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Contents:

INTRODUCTION

SIGNIFICANCE

CHARTCHAI AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY

EARLY CAREER

LATER CAREER

PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES

ULTIMATE CAREER POTENTIAL

INR/OIL 8 Info noted
RS/R File fcf

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INTRODUCTION

Brigadier General Chartchai Chunhawan, the golden boy of the Pibul Songkhram era who was exiled abroad as a Thai Ambassador after the 1957 coup, has now re-emerged as a prominent figure in Thai ruling circles. His new position as Deputy Foreign Minister does not make him a member of the inner circle of power holders at this time; however, it should provide him opportunity to renew and develop relationships which will enable him to move on to bigger things when the present top leaders pass the reins over in the next few years.

Chartchai's return to Thailand to become Director General of the Political Department in the Foreign Ministry in September 1972 seems to stem from three main factors: (1) he had done an extremely capable job as Thai ambassador in six different posts (some concurrently) during the previous fifteen years; (2) he is quite close to Thanom and also Thanom's wife, Thanphuying Chongkol Kittikachorn, who has a long standing family friendship with Chartchai's family; (3) before the November 1971 National Executive Council (NEC) take-over, Sanga Kittikachorn, brother of the Prime Minister, Chartchai's Military Academy classmate, and then Deputy Foreign Minister, was trying to effect Chartchai's appointment as Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, probably hoping to make use of Chartchai's influence with the military to improve his own power base. Then Foreign Minister Thanat is believed to have blocked that appointment, but later to have agreed to Chartchai's assignment as Director General of the Political Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Subsequent to the announcement of his appointment came the "coup" of November 1971. Thereafter, months passed during which his arrival was repeatedly postponed and rescheduled, and the impression grew that General Praphat feared him as a potential rival and was blocking his return. Finally, however, he did arrive to take the job in September 1972.

Chartchai was tapped to be Deputy Foreign Minister in December 1972 in part because other more obvious candidates such as Pote Sarasin and Sunthorn Hongladarom were unavailable, but also in part because Chartchai had turned in a highly creditable job as Director General of the Political Department, undertaking several important missions abroad and generally giving the Department an importance it had never had under Thanat's regime. The choice may also have

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reflected the desire of the senior military leaders of the country to have one of their own kind in effective control of the Foreign Ministry, after suffering so long the intellectual arrogance of Thanat Khoman. Once Thanom had decided to keep the Foreign Affairs portfolio himself, he needed someone vigorous to carry out his policies while he devoted the major part of his time to other matters. There is also a report that shortly before he died Chartchai's father, Field Marshal Phin Chunhawan, asked Thanom to give Chartchai the Deputy Foreign Minister job. Phin, although out of active politics for many years, could as organizer of the 1947 coup and grand old man among Thai Army officers, influence Thanom and Praphat, especially the former.

Although Sanga Kittikachorn was instrumental in initiating Chartchai's return, he has more than once criticized Chartchai's performance in press interviews. Dropped from the Cabinet after the November 1971 coup, Sanga may feel bitterness toward Chartchai for replacing him (and obviously outshining him in influence and achievements). Sanga is virtually without political significance at present although he would probably become of some importance again at such time as an elected parliament is reestablished.

Chartchai has long been considered friendly toward Americans, which reputation seems well borne out in our present relations with him and in his administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Chartchai reportedly paints well and apparently is a competent jazz pianist. He also enjoys tennis, golf, riding and hunting. He speaks excellent English, Spanish, French and also some German. His wife, Boonruan, studied in Paris and is fluent in English as well as French. Chartchai has two children. The eldest, Kraisak, a son, is studying abroad, and a married daughter, Wanee, lives in Thailand.

SIGNIFICANCE

Chartchai has several credentials for eventual membership in a future inner circle leadership clique. According to some of Chartchai's confidential assistants in the Foreign Ministry, Chartchai has the complete confidence of Thanom and most of the other top leadership with the exception of Praphat, and is influential in forming government thinking on foreign policy matters. It has been reported over the years that Praphat has considered Chartchai

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something of a rival and was the one who kept him abroad in political limbo for so long. Recent conversations indicate that Chartchai still does not have Praphat's confidence to the same extent as he has Thanom's. This could cause Chartchai some real, and potentially fatal, career problems as the accession to power of the next echelon leaders takes place. If Thanom leaves active political life some time before Praphat does, the latter may severely reduce Chartchai's influence during this interim period, and beyond. If, however, Krit Sivara retains a prominent place in the top power grouping, and especially if he should ultimately rise to one of the very top positions, Chartchai is likely to fare much better.

Chartchai is considered to be close to the Royal Family, especially the Princess Mother who is an aunt of his wife. It is probable that Chartchai was assigned to Switzerland, where the Princess Mother spends much of her time, because of this association. Chartchai was also once a military aide-de-camp to His Majesty.

In terms of family, Chartchai has considerable credentials. He is the son of the late Field Marshal Phin Chunhawan, Commander-in-Chief of the Army under Pibul Songkhram, and his sister is the widow of the late Police General Phao Sriyanond, the former Director General of National Police who was deposed by Sarit in the 1957 coup. He is also a brother-in-law of General Pramarn Adireksarn, President of the Thai Industry Association and of the Thai Textile Manufacturers Association. However, with the exception of his close association with Thanom, his family connections tie him in with the previous generation of top leadership, not with today's power brokers.

Various Embassy contacts have described Chartchai as "still popular" among the military and said he has "military backing" for his present post. He is a close friend of General Krit Sivara, Deputy Commander of the Royal Thai Army, who presently also Minister of Industry. General Krit has told us he saved Chartchai from a worse fate (undisclosed) than his ambassadorial exile when the latter wound up on the wrong side of the 1957 coup. Chartchai is also a classmate and long-time friend of General Kriangsak Chomanan, Deputy Chief of Staff of Supreme Command Headquarters (Forward).

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Still, it must be remembered that Chartchai was out of the Army and out of Thailand for fifteen years which means that he certainly lost touch with the Army. Many of his classmates at the military academy are still his close friends, and certainly he has some influence with these men. However, after fifteen years of exile he would know very few of the middle level and junior officers, and is not likely to have any military backing from officers much younger than his classmates and contemporaries.

CHARTCHAI AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY

When Chartchai was first appointed Deputy Minister in December, he attempted to continue the Under Secretary of State's (and under NEC rule the de facto head of the Ministry) method of having policy ideas staffed out in the substantive divisions of the Ministry and sent up to him for approval. We now hear that he has found the Ministry's product deficient and that he has reverted at least in part to Thanat Khoman's old approach of depending chiefly on a select group of bright young men in and near his immediate office. However, the group that Chartchai relies on is much larger than that which customarily served Thanat. They are also considerably more independent intellectually and operationally, and more influential on Chartchai's thinking, than Thanat ever allowed his immediate staff to be. Chief among these is Asa Sarasin (Pote's son), who is Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

EARLY CAREER

Chartchai was born on April 5, 1922 in Bangkok, Thailand, and was educated at Wat Thepsirin School before entering the Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy in 1937. Following his graduation from the academy in 1940, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Army and was shortly thereafter assigned as a platoon leader in the First Royal Horse Guards of the First Cavalry Battalion.

Chartchai's first involvement in Thai power politics came in the coup d'etat of 1947 when he commanded the tanks of the First Cavalry Battalion in support of the coup that ultimately restored Pibul Songkhram to power. At that time, he was a member of the faction within the coup group headed by his brother-in-law, General Phao Sriyanond.

In 1948 he toured Europe and then went to the United States where he attended the U.S. Army Armored School at Fort Knox. One of his instructors was then Colonel Creighton

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Abrams. Chartchai himself jokes that he missed so many classes, because of playing around, that the Commandant's office called him in and asked what his next assignment was going to be. When he said he was going to be Assistant Military Attache in the Thai Embassy in Washington, D.C., they allowed him to continue. Chartchai then attended the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. Following his graduation he was named Assistant Military Attache at the Thai Embassy in Washington, D.C. He returned to Bangkok in 1950 and was appointed Assistant Commandant of the Royal Thai Army Armored School. Later he was appointed Deputy Commander of the Second Armored Regiment, stationed in Bangkok, and in 1952 was in addition appointed Chief of the Liaison Officer of the Ministry of Defense to MAAG. In 1954 he was made Commander of the Second Cavalry Regiment (Armored).

In 1955, Chartchai was relieved of his important troop command at the Second Armored Regiment (apparently part of Sarit Thanarat's maneuvering against Phao) and was named Commandant of the Royal Thai Army Armored School.

During this period Chartchai held several political posts and assignments. He was an appointed member of the National Assembly from 1951-1957. In 1953 he was Chief of the Thai delegation to the joint committee concerned with the evacuation of the Nationalist Chinese troops from Burma. For his efforts, he received a decoration from the Burmese government in May 1957. In 1954 and again in 1956 Chartchai visited the U.S. as a member of military missions. Chartchai was also designated to attend the London Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting in London in 1957, but Pibul told him to stay in Bangkok because of the tense political situation.

Following the 1957 coup, Chartchai was relieved of his positions as Armored School Commandant and member of the National Assembly. He was also relieved of a potentially lucrative government post he had held for only a few weeks, that of Managing Director of the state-owned Express Transport Organization.

LATER CAREER

Following the September 1957 coup during which Sarit and his followers ousted Pibul, Phao and the others, Chartchai was posted to Buenos Aires in April 1958 as Counselor of the Thai Legation and Charge d'Affairs.

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Thai/Argentine relations were raised to Minister level before he departed for his post, and Chartchai was promoted to Minister. In February 1961 he was made the first Thai Ambassador to Argentina.

In June 1963 he was transferred to Vienna as Ambassador, and in late 1965 was made concurrently Ambassador to Turkey. While serving in Vienna, he was Thai Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency and was also Thailand's alternate governor on the IAEA Board of Governors. In this capacity he visited the Oak Ridge, Tennessee nuclear laboratories in April 1966. In August 1970 he was named Ambassador concurrently to the Vatican. In 1971 Chartchai moved to Switzerland as Ambassador, and was concurrently accredited to Yugoslavia as well as the Vatican. His return to Thailand in 1972 is discussed in the introductory section above.

PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES

Chartchai is a man of considerable quickness of mind, poise and perceptiveness. At times it is difficult to get him to focus on what we consider to be the core of the problem at hand, although this may be at least in part evasive tactics by Chartchai. He has great energy, drive, ambition, and organizational ability, sufficient to make him capable of handling any job he might get in the future.

In the pre-1957 period, Chartchai was regarded as a potential Prime Minister of the future. He was extremely popular within the military. He is described by some as having been the "Narong Kittikachorn of sixteen years ago", both in his ambition, his heir apparent role, and in his boisterious rowdiness as a young officer who was a law unto himself. Like Narong, he is said to have been especially rough on any police officers who were so unwise as to interfere with the men in his command.

After his fifteen year exile he is more settled and mature, though he remains an intense, sometimes impulsive man who prefers direct action to drifting with the crowd or doing nothing. He is a great talker, but not always a particularly attentive listener. He seems at times to be thinking more about what he is going to say next than about what is being said to him.

While Chartchai gained considerable diplomatic experience as a Thai Ambassador abroad, until September 1972 he had never worked in the Ministry. There have been

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indications that he can be excessively impatient at times and may not always know when to wait out issues when action may be inappropriate.

General Krit Sivara once mentioned to us that he had advised Chartchai, "Slow down a bit. You are no longer commanding a tank unit. You are a diplomat now." On the other hand, Chartchai's propensity to take initiatives has energized the Foreign Ministry considerably, and in some cases he has contributed positively to Thai foreign policy goals.

His trips to all of Thailand's contiguous neighbors and to most other Southeast Asian countries have furthered Thai foreign policy objectives. His initiatives vis-a-vis Burma, culminating in the recent Ne Win visit to Thailand, have been particularly productive.

Today, even though he has been completely out of military affairs for fifteen years, Chartchai maintains his military associations both here and among his classmates at military schools abroad, principally in the United States. During General Alexander Haig's recent visit to Bangkok, he and Chartchai reminisced expansively on their respective days at Fort Knox. Chartchai has also maintained his interest in the Thai Army, and in several recent conversations has criticized what he considers to be its inadequacies.

ULTIMATE CAREER POTENTIAL

We tend to agree with the bright young officers that now work with Chartchai in the Ministry who believe that his future goes well beyond being Deputy Foreign Minister, and probably even beyond holding the Foreign Minister's portfolio. We believe he aspires to be Prime Minister.

Despite his fifteen years in political exile, Chartchai has retained his friendships in the military, especially among his classmates in the prestigious and increasingly powerful Military Academy class of 1940. These include Lt. General Serm Na Nakhon, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army; Lt. General Saiyud Kerdphol, Director of the Communist Suppression Operations Command and Assistant Chief of Staff for Personnel of the Army; Lt. General Chalat Hiransiri, Commandant of the Institute of Army

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Academies and a political activist in Praphat's camp; and police Lt. General Suraphon Chullaphram, Commissioner of the Border Patrol Police. He has not, however, been able to maintain the patron/client net among troop commanders and other younger, middle level officers of the kind needed to exercise power as Thanom, Praphat and Krit do.

In addition to his military and family connections, Chartchai is extremely wealthy, having apparently been the principal inheritor of the very substantial economic empire (though diminished after the coup of 1957) established during the Pibul Songkhram era by the so-called Phin-Phao clique. While details of Chartchai's business associations are not known to us, evidence available suggests that he is not a member of the network of business associations which knit together the top leaders of the post-Pibul era. However, the fact of his wealth remains and will continue to be a great asset to him in building his political future.

Bearing these factors in mind, our best estimate is that Chartchai will top off his career as an important, influential cabinet minister, fulfilling a civilian rather than a military function, much in the nature of Pote Sarasin, or in the past of Thanat Khoman. He seems unlikely ever to achieve power equal to that Thanom, Praphat or Krit now hold. However, with Chartchai's credentials and capabilities he remains in the Embassy view a potential candidate for selection by the present leaders to succeed to the Prime Ministership, presiding over and sharing power with military men closer to troop commanders than Chartchai.

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