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Attention MRS TROMBLY
Keep this study together.

HI

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Washington, D.C. 20520

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December 20, 1972

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: New Thai Constitution and Government

The attached paper on the New Thai Constitution and Government was prepared for the Secretary by the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs.

P.Bradley for
Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.
Executive Secretary

Attachment:

As stated.

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New Thai Constitution Promulgated and Government Formed

After 13 months of provisional rule, featured by numerous premature reports that a new constitution was about to be proclaimed, Thailand's National Executive Council (NEC) has finally acted. Following NEC recommendations, on December 15 the King promulgated an interim constitution and appointed a 299-man National Assembly containing only one member (the Speaker) from the elected pre-November 1971 Parliament. On December 15 a 27-member Cabinet was announced, with Field Marshal Kittikachorn (who has served as head of government without interruption since 1963) as Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and of Foreign Affairs, General Praphat Charusathian as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, and the remaining positions allocated to the military officers and civilian bureaucrats who have controlled the country for many years. Although there have been some promotions (for example, Prasit Kanchanawat, advisor to the Thai ping pong team which went to Peking, becomes Minister of Commerce, having been a Deputy Minister in the last Cabinet), all those appointed are reasonably well known.

Domestic Situation. Power remains fully centralized in the hands of Thanom and Praphat as leaders of the Thai Army, and the new Constitution gives somewhat greater powers to the Executive than did the previous one. The power relationship between Thanom and Praphat appears to have reverted, at least on paper, to pre-NEC proportions. Constitutional government and a parliament have been restored and provide an essential first step for a return to an elected legislature, if and when the

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leadership permit such an evolution--which will probably not occur for two to three years at the earliest. We expect the Thai public, which enjoys relative prosperity and civil freedom, to take the transformation calmly; by all available signs, the Thai government continues to function in most respects with the consent of the governed. The fact that the new Cabinet is composed of familiar faces indicates that the leadership remain unwilling to signal any new approach to the succession problem (Thanom is 61 and Praphat 60).

Foreign Policy Implications. With the top political leadership continuing on, we anticipate no change in the basic tenets of Thai foreign policy. Thailand's two foreign affairs personalities enjoying international reputations have, however, left the scene: Pote Sarasin removed himself as a possible minister on personal grounds while Thanat Khoman, forced out when the NEC abolished the Cabinet last year, finds himself excluded from the Cabinet because he was appointed a member of the new Parliament (the new Constitution, like the previous one, excludes simultaneous membership in Cabinet and Parliament). The new Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Brigadier Chatichai Chunawan, recently returned from 14 years abroad as an undistinguished Ambassador, and is generally considered to be incapable of gaining the personal prestige or providing the policy articulation which Pote and Thanat contributed in the past.

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