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NSC BRIEFING

5 August 1954

PEIPING SPONSORS THAILAND EX-PREMIER

- I. First news in many months regarding former Thai premier, Pridi Phanomyong was 23 July Peiping radio broadcast that he guest of honor at banquet of China Peace Committee.
 - A. Pridi, who worked underground with Allies in World War II, headed Thai government after Japan's defeat, vanished after 1947 coup lead by Thailand's present premier, Marshal Phibun. Whereabouts since 1947 obscure; often reported in China.
 - B. His Peiping reappearance quickly followed by 29 July byline in People's Daily. Article parroted Communist line, with usual nods to "peaceful coexistence," trade with "People's Democracies," great victory for "peace" in Indochina.
 - C. More important, piece violently condemned Thai government as "reactionary puppet" American imperialists, with whom plotting aggression. Thai people warned they "duty-bound" overthrow government, thereby restore Thailand's good name.

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II. Re-emergence Pridi appears important step in Peiping's intensified psychological campaign against pro-Western Phibun regime.

- A. Ultimate objective campaign: force present Thai government abandon West, accommodate to Communist power. If not, replace regime by one that will accommodate.
- B. However, doubtful Peiping thinks any present chance armed uprisings and return Pridi.
 - 1. Few Communist activists in Thailand, either Chinese or Thai.
 - 2. Anti-government groups, who not necessarily pro-Communist, been weakened, dispersed during Phibun's long tenure.

III. Peiping's sponsorship Pridi perhaps equally intended for effect on Colombo powers--particularly Burma.

- A. Contrast between Peiping's kind words for these "neutralists" and vitriolic attacks pro-Western Thailand obvious.
- B. Should have effect on leaders with latent SEATO sympathies.

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- IV. Pridi's reappearance in post-Geneva period well-calculated increase nervousness Thai regime.
- A. Thai leaders have irrational fear Pridi; have done all possible discredit him, suppress followers.
 - B. Reaction to Pridi article frenzied: fresh round-up Pridi-ites; alert of armed forces;
 - C. Government spokesman termed article "first step" in Communist campaign conquest Thailand.
- V. Although Thai leaders publicly defend pro-Western orientation, indications private doubt over wisdom this policy.
- A. Before Indochina armistice, Premier Phibun's own newspaper warned West that Southeast Asia might accommodate to Communism unless given clear indication Western intent defend area.
 - B. USIA officials in Bangkok report that Thai leaders consider post-Geneva danger greater than ever.
 - C. Potentially influential Thai group has always doubted that US would come to defense Thailand in showdown.

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D. Danger some government leaders will come to share this view, since advocates of retreat to neutrality can argue Pridi's real or imagined threat to continued tenure ruling clique.