PREFACE

During the first half of the 20th century people from most of the Third World countries were fighting against the colonial powers for the independence of their respective countries. In Thailand, the reign of Chakari dynasty, by its centralised rule along with reforms and modernization programmes, helped Thailand to get through the period of imperialism with its independence intact. However in 1932, a group of officials in military and civil services organised a coup d'etat, turning monarchy into a constitutional one. Many studies identify 1932 and the overthrow of absolute monarchy as the beginning of the modern period of Thai politics. Political activism expanded considerably immediately after the overthrow of the monarchy, the People's Association which played crucial role during the coup of 1932, received considerable support from students, workers and other urban groups. All these groups played very important role in the gradual democratization of Thai politics. But, in this study major attention has been given on the role of students who played most crucial role in the democratization of Thai politics.

The majority of Thais for generation had been living in an isolated environment. But after coup 1932, the spread of western ideas, exposure
of communist ideology in rural areas and ferment within the ranks of urban middle class contributed to an increase in political awareness. Owing to the preponderance of Chinese workers, the government put restraint against the formation of labour unions as it was suspected to have lead to dissemination of communist ideas. In such an atmosphere, students become increasingly vocal and active. They participated in demonstration and protested against the academic misconduct, poor economic growth and political issues.

In the first chapter of this research work, an attempt has been made to study the various aspects of student politics under three broad groups of countries namely the advance capitalist countries, socialist countries and the Third World i.e. developing countries.

In the second chapter various Thai students movements have been discussed in great detail. Special emphasis have been given on the student revolt of 1973 which derived inspiration from the similar kind of movements in other part of world. Outcome of this revolt and its impact on Thai society also have been discussed.

In the third chapter, the emergence of communist party in Thailand, its ideology and impact on Thai society have been discussed. In addition to this the relation between Thai radical students and communists and their ideological difference have been discussed in
great detail. The defeat of American forces in the region and its impact on Thai society and politics also have been discussed.

In the fourth chapter the events that led to the mass uprising have been discussed in great detail. The role of middle class, mass media, information technology have been highlighted.

In the fifth chapter, political and social developments since end of the 19th century have been discussed in great detail. The role of monarchy in the development of democracy have been highlighted. The emergence of politically conscious middle class, rapid growth of Thai economy and such other factors which led to the incremental growth of Thai democracy also have been discussed in this chapter.

The sixth chapter is basically the findings of this research work which shows that from 1932 to 1992, Thai democracy has gradually moved towards maturity. During this period several developments took place on social, political and economic fronts. Development of civil society, high economic growth rate, free media, high literacy rate and emergence of politically conscious strong middle class are some of the most important factors which will lead Thailand towards a more representative democracy.