

THE BOWORADET REBELLION,1933

NATTAPOLL CHAICHING

Asst. Prof, Ph.D. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, SuanSunandhaRajabhatUniversity,Thailand.
Email: nattapoll.ch@ssru.ac.th

Abstract - The 1932 Siamese Revolution was a crucial turning point in 20th century Thai history. The revolution was changed the system of government in Siam from The Old regime - an absolute monarchy to The New Regime The constitutional monarchy. However, a serious royalist revolt broke out led by Prince Boworadet, who pro- the old regime. Also known as the Boworadet Rebellion.

Index Terms - The 1932 Siamese Revolution, Boworadet rebellion

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1932, People's Party carried out a revolution (overthrowing the absolute monarchy in Siam [1]) which was regarded as a crucial turning point 20th-century Thai history. After the establishment of a new regime, a series of counter-revolutionary crisis threatening the constitutional government. Democracy for Siam was, however, to be given to the people in installments. However ,Throughout the aftermath of The Siamese Revolution of June 24, 1932 the Counter-Revolution was began.

The Boworadet rebellion was royalist revolt broke out led by Prince Boworadet, who had been defense minister during the previous pro-royalist regime which was overthrown in 1932. Also known as the Boworadet Rebellion. The fighting lasted from October 11 to October 23, and resulted in the loyalist government forces defeating the rebels.

II. LITERATURE REVIEWS

The two perspectives on The Boworadet rebellion.

1) Traditional views

In general, The Boworadet rebellion was regarded as democratic movement to counter 1932 Siam Revolution. Most academics in 1970, ThawatMokarapong (1972) and ChaiananSamuthawanit. (1974) interpreted this movement was democratic movement. They assumed that government after the revolution was dictatorship hence the Boworadet movement was true democratic movement.The rebellion proclaimed that its armed struggle against the government was intended to establish real democracy in the country .

2) Revisionist views

Prince Boworadet's motives was generally regarded as royalist and reactionary. After , The 1932 Revolution the Royal Families and the Royalist were lost their all power . Revisionist view provided by NattapollChaiching(2010), a Political scientist from SuanSunandhaRajabhat University and Federico

Ferrara (2012), a Political scientist from Hongkong University, proposed that that the Royalist were the head of anti- democratic regime conspiracy. Based on verdict report of the special court of 1939 and witnesses' memoirs, Chaiching argues that they established a large anti-Revolution underground network, secret agents, assassins, military officers, civil servants and journalists- all of them loyal to the old regime. Chaiching defends the validity of the sources writing that royalist witnesses are more likely to tell truth as the political atmosphere at that time .

The formation of the rebellion.

The first political conflict between the royalists and aristocrats and the People's Party erupted in the following year over the government's proposed economic plan drafted by PridiPhanomyong, one of the promoters of the 1932 Coup and the famous leader of the civilian faction in the party. Essentially his economic plan called for the nationalization of land, labor and capital by the state in order to develop the country independently. The heated debate and subsequently strong opposition to the economic policy from the royalist group, particularly King Prajadhipok/ King Rama VII himself, resulted in a temporary exile of Pridi to Europe. Yet conflicts continued within the coalition government until the military faction of the People's Party seized the government and ousted the royalist-aristocrat group from positions in the government.

Further political struggles between these two major groups only resulted in the more violent and profound hatred and distrust between members of the two different social and political classes. The "Boworadet Rebellion".

Prince Boworadet(a German-educated minor member of the Royal Family, had been Minister of Defense and the Siamese Ambassador to France. He lost his positions following the Revolution of 1932. An ardent royalist, he was furious that anyone was allowed to sue the King. This added to his discontent of Phraya Phahon's coup against Phraya Manopakorn and his support of Pridi against the monarchy.The

Prince secretly plotted with Colonel Phraya Sri Sitthi Songkhram, commander of the Armed Forces of Bangkok, and other senior military officers to stage a coup d'état to unseat the government and replace it with a more traditional one. When the People's Party took over, the older right-wing military officers had been unceremoniously pushed out and replaced by younger coup members.

Another prominent counter-revolutionary leader was Phraya Sri Sitthi Songkhram, a former close friend of Phaya Phohon, who also received his military education in Germany. Like Prince Boworadet, he also refused to join the 1932 revolution, but he anticipated his revolutionary friends would appoint him to an important position in the new regime as his good educational background and high stature among army officers would help the promoters in strengthening the revolution. Much to his disappointment, he only got a minor position in the Ministry of Education. Later, he was appointed to the Directory of Military Operations after the four military leaders were expelled by the coup carried out by Phraya Manopakorn. However, the second coup soon took over Phraya Manopakorn's government, Phraya Sri Sitthi Songkhram subsequently became the bitter enemy of the new government. In the rebellion, he was assigned the task of inciting the Ayudhya garrison and Boworadet's second-in-command.

Early in October 1933, Prince Boworadet had appeared in Korat to mobilize the armies to rebel. He soon took complete control of Korat and got positive responses from other provinces. The central government had sensed the political storms in the provinces, but was trapped by the antagonistic elements in Bangkok. Bangkok started military preparations for the upcoming insurrection. Businesses and organizations offered money and volunteer services to help the defense. On 11 October 1933, under the leadership of Prince Boworadet, a full-scale rebellion broke out at the provincial garrison at Khorat. The garrisons of Nakhon Ratchasima, Ubon Ratchathani, Prachinburi, Saraburi, Ayutthaya, Nakhon Sawan, and Phetburi one after another declared themselves in favor of the rebellion against the Bangkok government. They issued their first ultimatum calling on the government to resign immediately or be removed by force on the same day. The legitimate government in Bangkok refused to comply with their demands. The first clash occurred on 11 October 1933 at Amphoe Pak Chong, in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The government forces were defeated and several members of the government were captured.

On 12 October, troops from the northeast of the country marched on Bangkok, seized the Don Muang airport, and entered the northern suburbs, occupied the area around Bang Khen. The rebels consisting of

the Korat, Phetchaburi, and Udon Regiments, together with a cavalry unit and several artillery batteries set up a stronghold near the Lak Si train station, using machine guns and cavalry.

On the afternoon of 13 October, Prince Boworadet sent another ultimatum to the government because they feared the people would establish the republic in Siam. The rebel leaders backed down from their original strong demand for government to resign because they found some important armies in the provinces failed to march to Bangkok and all the armies in Bangkok remained loyal to the government. The second ultimatum presents the following demands: 1) The Country shall be headed by the King forever 2) All State affairs must be carried out in accordance with the Constitution, especially the appointment and removal of a member of the Council of Ministers, which can only be made by a majority of votes 3) Permanent public officials, both civil and military, shall not intervene in politics 4) The appointment of public officials shall be made with regard to qualifications, without political partiality 5) The second type (non-elected) of the people's representatives shall be appointed by the King (as opposed to the Prime Minister) 6) Armaments for the Army shall be provided everywhere, not gathered in any specific area and 7) Amnesty shall be granted to the National Rescue Council and all its supporters.

With the situation turning in the government's favor, the government was unwilling to compromise with the insurgents. Phraya Phahon, in his radio speech, revealed the King's telegram expressing his regret for the rebels' action to appeal for popular support, which got a warm response.

Civil war at Bangkok.

The government appointed Lieutenant Colonel Luang Phibulsonggram, one of the 1932 coup makers, to command the Bangkok forces and take charge in the speedy defeat of the rebels. On the 13 October, Phibun launched a counterattack. He opened a heavy artillery attack on the rebels' positions. Phibun's artillery forces were better supplied than the exhausted rebels. And they were supported in a non-combat capacity by Boy Scouts, students, and labourers. For the next three days the two opposing parties shelled each other, causing many casualties and great damage. These were supported by an armoured car and a tank commanded by Phibun's friend, Lieutenant Colonel Luang Amnuai Songkhram (Thom Kesakom), who would later be killed in combat. The government was able to drive the rebels with the help of the Nakhon Sawan Regiment and a declaration of the Prachinburi Regiment in support of the government and joined the fight. This broke the rebels' morale, and on 14 October they began to retreat. On the afternoon of the 16 October, the government forces recaptured

the Don Muang Airport on the outskirts of the city and drove the rebel troops to retreat along the northeastern railway line. Much destruction was done to the infrastructure of Bangkok (railways and bridges) and the surrounding area, including the Don Mueang Aerodrome from artillery bombardment, bombings and fire.

On their desperate way to escape, the rebels sent an empty locomotive down the track at top speed to collide with the government troop carrier. The resultant crash killed a number of government soldiers and gave the rebels time to reach their base in Khorat (Nakhon Ratchasima Province). The government with superior forces (heavy artillery having been moved in by rail) was able to attack the rebel stronghold. Running out of ammunition and supplies, the rebels broke. Government forces pursued and advanced to the rebel base in Nakhon Ratchasima. By the end of the October, the rebellion finally wound down in the provinces with the possibility of further reinforcement by other provincial garrisons. On 23 October, the government forces seriously defeated the rebel forces at the jungle of Hin Lap, and Boworadet's second-in-command, Phaya Sri Sithi Songkram, died in the battle.

Defeat of the rebellion and aftermath.

By the end of October, the remnants dispersed, and the royalist rebellion was over. The government broadcast a radio appeal to rebel troops to surrender and offered a ten thousand baht reward for the capture of Prince Boworadet. On 25 October Prince Boworadet and his wife suddenly boarded an aeroplane and left Siam for Vietnam (then part of French Indochina). When the news of his escape was known, Phya Sena Songgram and other important leaders, now approaching Buriram province, became greatly disheartened and fled. Twenty-two officers managed to flee the country and find asylum in French Indo-China.

Most of the rebel forces surrendered and granted amnesty except for important rebel leaders. Twenty-three lives had been lost in actions. The People's Party arrested the stragglers and eventually jailed 230 people including Prince Boworadet's younger brother, Prince Sinthiphorn. Two retired senior military officers were tired and executed. A royal prince was sentenced to life imprisonment. These later were sentenced to death, but later all the sentences were commuted, and no executions took place. Most sentences were later reduced and many were pardoned completely. Prince Boworadet received asylum in Cambodia, where he lived until 1948. He then returned home to Thailand, dying in 1953 at the age of 76.

Phraya Phahol's Government was able to further cement their grip on power. Although no direct

evidence that Prajadhipok ever supported the rebellion, the result was nevertheless a blow to the King, as the rebels had claimed to be fighting in his name. The King's lack of leadership and indecisiveness showed when he only released a telegram saying that he regretted the strife and civil disturbances that occurred, he and the Queen then left the capital for Songkla leaving the Government to deal with the rebellion. During this time he also failed to support his constitutional Government, which undermined his credibility and his perceived commitment to democracy and the constitutional system. This gave Phraya Phahol and the King's opponents reason to point that the monarchy has failed to do his duty. The series of events following the rebellion eventually led to the King's abdication in 1935. The rebellion also led to the estrangement of the aristocratic factions and families, which has served the Kingdom for centuries. They were viewed with distrust and would never again regained their power and position in Thai politics.

The People's Party had crushed the counter-revolution at the expense of Revolution's democratic potential. The promoters relied on a host of repressive measures to stave off the royalist challenge to the constitutional regime and in the immediate aftermath placed Siam onto the track to military dictatorship. The government then could arrest dissents in the excuse of their involvement in conspiracies against government. The press was controlled and a draconian "Act to protect the constitution" criminalised public expressions of disrespect for the constitution or the constitutional regime.

Pridi and his economic plan might be one of the reasons causing the turmoil. The accusation of him as a communist, the divided of the People's party and the first coup along with the rebellion squeezed his political power. The liberal and socialist civilian faction was weakened. Phahon's supporters won a clear mandate in the national elections. Ironically, absolute monarchy was eventually replaced by an military regime.

The rebellion was also seen as the beginning of the meteoric rise of a player in the rebellion. Lieutenant Colonel Luang Phibulsonggram, who became a hero. He became minister of defense in early 1934. Phibun gradually weakened his enemies and eventually eliminated them. He also built up his political constituency in the army forces. He replaced Phraya Phahon as Prime Minister from 1938–1944, and served again from 1948 to 1957. He is the longest serving Prime Minister in Thai history.

However, royalists suffered a serious setback, the democratic image of King was largely intact in the long term. Based on the easily obtained sources, one

can hardly portray the figure of King Prajadhipok in too negative a light. Only by examining some revisionist resources, the disputed role he played in a series of events will come out. Because the revolutionary government turned into a military dictatorship, King's dissatisfaction with the promoters, his verbal attack of the government and his democratic rhetoric in the abdication statement earned him a democratic credibility.

Last but not least, King Prajadhipok's role in the Boworadet Rebellion is still somewhat controversial among scholars. Some historians even did not mention the King's role in the rebellion other than the neutral standpoint he took at the beginning of the rebellion and the regret he expressed when the rebellion was quelled. Others took a much sympathetic view on King Prajadhipok's predicament during the rebellion.

CONCLUSION

The Siamese Revolution of June 24, 1932. The People's Party carried out a revolution (overthrowing the absolute monarchy in Siam,) which was regarded as a crucial turning point 20th-century Thai history. After the establishment of a new regime, The Boworadet rebellion - a series of anti-democracy crisis threatening the constitutional government. fighting lasted from October 11 to 23 October, and resulted in the loyalist forces defeating as the rebels.

REFERENCES

- [1] Barmé, Scott. (1933). **Luang Wichit Wathakan and the creation of a Thai identity**. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- [2] Baker, Christ and Pasuk Phongpaichit. (2014). **A history of Thailand**. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- [3] Batson, Benjamin. (1986). **The end of the absolute monarchy in Siam**. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- [4] Chaianan Samuthawanit. (1974). **14 October : People Party And Boworadet rebellion**. Bangkok: History Circle Faculty of Arts Chulalongkorn.
- [5] Charnvit Kasetsiri. (2008). **A Political History of Thailand-Siam 1932-1957**. Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbook Project.
- [6] Federico, Ferrara. (2012). The legend of King Prajadhipok: Tall tales and stubborn facts on the seventh reign in Siam, **Journal of Southeast Asian Studies**, 43(1).
- [7] Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian. (2003). **Kings, Country and Constitutions: Thailand's political Development 1932-2000**, Routledge Curzon, London.
- [8] Mardarath Suksanga and Nattapoll Chaiching (2016) **Boworadet Rebellion 1933: The First Civil War in Thailand and Its Effects**. Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
- [9] Mokrapong, Thawat. (1972). **History of the Thai Revolution**, Bangkok: Chalermnit.
- [10] Nakharin Mektrairat. (2003). **Khwamkhithkwamrulea amnat kanmueang naikan patiwat Siam 2475**. Bangkok: FaDiew Kan.
- [11] Nattapoll Chaiching. (2010). The Monarchy and the Royalist Movement in Modern Thai Politics, 1932-1957, **Saying the unsayable: monarchy and democracy**. Sorren Ivasson and Lotte Isager (eds.), (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Copenhagen University).
- [12] Natapoll Chaiching. (2013). 'Phra Pokklaokap "Kabot Boworadet": 80 pi khong kankok abot to tan prachathippatai' [King Prajadhipok and the Boworadet Rebellion: 80 years of the counter-democracy] *Silpawattanatum*, Year 34, Vol. 12 (October), pp.112-129.
- [13] Terwiel, Barend Jan. (2011). **Thailand's political history**. Bangkok: River Books.
- [14] Yatabe, Yasukichi. (2007). **Kanpati watlaekan plian plaeng naiprathet Siam: Banthuekkhong thutyipunphu hen het kanpati wat 2475 [The revolution and changes in Siam: Memoir of the Japanese ambassador who witnessed the 1932 Revolution]**, trans. Eiji Murasima and Nakharin Mektrairat, Bangkok: Maticchon.

