



Global Nonviolent Action Database

Published on *Global Nonviolent Action Database* (<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>)

Thai people successfully defend democracy against military coup, 1992

April

1992

to: June

1992

Country: Thailand

Location City/State/Province: *Bangkok*

Goals:

"To increase public awareness of the Thai constitution practice, encourage democratic practices, and assist in coordinating activities among other NGO's with these aims" and "To struggle in a nonviolent way against General Suchinda's appointment using symbolic and direct action"

- Campaign for Popular Democracy & Students Federation of Thailand

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 013. Deputations
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)

Methods in 4th segment:

- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 013. Deputations
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws

Methods in 5th segment:

- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 056. Selective social boycott
- 061. Boycott of social affairs
- 086. Withdrawal of bank deposits

Methods in 6th segment:

Notes on Methods:

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Democracy

Group characterization:

- Middle Class Democratic Intellectuals and professionals
- Representatives from 19 organizations
- Women
- academics
- students
- teachers

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Students Federation of Thailand, Campaign for Popular Democracy

Partners:

Major-General Chamlong Srimuang - Leader of an opposition political party

Confederation for Democracy

Note: Confederation for Democracy consisted of 26 organizations with representatives from key groups including politics, academics, labor workers and even "slum dwellers"

Students Federation and Campaign included: Middle class democratic intellectuals, professionals, academics, the poor, women, teachers, human rights groups, and labor workers.

External allies:

Not known

Involvement of social elites:

Major-General Chamlong Srimuang

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- Civilian involvement grows

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Men and Women and Children from all social classes are more apparent

Groups in 5th Segment:

- More business people

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: *Approximately 10 days*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC) - Made up of Military graduates, most notably Army Commander-in-Chief General Suchinda Kraprayoon. NPKC later formed the political party known as Samakki Tham Party

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

The only type of campaigner violence occurred during the May 17-20, 1992 rallies. This includes vandalism, throwing bottles filled with gasoline, and throwing of debris

Repressive Violence:

May 17 - When demonstrators attempted to march towards the Government House they were stopped by a blockade of police. As campaigners threw bits of debris police responded by beating campaigners

Some of the first reports of vandalism were said to be from police.

Capital Security Command brought in 4800 police and 13000 troops which were firing shots at will on campaigners

Police undercover groups (Headhunter groups) were to eliminate vandals however they could

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

5 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

The draft amendments were read through and publicized on June 10th 1992- However, this was all done by the NPKC party which was still dominant in parliament. Changes were nonetheless made to the new constitution. "The amendment stated, notably, that the Prime Minister must be a member of the House of Representatives and that the Senate could not censure the Government"

Suchinda resigned on May 24, 1992 after admitting the Prime Minister must be a member elected into Parliament.

On February 23, 1991, a military group by the name of the NPKC, or National Peace Keeping Council, which was composed of Military academy graduates, sought to overthrow the current government in Thailand, which they believed to be a “parliamentary dictatorship”. NPKC quickly gained control over the government and formed the political party known as Samakki Tham.

Samakki Tham quickly grew and became one of the most powerful parties in parliament as it began to acquire more and more members from other established Parliamentary parties. After their entry into Parliament, Samakki Tham then picked a group of people who would comprise a committee whose job would be to rewrite the constitution.

Outraged by this decision, the Students Federation of Thailand quickly recharged what was known as the Campaign for Popular Democracy. The Campaign was comprised of teachers, women, academics, human rights groups, the poor, representatives from nineteen different organizations, and middle class intellectuals. In April 1991, the Campaign and Students Federation began creating public awareness of the new changes that were to be made to the constitution by the new military political powers.

Protest letters were written and press releases were sent out in opposition to rewrites being made to Thailand’s constitution. Then several different council members from different provinces who supported the campaign to stop the rewrites created what would later be know as The People’s Constitution. On June 24, 1991, The People’s Constitution was then given to the National Assembly.

Before the March 22 elections that were to be held in 1992, the Students Federation held a demonstration at Sanam Luang Park in Bangkok. The demonstration was thrown after the changes they had suggested in The People’s Constitution were not integrated. Between 50,000 to 70,000 people showed up to support the cause, including representatives from more than 50 nongovernmental organizations (NGO’s) and four political parties.

On March 22, 1992, Samakki Tham won the general election and, on April 7, announced that Army Commander-in-Chief General Suchinda Kraprayoon, a member of Samakki Tham, was to be Prime Minister. This move by the Samakki Tham to appoint Suchinda Prime Minister caused grief with the public because up until this day Suchinda reassured the public he would not take on the role of Prime Minister, as he was not an elected Member of Parliament.

April to the end of May 1992 is when vigorous campaigning began by the Students Federation and the Campaign for Popular Democracy. Their goals were “to increase public awareness of the Thai constitution practice, encourage democratic practices, and assist in coordinating actives among other NGO’s with these aims” and also “to struggle in a nonviolent way against General Suchinda’s appointment using symbolic and direct action”.

On April 8, 1992, campaigners began the first of many hunger strikes against the Samakki Tham party and General Suchinda. Nonviolent demonstrations continued on April 20, May 4, and May 6-7 at different locations around Bangkok including the Sanam Luang Park and the Royal Plaza. Speeches were made, leaflets were handed out and more people joined in on hunger strikes. Support for campaigners grew from 60,000 people to 150,000 by May 7.

On May 14, the Confederation for Democracy was created which held representatives from key groups including politicians, academics, “slum dwellers” and labor workers. They joined in on the campaign against the military government.

From May 17 to 20 tension grew. Numbers of demonstrators continued to grow in Bangkok and the military government began deploying troops and police to areas around the city. Campaigner’s continued their demonstration in nonviolent, unarmed ways. The crowd grew to close to 500,000 people. Eventually, when demonstrators tried to make their way to the Government House they ran into a police barricade. Some campaigners threw debris, police retaliated with beatings and violence started to grow. Some of the first acts of vandalism were reportedly done by undercover police.

Alongside continued nonviolent action, violence escalated: vandalism, bottles filled with gasoline, police and military troops firing at will, motorcycle gangs, buildings set on fire, and arrests. On May 18, the government placed a ban on groupings of more than ten people. Untouched by this ban 50,000 people gathered at Ramkhanhean University the next day. Resistance groupings also began popping up in different parts of Bangkok on May 20.

Protests continued after a meeting with the King, General Suchinda, and opposition party member Major-General Srimuang where the King asked for them to resolve their issues through conciliation. Still, campaigners boycotted military sponsored concerts, taxi drivers refused to accept known military members, and the public took money out of military banks.

The public kept pushing for changes to the constitution throughout the end of May, and more and more businesses joined in on the cause. The Samakki Tham drafted amendments to the constitution and on May 24, Suchinda resigned as Prime Minister after agreeing that the Prime Minister should be an elected Member of Parliament. By the June 30, 1992, the Military Parliament was abolished and a new election was set for September.

Research Notes

Sources:

Sharp, Gene. *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*. Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 2005.

Callahan, William, A. *Imaging Democracy: Reading "the events of May" in Thailand*. Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1998.

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Alexa Wallin, 27/02/2012

A project of Swarthmore College, including Peace and Conflict Studies, the Peace Collection, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility.

Copyright Swarthmore College.



Global Nonviolent Action Database is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

Original website design and artwork created by [Daniel Hunter](#).

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>.

Registered users can [login](#) to the website.

Source URL (retrieved on 07/10/2020 - 22:54): <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/thai-people-successfully-defend-democracy-against-military-coup-1992>

Links:

[1] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/mainly-or-initiated-people-color>

[2] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/mainly-or-initiated-student-participants>

[3] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/example-paradox-repression>

[4] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/example-regime-change>

[5] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/included-participation-more-one-social-class>