

BURNING ISSUE

Thailand: A letter to the well-heeled protesters of Bangkok

Wednesday 11 December 2013, by [ROJANAPHRUK Pravit](#) (Date first published: 11 December 2013).

Did you take part in the fierce argument over whether five million of you folks or a mere 150,000 showed up at the anti-government rally on Monday? I thought it showed insecurity over whether you represent the real majority voice in Thailand.

Your supreme protest leader, Suthep Thaugsuban, left no room for doubt when he addressed the crowd on Monday, saying he would soon deliver an announcement, “on behalf of all the Thai people”.

Wow, I don’t recall giving my consent to Suthep (or anyone else) to speak on my behalf. And you know deep down that millions of others hadn’t done so, either. The truth is, no one can ever claim to be speaking on behalf of all Thais.

Whether you numbered five million or a mere fraction, you mostly-Bangkokian middle class protesters should be mindful that you are not the majority of the people, and that Bangkok is just one part of Thailand. I know how frustrating it is for you to watch helplessly as the party of your choice keeps losing elections, leaving your favourite Oxbridge- and Ivy League-educated candidates unable to govern the country. Instead you have to settle for what you see as a corrupt and vulgar regime under Yingluck Shinawatra, with her brother Thaksin running the show via his numerous smartphones -and simply because the majority of poor and less-educated Thais keep voting for them.

I know you see Thaksin and his sister as bad, corrupt, abusive, blah, blah, blah. And to a certain extent I agree: the siblings can be arrogant, abusive and unrepentant. Look at the way they tried to sneak a blanket-amnesty bill through Parliament at 4am that would have absolved Thaksin but trampled justice for the families of red shirts who died in protests. It took some nerve.

I know that you middle class and well-heeled Bangkokians are used to snapping your fingers and having your maids, drivers, waitresses and even sex workers jump to satisfy you. It must be such a pain to see these people turning the tables and dictating the course of Thai politics.

After all, they are not “educated”, and many don’t even pay taxes. Some of you say these “red-shirt buffaloes” are too stupid to be allowed to vote - a privilege that should only go to college-educated Thais or the middle class.

But this is not the way to go. We - and I say “we” because I come from a similar background to you - cannot go on trying to maintain minority rule. This effort is almost apartheid-like, if you know what I mean. The poor and less-educated Thais in rural areas and in Bangkok want their political opinions counted as well. A lorry with 10 wheels cannot move forward with just one wheel dictating the speed. And so it is with Thailand.

You should try harder to convince them through civil dialogue, rather than engaging in bouts of expletive-loaded hate speech and showing open indifference to loss of life of among protesters who

don't share your political opinions. We need to give a space for our fragile and young democracy to grow and mature. And that means employing legitimate democratic means in opposing Thaksin and Yingluck - no military coup and no mob rule, please.

We have to learn to co-exist with others. And this cannot be done peacefully if you think that your views are the only ones that count.

To begin with, kindly tell your leaders to stop claiming to be speaking for all Thais. Let's call a halt to this ridiculous posturing.

Yours,

Pravit Rojanaphruk

P.S.

* The Nation (Thailand), December 11, 2013 1:00 am:

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/politics/A-letter-to-the-well-heeled-protesters-of-Bangkok-30221768.html>