CHAPTER III

THE RADICAL STUDENT GROUPS AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST PARTY OF THAILAND

The students revolt of 1973 had presented Thai people an opportunity to evolve a stable democratic government in Thailand. Students organised political instruction in the villages, while political parties sprang up everywhere. Public expression was exceptionally free, and newspapers and magazines circulated all shades of opinion. The writings of leftist intellectuals of the forties and fifties, like Chit Phumisak and Kulap Saipradit, were re-issued and Marxist-Socialism was in vogue. The left, even the far left, was fully out in the open, confident that a new democratic and socialist days were about to come. The organization of labour unions and peasant associations were well under way.

Meantime the right wing forces also started consolidating their power because in course of time the monarchy, the urban elites and much of the urban middle class became frightened by the radicalism of the students, whom they viewed either communist directed or inspired.¹ Their support soon swung into variety of new organisations,

such as New Force Movement, "Red Gaurs"\textsuperscript{2} and "Village Scouts"\textsuperscript{3} of the right wing. Most of these organisations had backing in the military or in the bureaucracy.

In October 1976, the students were attacked by the right wing activists and government forces while they were protesting at Thammasat University against the return of the former Prime Minister Thanom to the country, who was responsible for the violence of October 1973.

The students protesting at Thammasat were branded as communists by the armed forces. Massive attack was launched against the students protesting at Thammasat University Campus. The students were attacked by the government forces, village scouts, Red Gaurs and other anti-communist forces.\textsuperscript{4} The students were lynched, burnt alive and beaten to death on October 6, 1976. It was estimated that around 300 students were killed, thousands were arrested and around three thousand fled to the jungle to join the communist insurgency forces.

\textsuperscript{2} Red Gaurs – An organisation of right wing forces. The purpose of Red Gaurs Organisation, according to its military supporters and vocational student leaders, was to defend the honour of the nation and king and to prevent the spread of communism in the Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{3} Village Scouts – It was created by the Border Patrol Police and received official support from the Ministry of Interior. Village Scouts emerged into a leading vigilante group and their members were dedicated to destruction of the NSCT and all other leftist influences in the Kingdom.

Since all these were done on the name of saving the country from the communists. It became, therefore, imperative to study the emergence of communist forces in Thailand and their relation with radical student groups.

After the 1932 revolution, in which the absolute monarchy was overthrown in a bloodless coup organised by the military men and bureaucrats, the Thai Communists were able to put forth their communist propaganda under the name of Seam Communist Committee. This group claimed some credit for the change in government and removal of the absolute powers of the monarchy. The liberal political atmosphere disappeared, and in 1933 the Thai government passed the first anti-communist law. However, the law did not deter several young advocates of socialism and the very next year leaflets urging the establishment of a Russian-style of government in Thailand were distributed in the northeast by university students under the name of Khananum Thai (Thai Youth Group). In 1935, the Thai government strengthened its communist stand and further amended the anti-communist statue of 1933 to deal with the emergence of communist groups under non-communist names.

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The invasion of China by Japan caused many anti-communist leaders in China and Southeast Asia to seek the aid of indigenous communists. From 1935-1941, the nationalist and communists formed an alliance against their common enemy Japan. It was at this time that the Thai Communist Party (TCP) was officially established and in the name of patriotism announced its support of the Free Thai Movement. The Free Thai Movement was a group of patriots and which was originally organised by Budi Banomyong in collaboration with the allied intelligence unit. The main aim of the movement was to resist Japanese occupation in Thailand because Thai government, under the Prime Minister Phibun Songkram, had declared war against the United States of America in collaboration with Japan. During the period between 1941-1945, Thai Communist Party became an effective part of anti-Japanese alliance. The TCP expanded its activities and divided the party organisation into two independent branches: (i) Chinese Executive Committee, which primarily comprised of Thai Chinese; (ii) Thai Executive Committee, which comprised indigenous Thais. After Japanese defeat in World War II, in 1946, when Thai government abolished all anti-communist acts, the Chinese branch of TCP started functioning independently under the name of Chinese Communist Party.

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of Thailand (CCPT) and started recruiting left-learning Chinese from the overseas Chinese Communities in Bangkok and Thonburi.

In 1949, after the victory of communists in China, Chinese Communist Party of Thailand ceased most of its activities. Most of its members went to China while others joined Thai Communist Party. In the meantime, United States programmes for aid and defence support began to move in, and USA consolidated her position with Thai military rulers. In 1950, however, Thai communists attempted to cooperate with various civilian leaders and politicians in hopes of mounting a successful counter coup. The attempt failed, and it was the last time the Thai Communist Party tried to achieve its aims through parliamentary means. Thereafter the Thai Communist Party leadership advocated "armed struggle" and a "people war". The next year, 1951, at a meeting of all communist representatives, the name of the party was changed from the Thai Communist Party to the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). Now the official policy of the party became a carbon copy of the strategy put forth by Mao-Tse-Tung and the members of the party were called upon to support revolution by violent means which would first liberate the masses in the rural areas and thereby enable them to take over the cities.\(^7\) Thereafter Thai government had opted harsh method against the

\(^7\) Ross Prizzia, op.cit., n.1, p.11.
communist movement and enacted an anti-communist law calling for more severe punishment for members of communist organisations. Therefore, CPT was forced to disband its most of the activities. Rather than expanding its base in Thailand, CPT began sending most of its members to China for training. In 1958, Sarit Thanarat led a successful coup and assumed control over newly formed government with the help of various US supported agencies Sarit initialed a series of counter insurgency operations. Faced with this anti-communist push, many of the socialist oriented politicians in Bangkok dissociated themselves from CPT while others found refuge as professors at universities at provinces. The University of Chiang Mai became a popular heaven for the students of Pridi and supporters of socialist reform. There were very few intellectuals who remained quietly at their posts in the faculty of economics at Thammasat University; several other professors sought refuge abroad. It was during this time that Kularb Saipradit, after spending more than five years in confinement as a political prisoner, requested and was granted political asylum in Peking.⁸

By 1961, the CPT had altered its strategy to accommodate the use of armed resistance once again. A new front organisation, the Democratic Patriotic Front, was formed. This new organisation sought

⁸ Ibid., p.12.
territorial accusation through protected warfare in suitable areas of provincial Thailand. From 1961 to 1964, the Democratic Patriotic Front concentrated its effort in Northeast Thailand and was eventually successful in seizing remote part of Nakhon Phanom and Sakhon Nakhon provinces, which were utilized as support bases. In August 1965, the Thai Patriotic Front engaged the government forces in a fierce battle at Baan Na Bua village in the province of Nakhan Phanom and suffered a serious losses in this battle, but communist continued their fight against the government in various Thai provinces. It was during this period that People's Republic of China openly supported the cause of CPT.\(^9\) However, it should be noted that the People's Republic of China played a role in the training of cadres of CPT and provided an ideological support to the Thais in exile, but Chinese Communist Party was silent in giving official recognition to CPT. As for Thai socialist philosophers in China are concerned, they never fully agreed with the Maoist approach to revolution. The writing of Pridi Banomyong and Kularb Saipradit, two most prominent Thai philosophers exiled in China, reflected aspects of Russian progressivist philosophy which allowed for cultural adaptation and gradual change of the system.

\(^9\) Ibid., p.13.
In the aftermath of the Student Revolt of 1973, the incident of insurgency and overall strength of CPT increased drastically. Communist insurgents under arms increased from an estimated 3,500 in 1973 to 5000 in 1974 and to 8000 in 1975. The CPT was particularly successful in increasing its strength in northeast Thailand, but significant increases were also recorded in the central plain and in the Southern provinces bordering Burma and Malaysia. CPT was further strengthened from 1975 to 1977 when a large number of Thai students and political activists fled to jungle and joined communist insurgency in the forest because of rightists and government violence. Contemporary political observer wrote that the exodus, which included many of the nation's brightest and most articulate youth, was a major victory for the communists.10 But within six years, most of the radical had given themselves up to the Thai government, expressing serious disagreement with the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), which they labeled as puppet of China. In this chapter an attempt would be made to describe the process of the developing antagonism between two groups and particular attention would be paid to the role of Chinese dominance of the CPT, ideological differences over Maoism, the effect of party structure and discipline, the

importance of tactical differences and personal ambition and the effect of government amnesty programme.

Before 14 October, 1973 Communist Party of Thailand had few links with the student movement. CPT leaders concentrated their efforts on organizing peasants in the countryside. It came to them as a stunning surprise when the students with the support of urban masses were able to overthrow the ruling military government in less than a week of overt struggle. The CPT with its rural strategy, on the other hand, had achieved almost nothing in 30 years of revolutionary warfare. As far the students are concerned, they had very little knowledge and understanding of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) firstly, because Thai government suppression of communist insurgents did not allow CPT to publicize its ideology in the cities and secondly CPT's Maoist leaders saw the students as bourgeoise and urban intellectuals. However, after the student success the CPT began approaching top student leader through its agents in the cities.

The period between October 1973 to October 1976 was the period of open intellectual debate among the radicals. Along with the Moist ideas of CPT, some of it was actually published by radical student groups, the radical students were also reading the original works of Marx and Lenin that were freely available in Thai translation and in
English for the first time in Thailand. They also read the writings of the some well known Thai Marxist scholars such as Pridi Banomyong, Jit Pumisak, Anut Arpapirom, Gularp Saipradit, Nai Pii, Seni Saowapong and Amnat Yutawiwat. Most of the Thai Marxist scholars felt in their writings that the idea of Marx needed to be adapted to fit the Thai situation and to be acceptable to ordinary Thais. In the process of this adaptation these thinkers tried to reinterpret what they thought were the best of Thai values into a Marxist framework.\textsuperscript{11} They emphasized the cultural and ethnical change rather than economic change. Art, literature and religion, they believed, were tools used by the oppressing class to keep the corrupt system working. Therefore, one of their first priority was to take these tools from the hands of exploiters and to put them at the service of the oppressed. They tried to create a revolutionary art literature and even a kind of revolutionary Buddhism. They believed that in order to change Thai society a cultural and psychological revolution had to precede and make possible the political revolution. In this cultural revolution, which was very different from the Chinese cultural revolution, artist and writers were to be the leading edge of a consciousness. The Thai Marxists felt more comfortable applying Marx's class analysis to Thai society and they saw the Sakdina class as the principal oppressor class. This class, with its connection to privilege and

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p.8.
wealth through the central government was the target of their analysis. In general, therefore, one can feel that the Thai Marxist were academicians, artists and poets, trying to develop a vision of revolutionary society to inspire the people to become aware of the injustice existing in Thai society. The role was one in which the later generation of radicals found congenial and quite different from the role of the Communist Party, which was trying to wage a war against the government in a Maoist way.

As we have seen in the earlier discussion between 1973 and 1976, student activism as well as other form of protest behaviour against the government gained momentum and became a significant means for political change in Thailand. Workers, farmers, fishermen, teachers and numerous other grass-root organizations began to mobilize and press demands upon civilian governments of Sanya Dhammasakdi (1973-1975), Seni Pramoj (1975) and Kukrit Promoj (1975-76). However, on the other hand, polarisation started on the basis of political ideologies and right wing forces also started strengthening their position. This group consisted combat students, "Red Gaurs" and "Village Scouts". Trade Union, farmers and students leaders were assassinated and subjected to

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12 Ross Prizzia, op.cit., n.1, p.78.
regain of terror. On 23 August 1974 Saeng Roong-nirandonkun was gunned down in broad daylight while waiting for a bus in Bangkok. On 31 July 1975 Inta Sriboonrang, editor of peasant newspaper was killed in the northern town of Chiang-Mai. On the 20th August of same year, hundreds of armed Red Gaurs attacked Thammasat University while the police looked on. On 15th February 1976, Red Gaurs fired and bombed the headquarters of the moderately left leaning New Force Party. Three days later, Amaret Chaisa-at, Student leader of Mahidol University was killed, ten thousand people attended his funeral. In the same month army staged a mock military alert on Bangkok streets showing its preparedness for a coup and four days later Dr. Boonsanong Boonyothayn, the General Secretary of the Socialist Party, was assassinated.

During the April 1976 general election campaign more than 30 people were killed by right wing forces. The election brought a more right wing government. As a result 14 trade union and student leaders were arrested under the 1952 anti-Communist Act. Instead of resisting government decision, Communist Party instructed its cadres to go underground or move to countryside to continue the fight and not to

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resist right wing forces in city. Finally on 6th October 1976, the army supported by right wing forces took its revenge on students and workers by attacking them at Thammasat University while they were protesting against the return to Thailand of the ex-dictators Thanom and Prapas. Students and workers were attacked at Thammasat by army and right wing troops carrying heavy combat weapons. Three hundred activists died, mostly students, and thousands were arrested. The battle at Thammasat precipitated a declaration of martial law by military leaders, the end to newly elected government of Seni Pramoj, the closing of parliament, and an end of all other forms of political participation by students, workers and farmers as a result more than 3000 of them fled to the jungle to join communist insurgent group.

Right wing assault to students and other activities led them to seek refuge as many of the prominent activist were quite vulnerable. A group of radicals, including Seksan, Pridi, Jiranan Pitpreecha, Saman Luatwonghat, Weng Tochirakan and Prasit Chaiyo were among the first radicals to join armed revolution. This group of radicals who thought that the increasing political polarization was leading inevitably to major bloodshed left for Paris in June 1975, more than a year before the violence reached its height. From there the group went to Peking, Hanoi,

15 Ibid., p.93.
Western Laos and then into guerrilla camps in Thailand. Their departure from Thailand just only two months after communist victories in Vietnam and Cambodia suggests that they believed that communist victory in Thailand was about to come in a reasonably short period of time.\textsuperscript{16} When radicals met Thai Communists, they were kept under observation by the CPT. They were well treated, but not immediately accepted. The CPT officials apparently made reports on each of them and finally they were assigned to Party base areas inside Thailand.

From 1975 to 1978 an estimated 3,000 young activists gave up their places in the university, their civil services jobs, their union posts, their teaching positions to flee to the jungle. Some went to the south and others to the sensitive areas of north and northeast. Many of them had no idea how to contact the communists. Some tried to sent out words through friend and acquaintances that they were ready to join and waited in hiding to be contacted. Some were important enough for the communists to seek out and help. Others simply walked into the forest areas that were supposed to be communist controlled. Sudden influx of activists, forced the communists to abandon their usual careful procedures for testing and judging the recruits. While Seksan's group was kept under observation for more than a year before even being

\textsuperscript{16} Yuangrat Wedel, \textit{The Thai Radicals and the Communist Party} (Singapore, 1983), p.11.
allowed to enter the country, the large number of new arrivals forced the communists to make quick decision on whether to take people in or not. In some places separate camps had to be set up to avoid compromising the security of key jungle bases.

Initially radicals were assigned mostly menial tasks with heavy doses of Maoist indoctrination and later on some of them were assigned some more permanent tasks as political or propaganda officers. Most of the radicals said that they adapted quickly to the physical demands of living in the forest. It was psychological demands that were most difficult to meet. The recruits were taught to despise their origins in the middle class. They were ordered to eliminate the questioning attitudes that they had been so tired with when facing the unconvincing explanations of Thai government. Some of the radicals complaint later on that they tried to get us eliminate from ourselves. They stressed sacrifice unthinking labour, patience and unquestioning obedience. 17

During a brief period of "honeymoon", many of the radicals tried their best to live up to the expectations of the communists. This was especially true for the younger recruits and those whose ideas were not fully formed than the radicals who had leadership position in the activists movement. Some radicals such as Seksan and Pridi, rebelled

17 Ibid., p.16.
against the communist efforts to re-educate them almost from the beginning. But other radicals began to see only gradually that they were not treated as equal partners in the revolutionary struggle. The better known radical leaders were organized into the coordinating committee of Nation and Democracy Loving Forces. This United Front Organisation was given much publicity on the party radio, but the radicals said that they soon found that they had little impact on how the party or the forces conducted themselves.

The treatment of the radicals by the CPT was not something done primarily out of personal feeling or simple desire to maintain their hold on the leadership. They made it clear to the radicals that it was their class origin that made them ineligible for position of influence. Most of the radicals who went to the forest were young students, lecturers, bureaucrats or members of Thai Socialist Party of Thailand. CPT saw them as urbanized intellectuals - the very antithesis of the peasants who, Maoist decreed, should lead the revolution. They considered intellectuals being too liberal and undisciplined. Many of the radicals were kept busy producing reports and propaganda but rarely, CPT leadership, allowed their writings to be printed without major changes. Seksan wrote several books during his five years in the forest, but each time he sought permissions to have his latest work printed, his request
was denied. When the radicals tried to propose ideas of their own, they were told by the CPT leadership that they should deal only with local problems and should not think about major problems. Whenever radicals suggested any alternative or improvement of the system they were always accused of violating discipline. Though ideological differences widened between CPT leadership and radical group, personal relations remained quite good. The CPT leaders always treated radicals with patience and courtesy. And personal ties of respect and courtesy kept them going together till radical decided to leave the jungle.

The dissatisfaction of radicals with their position in revolutionary movement was heightened as they saw CPT leadership struggled with the contradictions created by the growing dispute between Vietnam and China and the political changes in Beijing following Mao's death.

After first incursion into Cambodia in December 1977, the Cambodians broke off relationship with Hanoi. The CPT depended on both Cambodia and Vietnam for logistic support and so tried to maintain neutral stand in this conflict. But Peking leaders called on to the CPT to join in the criticism of Hanoi. As a result CPT in its propaganda denounced the Soviet Union and Vietnam. Vietnam and her close ally Laos demanded that the Thai communists should halt their criticism. With the CPT decision to stay on its pro-Chinese course led to the
holding of supplies which was coming along the Chinese built road in western Laos to Thai border. Laotians repeated request to CPT leadership to stop propaganda attacks on the Soviet Union and Vietnam was simply ignored because the CPT leadership's ideological and psychological connections with China were more important than the logistic facilities provided by the Vietnamese and Laotians. The CPT could not stop following Chinese even when its own vital interests were threatened.

In September 1977, Vietnamese premier Pham Van Dong visited Thailand and announced that Vietnam would not support insurgency in Thailand. In November Sale Uongkamsao, a Lao politburo member met a CPT politburo member and handed over the formal demand that all CPT bases be withdrawn from Lao territory within a month. But CPT could not meet the one month dead line and it was extended till January 20, 1979. The CPT's sick and wounded members did not cross into China until the day border was closed. Finally, fighting broke out and many CPT activists were killed. CPT also lost some of its cadres because many ethnic Thai-Lao and Thai-Vietnamese fighters and sympathizers deserted the party.

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18 Ross Prizzia, op.cit., n.1., pp.21-22.
The cutting of supply routes through Laos had caused a drastic reduction in the amount of supplies the Chinese were sending to the CPT. Now arms and weapons were not so easy to obtain as before. Then in June 1979 top Chinese officials advised the CPT to ease its criticism of Thai government over the voice of the people of Thailand which transmitted from southern China. CPT thought that Chinese advise were totally against for which they stood but party did not dare to make a complete break from China. Finally on 11th July, 1979 the radio went off the air temporarily to put an end to the dispute. Chinese not only revived their relation with Thailand rather they sold petroleum to Thai government when it was facing serious fuel shortage. Thai Prime Minister visited China and got warm and sympathetic reception in Peking. It was too much for the radicals as Pridi Boonsue said “we were being bombed by government planes flying with Chinese fuel while Kriangsak was given banquets in Peking”.19

International changes that caused so much confusion and conflict between radials and the CPT stemmed from changes in China that highlighted Chinese dominance over CPT. The denunciation of the Soviet Union and the Vietnamese was clearly a result of Chinese national policy rather than CPT policy. Therefore respect for the CPT

19 Pridi Boonsue in one of his interview quoted by Yuang Wedel in Thai Radicals and Communist Party, p.21.
leaders declined among Thai radicals when they saw how quickly and supposedly Thai independence fighters fell into line behind whatever turn Chinese policy took. For example, when the “Gang of four” was in power in Peking the CPT espoused its brand of radical Maoism. When the gang fell the CPT changed with the times. When Mao ideology was challenged by the new leaders the CPT leadership began to criticize Mao as well.

CPT's dependence on China was not limited only to ideology, but was strongly reinforced by a flow of supplies and money. CPT received most of its military equipments like guns, ammunition, uniforms and radios from China. China also gave financial support to CPT through Chinese merchants established in Thailand. Until the closing of the Lao border and invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam, China supplied rice and food through these routes. The radicals saw the CPT as completely dependent on China, ideologically, materially and psychologically. This dependence had cost the Thai revolutionary struggle dearly as CPT obediently joined in Peking's disputes with Vietnam and the Soviet Union. But perhaps more importantly Party's pro-China line offended the strong innate nationalism of the radicals. One reason they joined the revolution was to eliminate foreign imperialist control of the Thai political and economic system. They were dismayed to find that the Thai
revolution was controlled from abroad as well. As a result discussions
and criticism among radical mounted.²⁰

To the radicals the abrupt changes in the CPT's foreign policies
were illogical, harmful and evidence of its psychological dependence on
China. But what concerned them more was the way this identification
with Chinese thoughts, policies and perceptions made it impossible for
the CPT to get an accurate view of Thai society and the changes that
were occurring in it. They believed that the CPT was missing
opportunities for revolutionary gains by sticking to a rigid and outdated
analysis of Thailand that was copied from China in the midst of its
revolution decade earlier because Party leaders, most of them may have
been born in Thailand but grew up in China and were close to the
Communist Party of China, never really studied Thai society. They just
accepted Chinese society as a model and called Thai society also as a
semi colonial and semi-feudal society.

On the other hand radicals believed that Thailand was very
different from China. First, Thailand had not been invaded by foreign
military forces as it was with the case of China. In Thailand the problem
was with democracy and political institutions. And secondly, Thailand
was a more of a capitalist nature than china. Thiruyuth Boonmi sent a

²⁰ Ibid., p.24.
footnoted article to a Bangkok newsmagazine "Matuphum" in which he analysed Thai society much differently than the communists. He wrote that "Thailand had passed through three different historical periods: ancient feudal society, traditional colonial period and the neo-imperialist period. Thailand was now in the Third period".21 Therefore, he concluded, Thai did not have the character of semi-colonial and semi-feudal society as CPT assumed. Radicals believed that the CPT could not understand the complexity and changing nature of Thai society because they had not tried and always saw Thai society with a Chinese perspectives. Thai communists tended to classify people according to their work instead of their economic class in Marx's sense. So they saw students and intellectuals as a member of small capitalist class even if their parents were farmers or labourers. The radicals also saw that the CPT's assumption that the sweeping problems of land ownership that existed in China were not really so important in Thailand. Infact in Thailand, the farmers did not have much land problems because the land was available, but their main problems were production and marketing. The most important component of changing Thai society which Thai communists missed totally was the emergence of a new class i.e. middle man in the rural areas.22

21 Ibid., p.32.
22 Ibid., p.33.
It was the middle man who emerged as a new capitalist class and controlled rural finance, marketing and transport. The Radicals thought that the control of this rural capitalist class as well as land reform only could solve the problems of the farmers. The radicals thought the CPT should have made more use of Thai Marxist thinkers, Jit Pumisak, Seni Saowapong, Pridi Banomyong etc., who had tried to evolve an ideology specifically for Thai revolution. But Thai Marxists simply did not fit into the rigid Chinese oriented ideology of the CPT. The CPT's view of Thai society, class, government and number of other matters were unrealistic and static to the Thai radicals. The radicals blamed this on the ignorance of the new and changing Thailand out of jungle on the part of CPT leaders and total dependence on the Chinese ideology to make up for that ignorance.

Because of CPT's incorrect and incomplete interpretation of contemporary Thai society the radicals concluded that the CPT leadership were using the wrong strategy in the revolutionary movement. After their initial period in the jungle the problems of strategy for the revolution were constantly discussed by the radicals. To them it was more important than any other set of issues.

The Radicals thought that the Chinese strategy borrowed by the CPT could not be applied to Thailand because:
(i) In Thailand capitalism was spreading in rural areas much more widely and quickly than China.

(ii) Thailand was much smaller than China so there were no vast distances for the Central Government to cover in trying to suppress and armed revolution and no large remote areas for the revolutionaries to use for liberated zone.

(iii) Unlike the Chinese peasants Thai farmers had never been invaded by a foreign army and had never experienced widespread warfare.

The radicals thought that the CPT was overlooking fertile ground for revolutionary organisation by its single minded concentration on the peasants. The CPT tactic of the United Front was not successful in overcoming this because party propaganda made it quite clear that urban middle class people had little role to play in Thai communist revolution. The CPT's claim over sole leadership of the revolution was particularly quite irritating of the radicals who had struggled throughout the political turmoil of 1973-1976 without any help from CPT. It was not that the radicals opposed the idea of having farmers as part of leading force of revolution, but they opposed the CPT's Maoist strategy of exclusive dependence on the farmers. After several years in the forest the radicals also saw the shortcomings of the Maoist plan to encircle the towns with revolutionary rural areas and then to proceed on to seize the
cities. This method, they said, was made obsolete by modern weaponry, especially the helicopter and the close support bomber or gunship. They thought, even if the CPT succeeded in liberating many villages, all the government has to do is to cut them off from outside supply and markets to seriously hurt the welfare of the villagers. Therefore the CPT strategy of liberating Thailand village by village will not work. The radicals were of the view that the effort should be made quietly in town first. Once large section of the town population were under their control, the revolutionary movement would be able to more easily influence the village and would have the supplies and equipment to put pressure on the cities where a network of sympathizers would make government resistance difficult. Not only some radicals disagreed with the particular tactics of carrying out the armed struggle, but some of them came to doubt the whole idea of armed struggle itself. When the radicals had gone into the forest they were desperate for armed protection and keen to revenge their friends killing on October 6, 1976. But radicals were not happy with the way the CPT began using revolutionary terror against not only government officials, but also the villagers. Large areas were declared war zones and villages were told either to join struggle or risk their lives. It became totally unacceptable to most of the radicals.

\[23\text{ Ibid., p.39.}\]
In addition to ideological and tactical frustration, many of the radicals thought that they would never get a chance to rise in the party hierarchy because influential positions were reserved for those who had qualifications of class and family as well revolutionary education from China. Those who studied in China gained faster promotion within party political hierarchy, it did not matter whether they had knowledge or not. One of the main causes for their decision to join the CPT's armed struggle was to escape from the dictatorship of Thanin government. They joined the CPT's armed struggle because they thought the communists were also against dictatorship. But they found that the party leadership was itself dictatorial. Those who did not belong to the leading section of the party, did not have any role in the decision making process.

The concept of party democracy was seen in completely different terms by the two groups. For the CPT, democracy was the process that was to lead them to monopolize state power, but for the radicals, democracy was the establishment of a political system in which people from every part of society could participate under political regulation.24

While the radicals became disillusioned with the CPT and international changes highlighted the Chinese dominance of CPT,

24 Ibid., p.45.
important changes also occurred in the Thai capital. The right wing government of Prime Minister Thanin had alienated even those who welcomed it at first. The Thai government's foreign policy and its repressive policy at home frightened even the military officers who had installed it. Just as Thanin's government completed one year in office, military ordered Thanin's government out of office and installed one of their own General, Kriangsak Chomanan, as Prime Minister. Kriangsak immediately showed flexible diplomacy and managed to get both China and Vietnam cut their support for the CPT. Officers of the Internal Security Operation command and the Special Branch of the Police convinced Kriangsak that a flexible policy towards the students radials in the jungle might also prove effective. Kriangsak announced an amnesty for all those involved in the October 6, 1976 violence. Most of the demonstrators and others arrested by police had already been released. Despite rightists opposition Kriangsak pardoned the last 19 student leaders being tried. The amnesty was extended in effect to any of those who joined the PCT as well. These measures had a strong impact on the radicals still in the forest who were increasingly disillusioned with the CPT and the armed struggle.

The radicals saw there was no room for compromise between their ideals and rigid ways to communists. With the differences more and
more out in the open the party put pressure on the radicals to conform. The situation in the camps deteriorated for many of the radicals. Whoever showed his disagreement with the CPT leaders was quickly branded a revisionist. And anyone accused of being a revisionist was psychologically isolated from the others. The radicals felt that the final factor that made them to leave was the CPT's pressure on them to abandon their disagreement with CPT policy and conform. As the CPT lost foreign support and its revolutionary policies began to be seen ridiculously and unsuccessful, therefore the radicals concluded that the CPT was not going to win and decided to leave.

All the radicals those who left the jungle did not directly surrender to the Thai government. Some of them simply slipped away and returned to their home town. A few like minded comrades fled in Laos and, eventually returned to Thailand and gave themselves up to the government authorities. Most of the radicals knew that they were already under the suspicion of the CPT leaders, they had to ask permission to leave the forest. In some cases CPT leaders deliberated for many months before letting them go. The radicals said that they were allowed to go free because their continued presence in the CPT camps might end up in them infecting others with their doubts and differences. At the same time the radicals were too well known and there were too
many of them to simply kill them. Such action certainly would have made it difficult for the CPT to even recruit people from the cities again. Most of the radicals were pledged not to reveal the whereabouts of CPT camps and after their release it appeared as if few of them broke their pledge. For all the ideological and tactical disputes between the radicals and CPT many of the radicals still felt gratitude for the protection the CPT gave them in 1975 and 1976 when they feared for their lives.

However, the surrender of radicals was seen either serious propaganda defeat for the CPT or part of CPT plan to change its rural strategy and infiltrate its cadres back into the cities. But government officials said that their own agents with the communist forces had confirmed many of the details of the disputes between the radicals and the CPT. They added that it does not mean that radicals have given up their hopes of bringing about radical changes in Thailand. The government authorities also noted that some of the lesser known radicals did not report themselves to the authorities when they left the forest and that among these may well be some CPT agents.

The outcome of the radical’s attempt to join forces with the CPT could have been foreseen. The radicals said they knew from the beginning that there would be differences with the CPT, but neither the
radicals nor the CPT were aware of the extent of those disputes. In retrospect most important differences were:

1. Thai radicals had wide exposure of variety of radical ideas, but were not attached to any particular category, certainly not to pure Maoism. They admired Marx but did not make much distinction between Marxists or Leninist or Maoists. They understood Marxism only from books, infusing theories with their own interpretations depending on their own particular Thai experience and values. They were influenced in this direction by an earlier generation of Thai Marxists. They were flexible enough to accept foreign ideas as long as they could be fitted into a Thai framework of values and applied to the Thai situation. Such easy going ideology was completely alien to the Maoist CPT. The CPT leaders read only Mao's work and praised only Mao. Mao's revolution was held up as the only example to follow. While the radical were flexible in their revolutionary ideology, they were firm in their insistence that whatever ideology be used it must fit the Thai situation. During their stay in the forest the radicals came to the conclusion that Maoism was not working and probably would never work in Thailand.
The Thai radicals, before joining the CPT, had a certain view of the CPT which they quickly lost. They admired the long struggle of the CPT and joined the armed struggle with high respect for its leaders even though they had never met. The radicals, in return, expected respect from the CPT. Many of the top radical leaders were known throughout the country. They had succeeded in overthrowing a government, something the CPT had never come close to doing. The radicals included many leaders with experience in organizing, leading strikes and protests and developing policies and strategies. They expected these experiences to be put to use in the continuing struggle. They expected their voices to be heard in revolutionary councils. The radicals enthusiastically expected to make a major impact on the CPT and perhaps some of them saw themselves as its eventual leaders. It came as a shock to the radicals to find that the CPT considered them not eligible for leadership because of their class origin and education. On the other hand the CPT was used to imprinting its ideology on the minds of uneducated village boys. They did not know how to cope with the bubbling ideas of the radical students. Most of the CPT leaders had never read any Marxist literature except that given to them and interpreted for them by Chinese Communist Party. They certainly did not want to
have debate with the newcomers. So the rigid system became even more rigid in the face of their intellectual challenge. Very few radicals were allowed even to become members of the party and none of them rose to high position. The radicals were prevented from contributing what they thought they had best to offer their ideas.

3. It must be remembered that most of the radicals were still quite young and had begun their political involvement as students. Like radical students in the west they were rebelling not just against a particular government or social system, but, to a certain extent, against all authorities. Their education encouraged this rebellion through "an incursion of modern individualistic values, stressing creativity and innovation". These values were key part of how they saw freedom and democracy. What they found in the forest was a Communist Party system even more rigid and authoritarian than the one they were trying to overthrow. Within this highly disciplined system and without the democracy radicals became powerless and thought it was impossible to achieve their goal.

4. Most important of all was the simple question of nationalism. The radials were fervently committed to a better future for Thailand, free of foreign domination. They found, however, that the CPT was
unable to envision a revolutionary future for Thailand except in relation to China.

The radicals could have understood and ignored a physical dependence on China for supplies, money and ammunition, but they could not understand the CPT’s complete psychological dependence on China. This tight ideological allegiance to Peking was shown in a particularly unfavourable light as the CPT began illogically altering its policies in conformity with the political struggle then ongoing in China. This caused the radicals to lose respect for the logic and intelligence of the CPT leadership. But more important, they came to believe that the CPT was simply a Peking puppet. Even the detested leaders of Bangkok government had not given up their independent thought to any foreign power to the extent that the CPT had given up their dependence to Peking. The radicals saw that the CPT owed its ultimate allegiance to China. The radicals owed theirs firmly to Thailand.