This role prompted the ruling clique of the time to resort to use of force as well as inculcation of a sense of righteousness among the public in suppressing the student movement by various means in order to maintain its political power and economic and social domination. Use of violence by the ruling class led eventually to the bloody incident of 6 October 1976 and impelled the student movement to end its activities in the city and join the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in the jungle.

The article will also highlight the relationship of the student movement with the CPT, their conflicts and the role the former assumed after the two had joined forces. The purpose is to bring into light the true nature of the student movement and its actual expectations from the CPT.

The 14 October 1973 - 6 October 1976 period witnessed an entry of Thai society into an age of significant intellectual change. Political consciousness developed in both extent and profundness. The victory of the 14 October movement, which began with the driving of the “Three Tyrants”

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into exile, was not a direct outcome of the student-led uprising on 14 October. It was rather a result of an exploitation of that situation by another power group in the ruling class, who set an eye on taking over governing power. The toppling of the "Three Tyrants", who had been in control of political power for more than a decade, led to a breakdown of the old power structure, leaving in its wake a power vacuum, chaos, and an unprecedented struggle for power in the military. There were also divisions and in-fighting among bureaucrats and politicians.

In general, public awareness and understanding of the political situation in the aftermath of 14 October 1973 may be divided into two main currents of thought. On the one hand, there was the belief that the 14 October movement should end its activities, since the "Three Tyrants" had lost their powers. This view reflected the mood of businessmen, the majority of the middle-class people, and a number of intellectuals, who did not understand social problems taken as a whole. On the other hand, there was the view that the ouster of the "Three Tyrants" had not solved the real problems of society. Social injustices remained, and there was thus the need for attempts to eliminate them. This was the attitude of progressive student intellectuals and the intellectuals among the farmers and the labour movement, who later led a combined force of workers and farmers in criticising the exploitative state authority.

**Post 14 October Challenges to State Authority**

After the 14 October incident, the political atmosphere was notable for comparatively freer activities and greater freedom of expression than in the earlier period. The society and economy which had been subjected to almost two decades of martial-law enforcement and dictatorial rule yielded their evil fruits in the form of a wide range of problems. Given popular inexperience in associational activities and representative organisation, *the National Student Centre of Thailand* (NSCT) assumed a pivotal role in organising popular demands and struggles, serving as a *de facto* "patron" of the people. It was this role that eventually led it to a confrontation with the post-14 October ruling elite. The student movement was in conflict with the state authority on two main issues. On the one hand, the post-14
October student movement rejected deep-rooted "Sakdina" values and ideologies. During 14 October 1973-6 October 1976, there were behavioural indications of a breakaway from old traditions and values. The challenge to state authority took the form of cultivation of nonsubmissive, non-obedient, and non-passive attitudes among students, farmers and workers, especially towards the state and seniority system. In the Thai hierarchical society of the older value systems, students were inculcated with a submissive respect for and passive deference to their teachers. The people in general were imbued with an obedient compliance with the authority of the rulers and government officials, accepting the latter as their over-lords. The Thai bureaucratic polity, indeed, had shaped a leader-follower relationship between the government officials and the common people.

A research work on the change of values regarding the seniority system in Thai society after 14 October 1973 has noted a weakening of these values particularly among the people of the 20-40 age group.¹

Following the 14 October incident, the NSCT launched an extensive campaign to promote democracy. It initiated, in particular, a "back-to-the countryside" programme and a "door-to-door" call during April-May 1974 as part of this campaign. The students directly got in touch with the people and contributed substantially to the awakening of their political consciousness. (At that time they enjoyed government support for these activities). A change in the patterns of social relations had indeed become evident after the 14 October event. The students and the people in general, who had hitherto been expected to follow the official lead, now became active in demanding social, economic and political justices. Examples of such demands were numerous, including an opposition to provincial governors and district chiefs who had abused their authority. The farmers, the social group allegedly most backward in terms of political consciousness, were for the first time able (with students' support) to consolidate by forming a Farmers Federation of Thailand through which they voiced their grievances. They sought, in particular, the government's

¹ Suwattana Iamworaphan, The Changing Values of Seniority in Thai Society (Karn plien plang ka niyom kiew kab kwam mi awuso nai sangkom Thai), M.A. thesis, Educational Research Dept., Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University; 1972, p.44.
help to redeem their mortgaged properties, ease their debts and land rents, support rice prices, and supply fertiliser and water for the cultivation of their land. The following are instances of how the farmers voiced their grievances and demands:

1 March 1974: a number of farmers lodged a complaint against fraudulent practices by financial dealers.

25 May 1974: more than three thousand farmers from various provinces came to demand help to improve their lot.

10 July 1974: the farmers rallied at Sanam Luang to air their grievances.

9 August 1974: farmers rallied in Bangkok to petition the Government for help and threatened to return their identity cards to the authorities in protest if their demands were not duly met.

29 November 1974: farmers, supported by students and members of the general public, staged a huge demonstration led by Buddhist monks. The picture of farmers in their black traditional dress and wearing slippers arguing with Mr. Prakob Hutasing, then Deputy Prime Minister, was indicative of their emancipation from domination by the “Sakdina” values and view that the ruled must unconditionally defer to the ruler.

The workers, on their part, set up labour unions. Industrial disputes and strikes were frequent. There were 399 of them during October-December 1973; and during January-December 1974 there occurred 477 industrial disputes and 357 strikes.2

High school children set up their own Student Center on 8 November 1972 to demand “democracy in school” and curriculum reform. They became critical of Thai literature, in particular, those texts which, as a school course, they believed indoctrinated students with “Sakdina” culture. They proposed constitutional amendments to lower the age of voters and MP candidates and revoke the Senate. Even in the Sangha (Buddhist Church), circle a new generation of monks united to demand a canonical reform.

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Finally, pressure groups were formed by the people in various professions. A study reported that during 14 October 1973-July 1976, a total of 246 pressure groups came into being as 390 strikes took place.\(^3\)

On the other hand, after 14 October 1973, there were indications that students aspired to a new ideology which would serve as a guide to solve problems in Thai society. The underlying motive was their disappointment with the ongoing parliamentary democracy and inertia and inefficiency of the Sakdina-type bureaucracy. The new ideology discovered by these enthusiastic students was socialism which, in essence, proposed that the aim in life was to serve the suffering mass. One must lead a simple life, refraining from exploiting other people, opposing repressive rule and replacing it with a just state. The students' socialist leaning was evident in the number of publications on politics as reported by “Content Analysis of Thai Books on Politics Published during 14 October 1973-26 January 1975” (unpublished Master of Education thesis, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University). Of 94 such publications, 39 were student publications, the other 55 belonging to various publishers. The contents of the 39 student publications were mainly on communism, while those of the rest, in general, concerned democracy.\(^4\) Moreover, an exhibition was held in 1974 to praise the success of the People’s Republic of China. Students as well as intellectuals paid greater attention to the study of socialism by the translation of documents and publications and by exchanging ideas on this ideology.

Unlike in the latter half of the 1940’s, when the study of socialism was confined to a small group of intellectuals, socialist ideas were both extensively and openly disseminated in the post-14 October 1973 period among students and intellectuals all over the country. “Progressive publications” were quite popular and thus made very good sales. About 3,000-5,000 copies of such publications were sold for each printing, and a lot of them were reprinted several times with sales figures of each of these

\(^3\) Chaianan Samutvanija and David Morell, Political Conflict in Thailand Reform, Reaction, Revolution (Mass : Gunn and Hain Publisher, 1981).

adding up to more than ten thousand copies. Most notably, propagation of, and adoption of socialist ideas among urban intellectuals, were products of the campaign by students and intellectuals in the city -- and not those of the CPT's propaganda effort, which consisted in reproducing just a few old books.

Changes in the post-14 October 1976 period also reflected a shift to a "new culture" among members of the younger generations of the period. Most notable was return to the study of "art for life's sake" or "art for the people" and its adoption as a new cult. This had in fact been proposed by the progressive intellectuals of the later half of 1940's as an aspect of their philosophy but was later suppressed by the Sarit regime (1958). The idea was revived in earnest in the post-14 October 1973 period. Novels reflecting this "art for life's sake" ideology, such as The Demon, Love of Wallaya, and Look towards the Future, were reprinted time and again, together with books on the theories of "art for life's sake" and "art for the people". It was this issue that attracted the attention of justice-loving intellectuals. They became impressed with and committed to the idea and thereby developed a public good-oriented political consciousness. The belief that knowledge and arts must be geared towards the public good was widely accepted. Old values were, as a consequence, challenged, including the belief among students that once they graduated they would become the people's "over-lords".

A new truth of life was discovered through a re-interpretation of history. An important work of Jit Pumisak, The True Face of Thai Sakdina, was reprinted and enthusiastically received by younger generations of students and intellectuals. His treatise presented a new historical method which rejected the chronicle-based historical study, shifting the emphasis from interpretation based on records of royal activities to those of the common people as well as economic and political changes. The True Face of Thai Sakdina, moreover, revealed the exploitative nature of the Sakdina regime, thereby unveiling a new dimension of how Thai intellectuals perceived their past, and providing an intellectual foundation for subsequent

5. The author's interview with Wittayakorn Chiengkul, a writer and scholar, Bangkok: Aug. 20, 1981.
studies of "popular history" by Thai intellectuals.

This new direction in historical interpretation was also evident in Sriburapa's *Look towards the Future*, in which the author at one point criticised chronicle-based historiography for its failure to record popular activities:

"Should the chronicles' failure to record the names of a great number of common people who shed their blood for our nation be regarded as a pretext for not acknowledging our indebtedness to these brave country folk?......."

After 14 October 1973, the idea of art for life's sake, art for the people and public good-oriented education, as well as awareness of the importance of the mass public were widespread among progressive students and intellectuals. It was later conducive to what may be considered a post-14 October "cultural change"

Music and theatre art became more and more imbued with the art for life's sake value. They developed a style, such as in dressing, which reflected the modest simple life style of the working people. University music groups produced songs describing real life in society, expressing sympathy to those being exploited, and opposing imperialist domination and all injustices. Poetry, short stories and plays written by young men and women normally contained similar themes.

**Development of the Student Movement**

It may be argued that the 14 October movement came into its own existence without prior planning and organisation. The CPT had not anticipated a victory by the 14 October uprising. It was concentrating its attention on armed operations in the rural areas in pursuance of the "countryside surrounding the city" strategy which had been put into effect following its adoption at the third congress in 1959. With an experience of vigorous suppression by the Sarit Government, the CPT ordered a ban on involvement and activities of its cadres in the 14 October uprising in order

to avoid possible losses. However, after the event, the CPT tried to infiltrate into the student movement; and by 1975 it was able to influence the latter in both ideology and organisation.

The CPT's success in infiltrating into the student movement was attributable to several factors.

Firstly, some progressive students and intellectuals adopted the view that social transformations and creation of a just society could only be the result of a revolution. They regarded the CPT as the only force really committed to an organised and ideologically motivated resistance to the state with armed strength and communist-infiltrated areas. Moreover, they looked to Jit Pumisak, an intellectual who had defected to the CPT, as an example. Finally, the CPT intellectually impressed them with a challenging ideology. An intellectual who used to be an intellectual leader of the students in the post-14 October 1973 period explained his acceptance of organisation by the CPT as follows:

"......the Party proposed a mode of analysing the whole Thai social system. It presented a more systematic analytic scheme. We were therefore intellectually inclined to accept it......It offered a systematic and plausible analysis (of Thai society); we therefore agreed with it......"  

Secondly, the CPT's city agents made a genuine effort at infiltration. Following the 14 October victory, the CPT regarded the student movement as an important resource that must be expanded and brought under its control. It had had a similar success in the aftermath of the Second World War. Its infiltration effort began with recruiting a group of ethnic Chinese intellectuals to the Democratic Youth League of Thailand, which was the CPT's principal arm responsible for disseminating socialist ideology among the youth. It then infiltrated into student organisations, gained control of their leadership and policy-making set-up, organised progressive students through personal friendship links, heightened their political consciousness

by setting up groups to study progressive books and documents, such as the Five-Part Treatise, the Stupid Uncle Moving the Mountain, and Chang Zi Te. A special emphasis was placed on ethics. And if a student had proved himself to be sufficiently politically oriented to assume the CPT agent's role, the Party would invite him to co-operate with it. Information gleaned from interviews with many former student leaders who joined forces with the CPT and analysis of the roles and policies of student organisations in 1975 sufficiently supported the hypothesis that the CPT exerted considerable influence in the shaping of the student movement's policy and direction of its political activities. CPT agents infiltrated into various parts of the movement, including the NSCT and its affiliated newspaper, Athipat, directing theoretical studies as well as political activities, and presenting cadres in the student movement with situational assessments.

Government authorities claimed later that the CPT placed its agents in most teachers' colleges, universities, and other educational institutions in every part of the country. There was a close co-ordination between rural and urban areas. These students would operate in the countryside, coming into direct contact with the people at the village level, educating them and directing their activities with a view to winning them over to communism. In the North, government authorities reported that the CPT provided arms training for the students and villagers. As a consequence, "quite a number of Northern people, who normally are gentle and peace-loving, became violence-prone in dealing with government authorities". In the Central region of the country, the Government claimed that there were approximately 500-600 CPT agents of an inner-circle rank. Though such a claim was somewhat exaggerated, it was generally admitted that the student movement was infiltrated by the CPT, regardless of whether or not the majority of students were aware of this.

The CPT's influence in the 1975-1976 period was evident in the

10. The author's interview with a student leader, Bangkok: July 18, 1981.
12. Ibid., p. 25.
application by the progressive movement in the city the strategy, tactics, and values practiced and/or adhered to by the Party in the countryside. This resulted in the students' tendency towards extreme left-wing militancy, ideological dogmatism and inflexibility, and rejection of a compromise-even for political gain. The movement became more and more isolated, particularly after the Government began to respond to the challenge to its authority with all state mechanisms. The extent of the CPT's influence may be appreciated by considering:

First, the importance the student movement attached to ethics and life perspective adopted by the CPT after the influence of the Cultural Revolution, which stressed the quality of being "red" rather than "expertise", had made itself felt in the Party. This meant that moral and ethical principles or adherence to discipline took precedence over capability. Party members were encouraged to adjust their life perspective and world view to those of the proletariat. This ethical emphasis gave rise to a new value among progressive students that saw them adopting a proletarian life style, particularly in matters of dress and eating habits. They were also very strict about sexual relationships, with cadres in the student movements obliged to refrain from sexual affairs and maintain only an ordinary friendship with their opposite sex. Otherwise they must follow a "three-delay" policy: delay involvement in a love affair, delay marriage, and delay having children. During their activities in the field as rural development volunteers, the students underwent training in leading a life believed to be similar to that of the CPT cadres. This mode of living consisted of exercise, practical training in democratic centralism, self-criticism and criticism of one another. The prevailing mood of the period reflected a rejection of liberal intellectuals, opposition to, and criticism of, those leading a "liberal" life and sticking to "liberal" ideas. This was board on the grounds that these liberals were not clear about the direction of their struggles, theoretical problems and remained attached to individual heroism. Former student leaders, writers and cadres who were defective in life perspectives were quickly rejected by the
movement. This atmosphere led to a critical and inquisitive propensity among the progressive students, including even those who were not in any way affiliated with the CPT.

Second, Maoist socialism, which, through the CPT, exerted an intellectual domination over the student movement. This was evident in the praise of socialism in China as an ideal type. This attitude was expressed in the exhibition on Red China in 1974. Translations from Chinese of important documents such as The Treatise on Mao's Thoughts and other works, as well as a weekly magazine Asia, were published to propagate Maoism. A study of Maoism was widely encouraged. Mao's thoughts were regarded as a directive philosophy--some kind of indisputable formula-type doctrine. Denouncement of those who disagreed with or deviated from it as "revisionists" took place in the student movement as was done in the CPT following the second congress in 1949.

Third, application of the CPT's countryside-oriented strategy, tactics, and policies as guidelines on activities of the student movement in the city. Progressive students at about this time gradually concluded that revolution was the country's alternative. This belief was reflected in the CPT's policy laid down in an article, "Direction of the Thai revolution: Genuine independence and democracy could be achieved only by revolution, and not through reforms", which was read through the Radio Voice of the People of Thailand on 22-23 August 1975. The article, which was subsequently published and widely circulated in universities, served as a directive principle. Some student leaders publicly expressed their readiness to confront the use of violence against their movement, believing the losses it might have to suffer as a result of a confrontation with state authority would serve to awaken and sustain political consciousness, and

15. Saiyud and Somchai, ibid., p. 69.
17. The same opinion was expressed by a CPT cadre in an interview saying that the Party decided to take arms struggle in 1965 in order to awake its members to fight actively against the state power.
members of the movement would as a consequence be always aware of the state of the ongoing class struggle. This belief was reflected in the slogan “with ten dead, a hundred thousand more were born”, which was recited to boost the morale of the movement every time its members were attacked or assassinated by anti-student movement forces. The student movement had advanced too far for the public to understand. Although some elements in the movement wanted to adopt a policy of gradual democratic development, they were unable to eradicate the students' militant image. Indeed, raising an anti-imperialist banner, just as the CPT had done, failed to strike a responsive chord. Among the city dwellers and the rural folk alike the anti-imperialist potential was virtually non-existent. When the Government launched its antistudent movement propaganda campaign through the mass-media and its own mechanisms, the students became even more isolated. Their supporters in the mass public now turned against them. Since 1975, before their public activities were terminated by the 6 October 1976 coup d'état, the students had already begun to experience difficulty in propagating their ideas in the rural villages. The government authorities had been actively cultivating in the villagers the suspicion that the students were communists committed to destroying their nation, religion, and monarchy.

The State's Response

Beginning with the Army's Armoured Division Radio programme “Our Thai Homeland”, which attempted to project the students' image as communists, the state's response to the challenge of the 14 October movement had by 1 July 1975 become systematic, serious and violent. A “red scare” campaign was launched in earnest. The public was reminded of the danger of communism, its strategy, tactics, and tricks. An opposition to the student movement had earlier been active in some form or another but its shape and direction had been obscure and disorganised. The state mechanisms had not functioned in a well orchestrated manner.18

18. Saiyud and Somchai, ibid., p. 69.
Now in order to maintain an ideological status quo, the state rose in opposition to the post-14 October current of change in the form of both an ideological rebuttal and use of force by its various organised mass groups.

**Ideological or institutional rebuttal** The governing class adopted the students' propaganda technique; that is, it published a number of anti-socialist or anti-marxist materials, including Police Colonel Wasit Dejkunchorn's book entitled *The Mistake of Mr. Mak* (literally areca nut in Thai - obviously a phonetic semblance of "Marx"), and popularised marching songs with anti-student contents, such as "A Burden to the Homeland", "We Fight!" and "Bang! Bang! The Lightning Strikes".

In addition, attempts were made to interpret Buddhism in such a way as to serve the state's need to suppress communism. Most notable was an interpretation by Kittivuttho Bhikhu who, in an interview, invoked a Buddhist principle to justify the "killing" of communists. This, he asserted, was not only not a sin; it was in fact a merit.19

Government officials, who together represented an important state mechanism, were required to attend indoctrination classes on psychological warfare. It was mainly an anti-communist indoctrination together with a reinforcement of their consciousness of traditional beliefs.

Further, the governing class instigated a popular concern about the country's three main institutions: *nation, religion,* and *monarchy,* which, its propaganda claimed, were being threatened with destruction by the Left. This propaganda campaign was undertaken through all forms of state mechanisms, ranging from its entire mass-media networks, to state-organised mass groups, especially *NAWAPOL,* village scouts, Red Gours, and housewife groups.

**Violent suppression** During 1973 - October 1976 the Thai political scene was characterised by a distinct Left-Right division. The Government

had beforehand prepared a pretext for each of its moves against the
students, so that its action against the post-14 October challenge to
its authority was generally acceptable. The opposition to the student
movement escalated to violent suppression particularly in the form of
assassination. During August 1974 - September 1976 quite a
number of those in the 14 October progressive movement were assassi-
nated. The death toll of the period amounted to 32 farmer leaders, 3 politi-
cians, and 15 students.\textsuperscript{20} Such a violent measure against the
students even more convinced them that co-operation with the
CPT the only force at that time that could launch a credible armed
opposition to state authority - was the only alternative. Their
frustration was evinced when student leader Kriangkramol Lauhapairoj
burst out during a Red Gaur-harrassed demonstration against “American
imperialism” following the Mayaguez incident, with a bitter threat “to
lead my group into the jungle if one more gunshot was heard”.

The situation prior to 6 October was evidently an explosive
one, with a major clash between the Government side and the
students being seemingly inevitable. For one thing, the student
movement at that time stubbornly persisted in its “hard-line” strategy
of unflinching political offensive in the belief that each stage of
political struggle meant a stage in the advancement of the political
consciousness of its members.

Not long before 6 October 1976, the conflict between the
governing class and the student movement became increasingly
violent. The tense situation seemed to have resulted from intentional
provocation by the ruling circle. This was evident in the arrangement
for Prapas to return to Thailand. When he was forced back into exile
by the student’s opposition, another arrangement was made for
Thanom to come back. During the anti-Thanom rally at Thammasat
University there was a stage production of the life and death of two
workers who had been murdered by hanging while putting up anti-Thanom

\textsuperscript{20} Thanes Arphornsuwan, \textit{Thai Society and Politics, Appendix : Political
Assassinated Victims (Sangkom lae karn mueng Thai, Paak panuak : pu thuk sangharn thang
karn mueng)} (Bangkok : Charoenvit Printing, 1978).
posters. The face of one actor happened to resemble the Crown Prince's. This provided an opportunity, which was eagerly seized upon, for bringing a lese majeste charge against the students. Those intent upon suppressing the students and taking over the governing power sent armed forces to the University, firing into the group of rallying students. No less than 300 students and members of the general public were massacred, and about 3-4,000 more were arrested. The Seni Pramoj Government was overthrown by a rightwing military group. However, all except 19 of those arrested were later released as a result of increasing external pressure, tension in the political atmosphere created by the shock of the general public - especially the student's parents and moderate intellectuals who normally disagreed with the Left ideology- at the horror of violent suppression by the authorities. Of the 19 student and worker leaders still in detention, 18 were court-martialed on a charge of being engaged in communist and rebellious activities, and one was tried by the Criminal Court on a lese majeste charge. At about this time approximately 2-3,000 students and intellectuals joined forces with the CPT in the jungle.

The 1973-1976 period marks an important transition in Thai history. The response to the challenge to state authority and Sakdina ideology was characterised by an unprecedented violence.

It was this recourse to violence that compelled those aiming at social reform through peaceful means such as exhibitions, rallies and demonstrations, and literary works and music, to co-operate with the CPT. Some of them did so in order to avoid an "unseen threat" to their life, while others believed this was the only way to carry on political struggle.

Prasert Chandam, a pregressive writer who joined the CPT after 6 October 1976, explained his decision to engage in armed struggle thus:

".....I learned the writer's craft before I could fire a gun. With a pen in my hand I thought I had no need for a gun. But I had to change my mind. With my chest being poked day and night by the state authority's gun, how could I write down what I be-
lieved?"  

Moderate intellectuals, such as school and university teachers who shunned right-wing extremism, abhorred the atrocious suppression in such traditionally unprecedented forms as burning and hanging alive and killing of unarmed and defenceless people. They were also alienated by restrictions on political as well as intellectual freedom imposed by the post 6 October 1976 right-wing government whose express desire to stay in power for 12 years was unpalatable even to the military. It may indeed be argued that the post-6 October 1976 regime was unable to win support of part of the Armed Forces and a number of urban middle-class intellectuals whose relatives were among those massacred on 6 October and those who had joined forces with the CPT. Therefore, within one year, the right-wing civilian government was toppled by a coup d'etat on 20 October 1977. A new government with a more "liberal" image was formed, and a "politics-guided" counter-insurgency policy was adopted together with greater liberalisation of political life in general.

**Student Movement-Induced Change in the CPT after 14 October 1976**

It may be argued that the 2-3,000 students and intellectuals who defected to the CPT and were placed in scattered groups in various parts of the country represented the bravest and most idealistic members of the newer generations. They had risked their lives in countless struggles against state authority and in the process had their will power tested. Most of them belonged to the lower middle classes and were well educated. Joining the CPT in the jungle thus meant forfeiting the opportunity to climb up the social ladder to respectable positions in society. The work of Chai anan Samutvanija and David Morell\(^{22}\) contained detailed backgrounds of the leading members of this group of students and intellectuals which, the

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22. Chaianan, *op. cit.*
authors believed, would have enabled them to occupy those positions had they not rejected the traditional order and opposed state authority.

These people were quite knowledgeable about economic and political processes as well as the network links among the various political groups. They therefore became the “brain” of the CPT which had after decades of armed struggle in the countryside lost touch with the central power structure and processes. A foreign observer has noted that “they were ready to propose new ideas”. The CPT for the first time enjoyed extensive moral as well as material support from towndwellers those related to the post-6 October 1976 defectors. The defection of the urban intellectuals had an important effect of “introducing” the CPT to towndwellers and thereby of re-shaping its image, that is, it was now presented as a “Thai” organisation rather than a foreign-dominated one - an image which the government propaganda had tried to impress on the mind of the public.

The urban intellectuals contributed substantially to the transformation of the CPT’s propaganda patterns and techniques, introducing subtlety and intellectual touch into its propaganda efforts which had hitherto consisted mainly of blunt and tactless attacks against the Government. Certain writers and journalists were placed in charge of the Radio Voice of the People of Thailand. They replaced its dogmatic, unimaginative, and platitudinous language and style of propaganda attacks on the Government with a variety of artistic productions and lively programmes, including music, dramas, poetic recitations, interviews, and up-to-date news commentaries and analyses. The aggressive, yet unimaginative attacks on the Government were softened and presented to the same effect in a more professional journalistic style. For instance, the Radio broadcast in August 1978 through its short-wave transmitter a tape-recorded sound of a battle the People’s Liberation Army of Thailand had engaged in, together with interviews with soldiers who had taken part in it.


The defection of the 14 October movement to the CPT also resulted in a transformation of progressive literary works of a "for life's sake" genre into a revolutionary type. These works reflected revolutionary enthusiasm and ethics, as well as the belief in an armed struggle as a solution to social problems, the efforts of intellectuals to mould their revolutionary character, and a life style in the jungle. These revolutionary ideals were presented in diverse forms ranging from poems and songs to short stories.

The students and intellectuals further enlivened and reactivated the CPT by issuing from the bases where they were stationed a number of monographs and periodicals. These publications, which included The Red Sun, Pioneering, A New Horizon, and Unite and Fight!, were put into clandestine circulation in towns and cities. Progressive academics among whom Chonthira Satayawatana was perhaps most notable conducted studies and researches on local and Thai histories. Medical students upgraded medical services and health care in the base areas especially by setting up a three-month "revolutionary" medical training programme. Engineering students, finally, helped develop technologies at the bases and camps. The defection of the 14 October movement to the CPT enabled it to adjust itself and to end its internal conflict and infighting resulting from its left-wing extremist current and leadership competition in "the two provinces" case.

During this period, the CPT intensified its armed struggle in retaliation to the Government's violent measures against the student movement. It made more frequent assaults on the police and military forces. It widened its organised armed forces; for example, in March 1978 it organised a Muslim Liberation Force of Thailand which would operate under its direction.

Intellectuals and politicians collaborated in forming a united front in September 1977 called a "Committee for Co-ordination of Nation- and

25. Referring to the case of which Damri Ruengsutham, a leading CPT’s member, criticised the central leadership under the domination of Wirach Angkathaworn that it failed to establish a well guarded stronghold, according to the guidance of Maoism, thus caused a successful suppression by the government forces and the party suffered great loss.

Democracy - Loving Forces” in which all forces with notable and widely accepted records of political activities were represented. The Committee’s secretary general was Thirayuth Boonmee, a most prominent student leader of the 14 October 1973 uprising.

**Ideological Differences between the CPT and the Committee**

The Committee as an organisation embodied the ideology and aspirations of the 14 October movement after its defection to the CPT. For one thing, it was composed of former urban political forces, such as the NSCT and Socialist Party of Thailand. The conflict between the Committee and the CPT began with the realisation on the part of the Committee that co-operation with the CPT represented a pursuit of immediate political objectives rather than a reflection of mutual ideological understanding. The conflict surfaced when the Committee proposed the formulation of a general direction of the Thai revolution that would be acceptable to all concerned, that is, political parties, organised mass groups (worker, farmer, woman, religious, and civil liberty and right promotion organisations) as well as various professional groups including doctors, engineers, monks, government officials, the Armed Forces and the police.27 The CPT, however, stressed in the main the interests of the proletarian class.

The Committee, moreover, had a short-term objective of searching for a solution to immediate problems and identified as the people’s enemies those existing forces such as the Sakdina, the right-wing groups, and their supporters. But the CPT’s goal was apparently a longer-term one, that called for the overthrow of imperialism. In addition, Committee wanted to understand the special characteristics of Thai society in accordance with which an appropriate strategy would be developed. As Thirayuth Boonmee once said, “it is incumbent upon the people’s cadres to conduct a thorough study on the basis of which a clear party line would be devised as soon as possible”.28

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The Committee did not restrict its study to only Maoism which was firmly adhered to by the CPT. It made a point of understanding at the same time Marxism-Leninism as well as revolutionary experiences of other countries.

Another difference was that while the CPT emphasized proletarian revolutionary ethics (which were a legacy of the Cultural Revolution in China), the Committee

"...did not regard the re-shaping of individual conscience as its task. For that would amount to attempting to convert all other classes to the proletariat. This was not in line with the general direction of the revolution in Thailand - and not favourable to a post-liberation rehabilitation and development of the country. As far as I know, in no country has a revolutionary effort ever succeeded with the support of only the proletarian class". 29

The Committee made clear its objective and in particular expressed concern for the life quality of the members of the new society. It stressed clearly its support for the equality of women and rights of minority groups, as well as the preservation of traditions and values which were "socialistic" in character, such as - Longkaek - the labour pooling system together with those regarded as reflecting a "good culture", such as respect for elders. Such a concern had never come within the purview of the CPT's revolutionary thinking.

The views of the students and intellectuals who joined forces with the CPT were similar to those of Gramsci, a well known Italian revolutionary and theoretician, who perceived the need for, and the importance of, gaining experience and undergoing practical training in understanding the post-revolutionary government. They were of an opinion that the CPT should not emphasize only the path to victory in its takeover bid or concentrate its attention solely on economic factors and conditions. Other important factors should also be taken into consideration. Otherwise the revolution would not guarantee a better society. This view was reflected in the words of Seksan Prasertkul, a prominent student leader at the time of the 14 October uprising:

29. Ibid.,
"...I believe it is most important for a revolutionary to understand the decay of the old society and have a clear vision of a new society to be built..."  

The Committee co-ordinated internal urban as well as external front allies. It published *Unite and Fight!* in both Thai and English. The CPT was as a result more widely known abroad.

As a pro-government journal reported, the Committee's propaganda efforts abroad as well as in the form of the *Radio Voice of the People of Thailand* broadcast were quite extensive and, using both the Thai and English languages as media of communication, these represented a remarkable measure of professionalism on the Committee's part. A number of Thai students, Thai nationals, and certain Thai professional groups in Europe, America, and Australia supported, and took part in, its activities. Moreover, correspondents from France, the Netherlands, and Japan made a trip to the CPT's base areas and widely publicised abroad their reports on conditions in the jungle.

It may be said that the 1976-1979 period witnessed a remarkable growth of the CPT and its unity with the student-led 14 October movement. The Government and foreign observers admitted that the political situation of the period was in the CPT's favour. The Government estimated that in 1979 the Party would make a step forward. It would be able to set up stronger and more publicly known organisations with an expansion of its united front among the students and members of the general public as well as co-ordination with allied organisations in foreign countries. The *People's Liberation Army of Thailand* would intensify its armed operations. In southern Thailand *de facto* liberated areas might possibly be established, and in the Northeast patterns of armed struggle would be upgraded. The Government recognised that while the CPT's cadres displayed great enthusiasm in undertaking their activities, government authorities were still in the dark about how to contain the growth of the CPT's influence and strength.  

predicted that the Party might soon initiate urban insurgency and be able to take over governing power within five years. During the first 2-3 years of their association, when co-operation was still smooth and conflict was yet to emerge, the students and intellectuals manifested a favourable attitude towards the CPT. Such as attitude was reflected, for example, in Prasert Chandam’s poetic piece:

...now we have become the farmers’ soldiers.

The Party has shaped and conditioned our character
And pointed a right and appropriate path for us to follow.

Or as Wisa Kantup confessed, “The revolution gave me a new life”.

After the 14 October student movement had contributed to the expansion of the CPT’s activities, the ruling class began to adjust itself with a view to gaining public support and legitimacy for its conduct. On 20 October 1977 the Government representing right-wing extremism was overthrown. Certain sectors in the ruling circle believed that such an extremist government created political and intellectual tension. The new government had therefore to ease that tension by issuing an amnesty under which the remaining 19 political prisoners - those student and worker leaders arrested on 6 October 1976 - would be released. It also decided to revoke press censorship, liberalise labour union activities, lift the curfew, call upon the intellectuals who had joined the CPT in the jungle and fled the country following the 6 October 1976 incident to resume their former functions, and finally promise a general election in the summer of the following year. In 1980 the Government issued an order the Order No. 66/1980 (or 66/23) - confirming the “politics-guided” counter-insurgency policy as well as a formal pledge not to bring a charge against those students and intellectuals coming back from the jungle to resume their normal activities as ordinary citizens.

For the first time in its development was the CPT accepted and regarded as clearly the only organisation opposed to the Government. It


35. Ibid.
thus emerged as a counter-force exerting some measure of negotiating leverage on state authority which represented the propertied class, the military, and capitalists, by claiming to be the sole representative of the exploited classes. This led to a “war to win over the people” in which the Government, on its part, de-emphasized armed suppression and concentrated more on development programmes. This was evident in the Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan whose prime emphasis was placed on development of poverty-stricken rural areas.

**Conflict between the 14 October Movement and the CPT**

Enthusiastic co-operation between the 14 October movement and the CPT came to an end at about the beginning of 1980. An indication of the emerging conflict was an increasing outflow from the jungle of the students and intellectuals who had defected to the CPT. The conflict in the CPT during this time was different from a previous one in the communist movement although common features existed, such as the tendency of the opposition wing in the Party to be nationalistic. The difference was that the conflict of this period was not, as had been the case, one of personality clash or disagreement among top leaders (about which we had little information) but rather one between the majority of students who belonged to the newer generations and the CPT’s organisation. The conflict became evident to the general public and the Party’s masses. Stemming largely from ideological differences and disagreement on organisational arrangement, it had a resounding impact on the entire movement, exposing the hitherto little known aspect of the CPT to the public. It gave rise to a rift even among the Party’s original members and accounted for its moral as well as physical decline in the eyes of the people in as well as outside Thailand. During the following two years the CPT’s downward trend hit rock-bottom with mass defection and an extensive critical exposure by its former supporters of its internal affairs.

The conflict between the 14 October movement and the CPT is largely attributable to differences in the origins and fundamental character of the two organisations. (These differences have been in part touched
upon in connection with the conflict between the Party and the Committee for Co-ordination of Nation- and Democracy-Loving Forces). In the first place, members of the student movement had been trained for, and acquainted with, open urban activities. They had an experience in group working as a form of practical training for democratic government. They were also accustomed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of knowledge through reading, discussions and comments, and unrestricted access to news and information from mass-media. They maintained a favourable attitude towards socialism, regarding it as a just and democratic system. They therefore entertained a high expectation from the CPT, that is, expecting it to be an ideal socialist organisation. A member of the student movement later revealed:

"...I in fact had little personal acquaintance with the CPT. I was nevertheless confident - a confidence I had gained from my private study - that the Communist ideology was a noble one. If we could create an exploitation-free society, wasn't that a good place to live in? I naively thought that it would be easy to talk things over in the jungle, because we as revolutionaries with no self-interests shared the same ideology..."  

The reading of the works of certain CPT's cadres and members (particularly Jit Pumisak's The True Face of Thai Sakdina, Art for Life, Art for the People; Nai Pi's (Asnee Polchandra) poem Isan in Drought and Aran Promchompoo's work of the same genre Semi-Colonial Thailand) led the students to believe that there were a genuine study of Marxism and analysis of Thai society in the CPT. They also had in their mind an ideal image of the Party members. These high expectations led them to bitter disappointment when what they saw in reality hardly matched what they had had in their mind. The influence of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, which had begun to permeate the Party since 1968, remained quite strong throughout the organisation. This was evident in the Central Committee's fourth conference report of November 1968, which ordered a formal study of Maoism. This development resulted in a formal acceptance of Maoism as a conclusive interpretation of Marxism as readily applicable to Thai Revolution.

As regards the composition of each organisation, it was evident that the student movement consisted largely of small bourgeois-class intellectuals with an educational background, life style and worldviews of the urban middle classes; while the CPT included in its small leadership group intellectuals of older generations, the majority of its members belonging to the peasant class whose worldviews and values were still dominated by rural culture and religious beliefs. When the senior members from the peasant class assumed a leadership position among the students, conflicts on various issues became inevitable. With these fundamental differences between the 14 October movement and the CPT, a conflict began to develop, when the latter made it clear that it wanted to exert a dominating control over other movements, such as the Committee for Co-ordination of Nation- and Democracy-Loving Forces. This attitude reflected the Leninist character of the CPT, which adhered to centralised authority and self-proclamation as a vanguard of the proletariat. It must therefore maintain a leadership role. Defection by the students and intellectuals in fact began not long after the two movements had joined forces, though on a much smaller scale than after 1979. During these early years of their alliance the conflict had not yet come to a head, their differences having been deflected by the grudges and bitterness generated by the 6 October 1976 incident.

Apart from differences in class and socialisation backgrounds, there were certain objective conditions affecting the student movement-CPT relationship. These included changes in the international as well as internal situations which had a catalyst effect on their smouldering conflict.

The second major cause of the student movement-CPT conflict was an internal factor, that is, the modification of the government policy, which resulted especially in the issuance of the Order No. 66/1980 by the Prime Minister’s Office. This document asserted, in essence, that “political work” was decisive to a successful struggle against the CPT. Military operations were to assume only a supporting role. The Order identified various forms of operations relying on all available state mechanisms and instruments. The Government would make vigorous efforts at information and psychological operations, public relations, democracy-promotion campaigns, elimination of social injustices and suppression of corruption
and all exploitative practices. It was believed that these operations would lead to a "victory over the Communists".37

The Government induced student defection from the CPT by pledging not to bring any charge against them, an amnesty to political prisoners, and ordering all educational institutions to re-admit those who had dropped out to join the CPT and now returned. This change by the Government from the hard-line policy to a more compromising approach provided an outlet for those who began to be in conflict, personally or ideologically, with the CPT.

The third factor accounting for the student-CPT conflict was an external one — that is, the conflict among the Indochinese socialist states following the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. This conflict culminated in Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Kampuchea in January 1979 and in the subsequent Sino-Vietnamese war. The situation forced the CPT to take sides with either Soviet-backed Vietnam or China. The Party chose to stand by the Chinese and began its anti-Soviet broadcasting in about the middle of 1979. Following Pham Van Dong's declaration in September 1978 of his country's decision to formally terminate its assistance to the CPT, the Laotian Government ordered the latter's immediate evacuation from its soil.

The Indochina conflict put the CPT in a predicament. The Laotian and Kampuchean territories could no longer serve as its "rear base", that is, the area where it could find support and/or use as sanctuary. China was not now in a position to channel its assistance to the CPT through Laos. Material shortage and failing of morale in the Party thus followed, particularly in the Northeast, where the cadres had for a long time maintained a brotherly relationship with the Laotian and Vietnamese Communist Parties.

Another international development of far-reaching impact was the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping and the critical current against the "Gang of Four" in China. The CPT as a consequence was compelled to drop its pro-Gang of Four posture and support for the Cultural Revolution and began instead to launch a critical assault on them. This shift in the

37. The Prime Minister Office, Order No. 66/2523.
Party's stance created confusion among its cadres and testified to its lack of independence and loyal adherence to Chinese policy. China had subsequently re-orientated its foreign policy, which was now founded on two fundamental principles and requirements; namely, peaceful co-existence, in accordance with which China would avoid conflict with foreign governments, especially in Asia, by reducing or ending its aid to revolutions abroad, and by allowing government-to-government relations to take precedence over party-to-party links; and anti-Soviet and Vietnamese imperative, under which the Chinese put pressure on the CPT to close down the *Radio Voice of the People of Thailand* station, the Party’s principal instrument of propaganda and recruitment of united front members, in return for Thailand’s anti-Vietnamese policy and tacit permission for Chinese assistance to the Khmer Rouge to pass through Thai territory. The PRC went so far as to counsel the CPT’s front alliance with the Thai Government to counter the Vietnamese aggression.

International developments, coupled with fundamental differences between the students and the CPT leaders, led to a major ideological crisis in the Party. The students and intellectuals initiated vigorous criticisms of its policies and organisational arrangement. Maoism was now criticised for its outmodedness and thereby unlikely to effect a successful revolution. These critical tendencies also spread to the Party’s masses.

The student movement-CPT conflict centred upon three issues. Firstly, the students and intellectuals regarded the Party as dependent on and dominated by China.

Seksan Prasertkul, one of those CPT defectors, said,

"...I do not want Thailand to be closely aligned with any one major power. We should remain uncommitted. I always assert to my friends and colleagues that we can be on any one side if, and only if, that is beneficial to us..."  

The Chinese and Maoist influence on the CPT was reflected in the adoption of the Chinese model and orientations in matters of social analysis, determination of strategy and tactics, and policies and interpreta-

tions. The students and intellectuals alleged that the CPT failed to scrutinise the real situation in Thai society, particularly to take into consideration the rapid economic and social changes after the Second World War. Application of Maoism remained predominantly dogmatic. Practical failures were thus attributed to alleged failure to properly abide by Maoist principles rather than to Maoism itself. This attitude testified to the dominating influence of the Cultural Revolution.  

The CPT also adopted Mao’s “Three World Theory” as the basis of its foreign policy. In July 1979 it began anti-Soviet and Vietnamese attacks, designating the Soviet Union and Vietnam as its principal enemies. The language used in these verbal attacks imitated that of the Chinese propaganda. This could not but lead the students to regard the CPT as serving Chinese interests rather than those of Thai revolution. They considered that international conflicts in the communist movement were conditioned by national interests and not ideological differences. The Thai party, they believed, should not take sides with any power in these conflicts. The CPT had nevertheless been so closely and clearly allied with a foreign communist movement that it now lacked independence and freedom of action. A politician who was once affiliated with the Party observed:

“...Sometimes I even felt that the Thai party was still maintained in Thailand only because it could serve as an instrument of negotiating pressure. It does not seem, as often asserted, that in dealing with foreign countries a distinction is made between state and party. The Chinese party and Chinese government seem to be one and the same thing...”

The students made every effort to induce the Party to independently re-orientate its strategy in accordance with reality. Thirayuth Boonmee argued that Thai society was not a semi-feudal and semi-colonial one dependent on modern imperialism but rather semi-feudal and semi-capitalist advancing towards a full-fledged capitalism. The students’ outlook

42. Nation, March 18, 1981.
43. Theerayuth, SPT News Agency, op. cit.
was different from that of the CPT, which designated the peasant as the only main revolutionary force. The Thai social structure had become quite complex and vastly different from what the CPT had depicted in its analysis 30 years earlier. Revolutionary forces should be conceived of as covering the whole range of the urban proletarian class, the semi-proletarian peasant population in rural areas, intellectuals, and the small and middle bourgeois classes.\textsuperscript{44} The students were of an opinion that in waging a people’s war the Party should not be too dogmatic. It should rather be flexible and mindful of other nations’ strategies and tactics, such as the North Vietnamese three area-two front, strategy and the Nicaraguan’s which focused on urban activities and the widening of united front.\textsuperscript{45}

Secondly, the students considered the CPT’s organisational set-up undemocratic and too centralised. The Party was Leninist-Stalinist in character. It stressed hierarchical control which was well suited to governing the normally deferential peasant class. Its conflict with the students and intellectuals arose as a result of its application of the same attitude to them and expectation from them such deferential recognition it was acquainted with.

The students alleged that the CPT’s leadership (‘organisation’) failed to genuinely adhere to democratic centralism. The Party emphasised only centralised authority and accountability to its leadership, calling for maximum obedience on the part of its members and masses. The students also pointed out that the Party leadership independently made all decisions, and that it acted as if it were “the Party” in its own right without respect to democratic centralism. For example, the students on its own initiative developed its area of operation into a new base. Since none of them was a party member, a request was made for a member to be assigned to the new base. That CPT member turned out to be “the Party” to whom everybody must listen. When a conflict arose between this member and the students, he exercised his “Party” authority to dissolve the latter’s operation unit. The CPT’s hegemonic tendency was also evident in its attempt to control the Committee for Co-ordination of Nation- and Democracy-Loving Forces by

\textsuperscript{44} TIC News, Feb. 28, 1981, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{45} Panthanmitr, Vol. 1, No. 1.
appointing a senior party member, Udom Srisuwan, to the Committee’s chairmanship, even though this body was in principle a united-front organisation of which the CPT was only a member. The students accused the Party of attempting to dominate the Committee by interfering in its affairs and admitting some front members to Party membership. These new Party recruits would create in the Committee certain tendencies or policy lines, such as anti-Soviet and Vietnamese orientation, in such a way that these would appear to have originated in the Committee itself. The Committee thus found that it was not in a position to run its own affairs without the CPT’s interfering influence. A Committee’s member later revealed that he had not been aware of the contents of certain documents disseminated in the Committee’s name. Sri Intapanti said that the CPT showed no respect for the Committee, otherwise it would not have used its name without prior consultation with it.

An irreparable rift between the CPT and the Committee happened in about 1980, when the latter, after sounding out the forces united under its banner, submitted to the Party a proposal for itself to equally represent the various groups and organisations and to have freedom of action. The CPT, as a member of the Committee, must be on an equal footing with all other members. It was also proposed that the Committee be represented in all parts of the country as well as abroad. This proposal was turned down. The CPT believed the Committee was attempting to establish its own independent existence with its own policy orientations and thereby compete with the Party. The decision to reject the Committee’s proposal was made with no consultation whatsoever with the Party organs. As a result, many important Committee’s and CPT’s members decided to leave the organisations. Thirayuth Boonmee, among others, returned to the capital city on 17 March 1981. A former member of the Socialist Party aptly concluded


that the CPT’s democracy was different from that of the Socialist Party. The former raised the democratic banner as a means of mobilising popular support, while for the latter democracy was its ultimate goal.\textsuperscript{50} As another Socialist politician has put it:

“...the CPT did not regard democracy as the highest goal of its revolution but rather as a tactic...Therefore, if and when the CPT succeeds in its take-over bid, we will surely find ourselves deprived of our liberty and freedom...”\textsuperscript{51}

Thirdly, the students and the CPT’s leadership held conflicting worldviews and operating procedures. The Party was not in favour of searching for new knowledge and attached great importance to theoretical study. This attitude was obviously incompatible with the intellectual inclination of the students. They were disappointed when they discovered that the majority of the cadres preferred implementing orders and directives to relying on their own analytical capacity.\textsuperscript{52} They at the same time realised that the leadership

“...was reluctant to pursue any study and listen to (other people). It had indeed no predilection for leading a pursuit of knowledge and resorted mostly to mottos and slogans as a means of mobilising loyalty and devotion. It stressed emotional attachment to the Party...”\textsuperscript{53}

In fact, the comrades in the leadership who belonged to the peasant class were not knowledgeable enough to explain anything. The scope of their perceptions of problems was limited and intellectual sophistication was sorely deficient.

The students were most frustrated with their being deprived of an opportunity to fully utilise their ability. The Party’s emphasis on ethics and “redness” meant a demand for the students to transform their conscience from that of the petite bourgeoisie into a proletarian one by engaging

\textsuperscript{50} An interview with a former Socialist Party’s member who returned from the jungle, \textit{Siam Mai}, March 28, 1981.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Nation}, March 18, 1981.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{South}, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{53} The author’s interview with Yuk Sri-araya, an activist who returned from the jungle, Bangkok: Aug. 1981.
mainly in productive activities. A former deputy secretary-general of the NSCT, for example, had to work all day long on a pig farm. Moreover, the students alleged that the CPT was not interested in acquiring and applying modern know-how to the work of the revolutionary movement. The use of field radio transmitters, for example, would immensely facilitate communications within its organisational network. This inclination to shun modern technology was tantamount to a lack of readiness and preparation for material development of the post-revolutionary society. It raised doubts in the minds of many as to how the existing rural backwardness could prevail over the materially developed cities. As a student later reported,

"...I once asked the Organisation (the Party leadership) if in case of a revolutionary success would it be able to cope with water supply demands, to make a needle, to produce APC pills, to provide electricity for the people, to drive a tank, or to repair a radio set. Since we were mainly preoccupied with tilling the land and raising pigs how could we govern the people? Nobody answered my question..."  

These conflicts reflected differences in class backgrounds between the students and the Party leadership represented at various base areas. There was no conflict between the students on the one hand and the Party masses and general cadres on the other. The students had on the contrary a very high opinion of those revolutionary rank and file, admiring their bravery and devotion and warm-hearted reciprocity - attributes which were virtually non-existent in urban society. They believed the masses' behavioural defects resulted from misguided orientation.

"...the majority of the people in the movement were good-natured folk. They had nevertheless been indoctrinated with misguiding and outmoded conceptual frameworks. New and more appropriate ideas were of only secondary importance and regarded as

55. Ibid.
half-baked. The domination by old ideas was indeed the root of a large number of organisational drawbacks and political failures..."  

The CPT’s Reaction to Its Conflicts with the Student Movement

The CPT’s attitude towards the students and the people was founded on a dogmatic Maoist belief that they represented the petite bourgeoisie. As such they lacked a potential for a development of revolutionary spirit. Even if they now towed the revolutionary line, they still retained their class characteristic - that is, sub-consciously they were still attached to individualistic ideal. This meant that they adopted a working attitude that reflected concern for their own stake - for their status, reputation, position, comfort, privilege and credibility among their own friends and acquaintances. Such an attitude was obviously incompatible with a revolutionary ideal. Once they joined forces with the revolutionary movement, they aimed at a rapid victory in order to change their present status, because they belonged to an unstable class with vacillating political positions, subjective thinking, individualistic conscience and nepotistic propensity, purely scholastic and theoretical expertise. Their ideas could easily become doctrinaire in their thinking. Those petits bourgeois already exposed to productive activities still suffered from certain limitations such as isolation...

With such attitudinal foundations, the CPT treated the students and intellectuals coming to join it after the 6 October incident as “guests” or “dependents”. The latter’s defection beginning in early 1980 only confirmed the Party’s Maoist belief about the petite bourgeoisie.

The CPT’s attitude towards its conflict with the students as reflected in its explanation of the latter’s early defection (before 1980) indicated that it did not take this loss of intellectuals very seriously. A member of the Party leadership compared a revolutionary movement to a train: there were those who joined as well as left it. In the past there was


58. “An analysis of class characteristics of the petite bourgeoisie” ("Wikroh thueng laksana khnong chon chan nai thun noi") typing sheet for internal studies of the CPT.
defection from the Party by intellectuals such as Prasert Supsuntorn and Pin Boa-on. In his opinion, defection implied that "the development of a class struggle had become more serious, more vigorous, such that those still attached to the old society could no longer stay with the Party".\(^\text{59}\) Certain documents explaining the students’ defection alleged that certain intellectuals were "revisionists" and hence instrument of the Soviet Union.\(^\text{60}\) At the same time the party leadership explained that the defection by certain students and intellectuals was indicative of attempts to divide the revolutionary movement. Charn Krasanayapura, the Party’s theoretician, indicated that such attempts took three forms, namely,

- criticisms of the Party by those progressive students and intellectuals who came back from the jungle;
- opposition to the Party by the "new generation of revolutionaries" who were disappointed with it because of their conflicting worldviews; and
- encouragement by the ruling elite of attacks on the Party by these defectos.\(^\text{61}\)

The Party leadership issued documents responding to the students’ criticisms of its policy lines which included the following important points:

- With regard to the suggestion that the CPT should not clearly side with any party in the Indochina war, the Party leadership explained that it considered the Vietnam-Kampuchea war illegitimate. Invasion and pillage of Kampuchea reflected chauvinism and were not characteristic of a Marxist party but rather of imperialistic behaviour.\(^\text{62}\) The Party took as its


\(^{60}\) \textit{How to understand the present situation (Cha kao jai sathanakarn nai patjuban dai yang rai)}, Aug. 1979, internal paper of the CPT. Reprinted in \textit{Thid Thang}, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1980.


\(^{62}\) "How to understand the present situation", \textit{op. cit.}. 
international duty to oppose revisionism. At the initial stage of the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, the Party took no position. However, the Lao-Vietnamese side engaged in hostile activities towards the CPT. For example, it recruited certain Party front members and cadres to serve as its instrument in attacking the Party and rounded up, detained and finally extradited more than 100 Party people to the Kriangsak Government. These acts were regarded by the CPT as a betrayal to the revolution.

- With regard to the students' allegation that the Party loyally followed the Chinese line, the CPT's leadership explained that it did so in conformity with Marxist-Leninist principles. This couldn't be regarded as a deviation from the main ideological line.

- With regard to the students' proposal for new strategies and tactics and their mention of Vietnam and Nicaragua as examples, the CPT's leadership considered that this did not correspond with the reality in Thai society. The Party used to operate in the cities but failed, mainly because these were centres of the reactionary and imperialist forces.

The Party issued in secret circulation documents criticising in retaliation the students' suggestions and allegations as too nationalistic. It encouraged its cadres to adopt an international perspective on the revolution, emphasising an understanding of the U.S.-Soviet competition for power. The CPT suggested that “we could not deal with the problems confronting us by just confining ourselves to the national level”.

The Party's attitude in early 1980 still reflected in the main its original dogmatic view on the students and intellectuals. It called for unity among those still being with it in common struggle, because this was a transitional period. It suggested that problems be brought to the

63. "Views on Indochina Situation" ("Kor kid hen kiew kab sathanakarn indocin") May 5, 1979, internal paper of the CPT.
64. "How to understand the present situation", op. cit.
65. "How to master revolutionary task in a confusing situation" ("cha pen chao khong ngan patiwat nai sathanakarn ti subson dai yang rai"), internal paper of the CPT.
67. "Proposition on the Thai Revolution, Revolutionary Movement and Revolutionary Party" ("Bot saner kiew kab arn patiwat kabuan karn patiwat lae pak patiwat Thai"), internal paper of the CPT.
leadership’s attention? and should not be exposed to the masses.\footnote{68} The Party tended to dispense with revolutionary renegades rather than attempt to pull them back into the revolutionary line. For example, it cut links with certain organisational connections in the cities that tended to be critical of the Party.

However, following the increasing defection by students and intellectuals, the Party’s leadership softened its stand, because, it realised, it was suffering a rapid loss. Its conflict with the student movement now became public, and the Party masses and cadres, who had hitherto been in total ignorance of what was going on in the Party, were well aware of its problems and shortcomings. After 1980, therefore, not only the students but also the workers and peasants, as well as certain senior Party members, decided to come out of the jungle. The CPT thus found it more and more difficult to explain the situation with its Maoist view of class revolutionary forces. Moreover, the students’ criticisms of the Party rekindled a simmering issue, that is, the conflict between the local Northeasterners and the ethnic Chinese. A cadre aired his view thus:

"...it was the Northeasterners who fought and died. It was the Northeasterners who were always in the front in any pioneering mission...Once an area was worked out or masses were recruited the leadership would send its people to rule, to assume a leadership position. Their backgrounds were unknown; we only knew that they were either purely Chinese or ethnic Chinese who had been born in Thailand ..."\footnote{69}

The student movement-CPT conflict apparently led to the latter’s internal dissensions and divisions. Party members explained their defection in much the same terms as those offered by the students.\footnote{70} The number of CPT defectors who turned themselves in to the authorities thus rose during 1978-1981: in 1979, 1,479 of them turned themselves in, and the number rose to 1,565 in the following year.

An official report claimed that during October 1980-April 1981 the

\footnote{68. "How to understand the present situation", \textit{op. cit.}} \footnote{69. "CPT Today ("Por kor thor wan ni"). \textit{Thai Nikorn}, June 11, 1979.} \footnote{70. \textit{Bangkok Post}, Feb. 14, 1982.}
CPT had lost no less than 1,295 soldiers. It was estimated that the approximately 11,000-strong CPT’s armed force had dwindled since 1979 and in 1981 there remained only 7,900 of them.\footnote{71}

Since 1981, the students who had remained in the jungle and in China gradually came back to the cities. The student-CPT relationship had virtually come to an end. Even though some students and intellectuals still stay with the CPT, their number is very small. The Party, which insists on a policy line it has always claimed to be correct, now plays a severely limited role.

In conclusion, the student movement after the 14 October incident experienced a rapid growth following a current of events brought about by sudden changes in the balance of political power at the top. However, the movement was in character a rally to solve immediate problems and was too inflexible in its adherence to certain formular-type theoretical frameworks. It had no time to develop into a full-fledged organisation rooted in a solid theoretical foundation. After the 6 October 1976 massacre, the student movement terminated its urban activities, because the majority of its activists who were progressive students decided to join the CPT in the jungle. The later generations of students lack enthusiasm shown by their predecessors, largely because they had no direct experience in the 14 October 1973 incident and in part because Thai society and its educational system still favour those prospective university students who have middle-class backgrounds in the competitive entrance examination. Once they won their places at university, they tend to pursue a self-servicing degree-oriented study rather than knowledge to improve society. Those students who were disappointed with the CPT have now become disillusioned with their former ideal and enthusiasm for such improvement. They have come to feel discouraged, suffering from some kind of “faith crisis”, adjusting themselves in order just to survive in the old society. Only a small number of the newer generations of students are really interested in a social goal-directed pursuit of knowledge. Some of them get involved in rural development programmes, while others have become political party

volunteers or associated with certain pressure groups, such as the Democratic Federation. In general, however, the student movement of the present time is characterised by virtual inactivity. Its role, if any, is extremely limited. This situation may have arisen from the fact that the students, unlike occupational groups, only temporarily stay in groups at their educational institutions for about 4-5 years and then disperse. There is thus no continuity in their activities. They could play a role at all only in some circumstances, for example, at the time of a crisis. Indeed, after 14 October 1973 we cannot expect the students to be a strong movement serving as a spearhead in the attempt to transform our society into a more democratic one. We should view them in more realistic terms, that is, as a group in society, the majority of whose members come from the middle classes and whose prospects for social mobility are much brighter than those of most other youth groups. How the students in each historical period develop their conscience and forms of activities depends on various ever-changing social and political factors. The role of the student-led democratic movement following the 14 October incident is just one instance in Thai history of the afore-mentioned situation.