

Thailand: Taksin, Pua Thai and the UDD write military atrocities out of history

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Taksin and Pua Thai have done a deal with the military in order for Taksin to return home and in order for the government to be accepted back into the exclusive club of the Thai ruling class. Earlier we saw Yingluk ingratiate herself with General Prayut, one of the murderers of Red Shirts in 2010. Then we saw her grovelling to General Prem. Now Yingluk has bought some land to give to the King in the name of her family. Taksin has been saying for a while that no one will be prosecuted for gunning down pro-democracy demonstrators as part of the “deal” on reconciliation. Taksin also said that the relatives and friends of those killed should be prepared to make sacrifices. It is a forgone conclusion that the lèse majesté political prisoners, like Somyot Pruksakasemsuk, Surachai Darnwatanatrakoon and Da Torpedo will be left to rot in jail.

Now we see the disgusting sight of coup leader Gen Sonti proposing a “reconciliation bill” in parliament in order to white-wash all the wrong doings of officials like himself and his new friend Taksin.

Important to this reconciliation over the dead bodies of Red Shirts, is the air-brushing out of history of the military atrocities. For months now the Pua Thai government and the leadership of the UDD have been only talking about former Prime Minister Abhisit and his side-kick Sutep as being the ones responsible for the Red Shirt deaths. Taksin has been trying to re-write history to say that the Thai crisis and coup were just about a “parliamentary dispute” between him along with his followers and the Democrat Party and their followers. The military have “slipped” from history and the Red shirts, according to Taksin, were merely his underlings.

Abhisit is a weak but vicious politician who only became Prime Minister because the army put him there. He has now become Taksin and Pua Thai's play thing to be kicked around and blamed for the blood bath. But the attacks on Abhisit are just for show. The elites all know that no one will be prosecuted.

Taksin himself has much to lose if the killers of 2010 are brought to court. He might find himself facing charges for his role in murdering scores of Muslim Malays in the south at Takbai in 2004.

Part of the elaborate play about reconciliation is the hiring of the lawyer Robert Amsterdam to investigate the Red Shirt deaths. Amsterdam has done a good job and uncovered much evidence about how the military and the Democrat Party murdered pro-democracy demonstrators. But his hands are tied like all lawyers. He isn't a political activist but he is sincere as a lawyer. Amsterdam can do nothing about prosecuting the generals or Sutep because the government has refused to pass a cabinet resolution inviting the International Criminal Court to investigate them inside Thailand. So all he can do is to try to prosecute Abhisit outside Thailand because Abhisit also holds British

citizenship. This is very convenient for the ignoring of military atrocities by Taksin, Pua Thai and the UDD.

The UDD leadership is helping Taksin and Pua Thai, not only by ignoring the military atrocities, but also by ignoring the problem of lese majeste and talking in an abstract fashion about re-writing the constitution. But their main role is to demobilise the Red Shirt movement and allow the Thai elites to get back to business as usual.

Many try to excuse the Pua Thai government by saying that it faces intense pressure from the military. A military that shot down nearly 90 people to avoid democracy will not lie down easily. But Pua Thai won a landslide election victory and had the backing of the biggest social movement in Thai history. Instead of using these assets to their advantage in order to sack the military top brass, free all political prisoners, prosecute those who ordered the killings and re-write the Constitution, they have chosen to do a deal with their former enemies. Pua Thai is now the “party of the military”, just like the Democrats used to be.

Giles Ji Ungpakorn, May 27, 2012

Taksin says the Thai political crisis “was just about himself”

Speaking over the phone to thousands of Red Shirts who were assembled on the spot where nearly 90 people were killed by the military two years ago, Taksin claimed that “the 91 deaths, the thousands of injuries and the imprisonments ... were for one thing only: to get rid of ME and my supporters.”

Like the interview he gave in Cambodia last month, his ego has no limits and he is trying to rewrite history where the Red Shirts were “merely” his followers. In fact Taksin played no role in building the Red Shirts and never actively led resistance to the military junta before that. He is now denying the strong pro-democracy current among most Red Shirts and even the republican mood which resulted from prolonged struggle. The Red Shirt movement was the biggest social movement to ever arise in Thailand. Its members have a dialectical relationship with Taksin, Thai Rak Thai and Pua Thai. While they supported Taksin and his parties, rank and file Red Shirts were also fighting for their own dignity, freedom and democracy and they made huge sacrifices for their goals.

The Red Shirt movement grew in political maturity as people struggled against the military after the coup of 2006. The movement to reform or abolish the lèse majesté law and to support the “Nitirat” reforms, which would scrap all laws resulting from the coup, is clear evidence of this. The Nitirat proposals would also allow for the punishment of those generals and politicians who were responsible for killing unarmed demonstrators.

Taksin almost totally ignored lèse majesté in his speech and concentrated on urging Red Shirts to help rebuild Thailand under the slogans of “Nation, Religion and Monarchy”, with “Democracy” mentioned as an afterthought. The reality is that Thailand can never be democratic and free as long as the lèse majesté law exists and as long as the generals and politicians who gun down political activists in the streets are never made accountable for their actions.

Taksin went on to indicate that he would return home to Thailand very soon. If he does manage to

return, it will be at the expense of those charged with lèse majesté who are rotting in jails and those killed by the military, none of whom can return home.

One reason why Taksin can dishonestly claim that the Red Shirts were “only about him” is the fact that those Red Shirts who are much more progressive than Taksin and Pua Thai are not organised enough and have yet to wrestled or properly contested the leadership from the hands of the UDD which fully supports the Yingluk Government. But some by-election results where Pua Thai voters stayed at home, causing the party to loose, may be an indication of a general dissatisfaction.

Giles Ji Ungpakorn, May 19, 2012

Yingluk's Bahrain Trip Insults The Memory of Red Shirts Shot by the Military two Years Ago

Thai Prime Minister Yingluk's trip to meet the Butcher of Bahrain is an insult to the heroes of democracy in Thailand and in Bahrain. This trip comes on the second anniversary of the deliberate shooting of pro-democracy Red Shirts by the Military in Bangkok. It also comes a few days after the death of political prisoner Aakong in a Thai jail. He was sentenced to prison for lèse majesté.

Yingluk's Pua Thai Government is signing trade agreements with the Bahrain dictatorship over the dead bodies of pro-democracy activists in Manama. At home it is talking “reconciliation” by shaking the blood-stained hands of the Thai generals. Taksin and the Yingluk Government have promised that no one will have to stand trial for the Rachprasong murders two years ago.

At the same time the Government has increased the use of lèse majesté against political dissidents. It has set its face against any reform or repeal of this barbaric law. Prisoners facing trial for lèse majesté, such as Somyot Pruksa Kasemsuk, are denied bail.

The actions of the Yingluk Government since it was elected last year mean that it has shown its true ugly face. It is a face which lacks any basic democratic principles. It is a face which puts business and power before human rights.

The world knows about the crimes of the Bahrain regime. More than 60 activists have been killed. Human Rights Watch has condemned systematic torture of political prisoners. Political prisoner Abdulhadi Alkhawaja is on hunger strike in protest at his unfair trial and sentencing by a military court.

Yingluk's visit is yet another stain on Thailand and the fact that nearly all Thai human rights activists have remained silent about this visit is shameful.

Giles Ji Ungpakorn, May 15, 2012
