THAILAND:
SONGS FOR LIFE
SUNG BY CARAVAN

Songs of the peasant, student and worker struggle for democratic rights


เพลงเพื่อชีวิต

โดย

คาราวาน

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ABOUT CARAVAN & THE ORIGINS OF THE POLITICAL SONG MOVEMENT

Since 1958, Thailand was ruled by a one-man military dictatorship under Sarit Thanarat. When he died in 1963, a triumvirate of his henchmen took over and further consolidated their rule. Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn was elevated to the dual posts of Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. He placed his son, Narong Kittikachorn, in command of the committee charged with "uncovering corruption," which could be translated as "fund-raising and blackmail committee" if one were to call it by its primary function. Narong's father-in-law, Prapap Jarusathien, was given the post of Minister of the Interior, with complete control over 250,000 armed police, in effect a private army. This position also gave him control of the border guard and the power to appoint all provincial governors.

Under this avaricious and brutal dictatorship, the Thai peasantry was oppressed and exploited almost to the breaking point, along with the workers and anyone else not part of the ruling class. For ten years, until October of 1973, the people chafed under these intolerable conditions, not daring to protest because of the tight controls over all forms of expression. But at last the student movement became organized and took on new forms, still technically legal, and to pressure them with an end to the ruling clique. First however, they took up issues which could help build a mass base for their work.

A student-led struggle which touched the entire population was launched during the so-called "energy crisis" which shook the world during the early '70s. The Thanom regime announced that because of the rise in oil prices the fares on buses would be doubled, meaning that people would spend a minimum of 2 baht per day just going to school. At the time, $1.00 = 20 baht, and the average daily wage for workers was 10 baht, or 50 cents. Rallies were illegal, so leaflets and posters, seminars and newsletters were among the methods used to mount the campaign.

In a country with the sharp class divisions of Thailand, to be a student means that one has been born either into the bourgeoisie, the petite bourgeoisie or the civil employee class, since student's out-of-pocket expenses alone each day average two times the daily income of most workers. But because they are exposed to new ideas at the universities, outside the direct control of their families for the first time, and in a relatively mobile and privileged position in society, students in Thailand as in many countries have often found themselves on the cutting edge of sweeping movements for change. Thus, when the bus fare campaign met with success and the proposed increase was cancelled, the student movement awakened to find itself in a new position of credibility, with many new contacts and ties to other important sectors of the population. They began to feel a new kind of strength.

The student-led boycott against Japanese goods, organized in 1972 by Thiyayud Boonme and others, which brought the student movement further into the center of things. For some time, the standard practice of Japanese manufacturers was to send Thai-produced raw materials to Japan for manufacture and then sell them in Thailand as Japanese products. This was seen as a threat to the livelihood of many Thai workers, and to the continued existence of many small manufacturers. A movement was launched to "Buy Thai," which helped build further bridges between the student movement on the one hand and the workers and petite bourgeoisie on the other. This process would prove invaluable in the building of a national liberation front. It also gave the students important experience in a basic economic struggle touching many sectors of the people. Interestingly, the present secretary of the Central Committee of the CCPDF (Co-ordinating Committee of Patriotic and Democratic Forces), which is the umbrella group uniting the Thai Communist Party, Socialist Party and many peasant, worker and intellectual organizations in the liberation struggle, is this same Thiyayud Boonme.

When a group of students at Ramkamhaeng University launched a criticism against the military dictatorship of Kittikachorn some time later, they were immediately expelled from school. In response, the student body demanded the expulsion of the dean who had punished the protesters. Two of the students who mobilized this movement were Surachat Jantimat and Virasak Suntornsi, the founders of Caravan. Later, after a period of a few days, this movement escalated into an uprising which led to the deposition of Thanom Kittikachorn on October 14, 1973.

After the uprising, the king appointed a caretaker government to run the country until elections could be held. For the first time, funds were authorized to "orient the Thai people to the democratic form of government." Hundreds of students, including many who had spearheaded the uprising, were sent to the remote countryside to "familiarize the villagers" with the idea of the upcoming elections as well as with the new constitution being drafted in Bangkok which (it was hoped) would guarantee a better life. The guitars of Surachat and Virasak enlivened many of the gatherings held for this purpose.

As students fanned out over the countryside, spending weeks in villages helping farmers reap and thresh the rice harvest, they carried their idealism and energy with them. For many, this was a new experience which taught them a great deal and helped put a firmer footing under their political ideas. At the end of the long work day, it was the farmer's turn to learn—about the real reasons for the low price of rice, about the difference between the meaning of democracy for the students and for the military clique, and about events in other parts of the country and the world. The gap between student and farmer was a wide one, and often both felt awkward and reticent as they huddled over the evening campfires.

Sometimes one of the students would begin to sing, as a way of overcoming his shyness. "This village is ours, it is very old, and has been here a long, long time..." and the other students would join in "We never saw very much, never went to school, never learned to read or to write, but we worked hard." As the distinctions blurred, some of the country people would rock themselves to the music or hum along. The sense of trust deepened. "Rice fields, full of nothing but sand, always lacking fish and rice. How many thousands more suffer as we do?"

One song ended, another began. So it would continue, until in a moment of silence a farmer might haltingly offer some words acknowledging acceptance of the students. "These songs you sing," one farmer might say, "they talk about us."

New songs were composed to reflect the conditions of the farmers and the stage of their struggle at that time. These songs were: "Nok See Luang (Yellow Bird)" memorializing the heroic people who sacrificed their lives during the recent uprising; "Kon Gap Kwai (Man and Buffalo)" describing the antagonistic relationship between the farmers and their most indispensable equipment, the water buffalo, while condemning the exploitation of the farmers themselves by the bourgeoisie; and "San Saeng Tong (Unite Our Force)" urging people to struggle together in unity. (The first two can be heard on this record.)

Two of the leading activists in this work were Surachat and Virasak. Both were under the influence of Bangkok's westernized atmosphere at first. Surachat Jantimat is a native of Surin Province, the son of a school teacher and formerly a student at Silapakorn University. Virasak Suntornsi was born in Nakorn Rachasima Province* but was a fourth-year law student living an urban life until plunged into political-cultural work. Both were nonprofessionals who, like many of their generation, learned from musical films, juke boxes and nightclub performers catering to the hundreds of thousands of American GIs and civilians brought to

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* Nakorn Rachasima is known to American GIs as Korat Base. Some of the heaviest air attacks on Vietnam were made from the giant U.S. Air Force Base located there.
that part of the world by the wars raging in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. These two, however, remained in particular to the anti-war and satirical songs of Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Arlo Guthrie and Pete Seeger.

In February of 1974 they accompanied a group of students to the northeast, where for the first time they brought their songs to a rural audience. By August they were joined by two progressive students from the Northeastern Vocational School. One of them was Tonggraen Thanaa, a former fourth-year student in the Arts Department, a founder of the United Artists of Thailand, and the Cultural United Front. The other was Ponngoy Krudonchamnan, who, like Tonggraen, was from Nakorn Rachasima Province. Another new member was Monkhon Uotok, a native of Roi-et Province and graduate of the University of Technical Arts (who was also an organizer of the Nasai Village incident). All three had long exposure to poverty, disease, illiteracy, superstition and low social position of the Thai peasantry, having grown up in the northeastern section where these conditions are most prevalent. They were ready for anything that might help change the situation.

Now the group had a new name, Caravan, and it began to travel through the country, bringing songs to the masses while at the same time learning from them. The newer members of the group helped bring a clearer conception and more solid insight into the function of people's art, and this significantly sharpened their work. Another important development was the addition of native musical forms and instruments to the western sounds, which created a synthesis of music like which could express both the blood and tears of the peasants and the contradictions of the workers and students in a foreign-dominated city life.

Caravan's courageous response to the repressive and unjust Thai society helped awaken the people's political conscience, and the group became an indispensable part of political gatherings. A more intensified repression which came toward the end of 1974 forced their political level to rise and their songs to become more revolutionary. Where first they sang of the frustration and poverty of the villagers in songs like "Word from the Villages," the hunting down and killing of many leaders of the progressive forces gave birth to songs like "Ten Murdered Gives Birth to Millions." Not only did they expose the roots of Thailand's rotten society but they urged the masses to consolidate their forces to struggle for a free country in which all would be equal and where goods would be fairly distributed.

Thailand's three year respite from military dictatorship ended on October 6, 1976 at Thammasat University, where students gathered to protest the return to Thailand of former dictator Field Mar-

shall Thanan Kittikachorn. More than two hundred students were slaughtered on the Bangkok campus that morning, and some 3,000 people were arrested. They were packed into prison cells so densely that they had to sleep sitting up. By evening, the civilian government was ousted and martial law declared. As night wore on, the government radio issued a series of military decrees.

Some sense of the power and influence of the left literary and musical expression which flourished during the three year period of relative democracy can be felt from the fact that Decree #5 outlawed "all documents and printed material giving news items which create distrust, lead people to communism and undermine national security." (Decree #6 outlawed all political parties.) In spite of the ban, all that night and for the days and weeks ahead, students crammed into prison cells defied the junta and sang the "Songs for Life." The military junta correctly perceived that these songs are dangerous to it. Unlike most of the Bangkok-based political parties, the songs had been able to penetrate throughout the country and into the peasant culture. Attuned to the bitter struggles of the people in their many forms, these songs formed a bridge of understanding between the urban middle-class student activists and the peasants, and they served as a vehicle for political education and discussion.

With the bloody coup, all hope for a peaceful struggle for social change was dashed for the Thai masses. On the very day of the coup, the members of Caravan were carrying out their work, singing at the Khon Kaen University in the northeast. After the concert they disbanded quickly and disappeared into the night, taking with them their guitars and their convictions with them. All their songs, along with those of the other musical/political groups, were immediately banned from the official radio.

Until that time, Caravan's songs had described the harsh conditions of life in Thailand and condemned the presence of U.S. military, exposing the negative role of U.S. economic and cultural intervention. Their songs spoke of repression and exploitation while they tried to offer courage and hope of a better day. From these harrowing times, their songs became "Red Youth." Now Caravan had a program, and "Songs for Life" had entered a new stage.

The Songs for Life have changed. No longer the rousing and hopeful songs of a young, idealistic move, now they are songs of resistance. No longer speaking of peaceful change, now they are sung clandestinely, with a sense of confrontation and challenge. To remember these songs is to be reminded of fallen comrades and repressed aspirations. To sing them alone is to spit in the face of the junta and declare one's own resistance.

To sing them in a group is a call to arms, for no one in Thailand now believes there is a peaceful road to new society.

In early December of 1976, all five of the Caravan group and three members of another important song group, Komchum, issued a joint statement through the radio broadcasts of the Communist Party of Thailand, "Voice of the People," announcing that they had joined in the armed struggle. Shortly after this, their songs began to be heard frequently over this clandestine radio being beamed from a revolutionary base in one of Thailand's mountains.

As for the Komchum group another time. Sadly, we were unable to secure any of their music for this record. We would like, however, to thank Frank Green and the ISAN Film Group for finding a way to bring the work of Caravan to you. They worked with Surachai Jantimwath to create the first "people's film" from Thailand about the desperate situation of the peasants in the northeastern region. The film is titled "Tongpan," and it can be obtained through the Union of Democratic Thais in the U.S. What follows is part of the statement jointly issued by the two song groups when contact with the masses was re-established through the clandestine radio.

"From Preecha Jintanan, student activist and member of the musical group Gammachon diabolically assassinated by the rightist clique; from Prakeang Rakangtong, leader of a progressive shadow-play theatre group in the south, against whom many assassination attempts have been made even while he was performing his art (eventually he was wounded, and his daughter and several colleagues were killed, during such an attack); from Sheevit, Kunruchon, Ton-Gla, Caravan, Komchum, and the other musical groups constantly harrassed and assaulted; from Nita, announcer and singer of the Gammachon group who stood up on behalf of the people to the last second of her noble young life when she was shot, stabbed, lynched and burned alive by fascists before the eyes of all at Thammasat University during the bloody coup of October 1976: Listen to this, you feudal lords, big capitalists, fascist warlords and all of your lackeys: you have betrayed the masses who look to you to feed yourselves with curry and rice. The time is now ripe for the victorious revolution of the people. It approaches so rapidly that you no longer have time to sit at your ease. The wheel of history is turning fast, and it will smash all of you into a million pieces."

Every day the people of Thailand are realizing victories over the military dictatorship, and moving toward the day when foreign domination will be at an

* It later-developed that it was not Nita who was killed but a woman who strongly resembled her. Nita herself was recently interviewed in a newspaper published by the revolutionary base.
end. But it would be incomplete to speak of these victories, and of the growing strength of the resistance movement, without mentioning the Thai People’s Cultural Army and the part played by Caravan in building it. With their music and their lyrics, Caravan has helped reveal the suffering and bitterness of the oppressed peasants and workers who make up 85 percent of the Thai population. Through their conscientious and patriotic work they have helped organize and inspire their firm resistance.

Here is a brief but true story which has already entered the folklore of Thailand:

One day in the spring of 1977, while the dictatorship of Thanin Kraiwichai and Admiral Snagal Chalory ruled Thailand with a shaky hand, a group of farmers in the north sat stringing tobacco leaves on bamboo splints. The sun beat down as they sat inside a large hut made from rice straw and wide leaves. They sat cross-legged among piles of fresh leaves they had picked early that morning. The Tobacco Monopoly had not raised prices for buying tobacco this year, and as usual the curing houses would hold back payment for purchases of tobacco for many months. For yet another year, the cost of living had risen, but the prices for farm products were still low, and dropping.

One farmer, sorting the leaves into grades by color and size, began singing “Kon Gap Kwai (Men and Buffalo)”, the most famous “Song for Life” in Thailand. After two lines he interjected: “I can be arrested for singing this, but so what?” and continued singing. The ten or so workers in the hut broke off their laughing talk to listen intently. Then the singer rendered “Berp Kau (Every Handful of Rice).”

“Where did you learn those songs?”

“At the farmer’s mass rally in Chiangmai three years ago.”

“And you still know the words! Why?”

“They are about our life. The words were on leaflets given to us by the students.”

“You still have the leaflets?”

At this, everyone in the hut grinned a knowing smile. “We burnt them up after October 6,” he said, threading another leaf, “but the words are in our hearts.”

FROM “THE KING & I” TO PEOPLE’S WAR

1855 Bowring-Monkut Treaty. British conquest of Burma and Malaya and acquisition of five ports in China, together with French colonization of Indochina, put Thailand in line for carving up between colonial powers. King Rama IV (known in west as King Mongkut of “The King and I”) succumbs to British diplomatic pressure, concludes treaty with Sir John Bowring allowing British primary rights to Thailand as market and source of raw materials. Similar treaties concluded with U.S., Russia and Japan. The country is sold out to save the crown; only colonialist rivalry prevents absorption of Thailand as direct colony. Sizable comprador bourgeoisie emerges, along with beginnings of Thai industrial proletariat.

1927 Social unrest grips country. Thai Marxist groups emerge and begin to work among students, workers and poor peasants.

1930 Communist Party of Thailand founded, almost immediately outlawed and brutally suppressed by regime.

1932 Military-coup civilian coup establishes British-style constitutional monarchy on paper but elections strictly controlled by military.

1941 December 8: Japan invades Thailand (one day after attacking U.S. at Pearl Harbor). Pibun regime capitulates without struggle. Pibun serves as Prime Minister for the Japanese throughout WW II.

1942 Anti-Japanese volunteer forces organize; Communist partisans lead workers in sabotage. December 1: National Deputies’ Party Congress fuses united front against Japan, proclaims ten-point program of national democratic revolution.

1945 Communist Party of Thailand openly forms Anti-Japanese United Association and clandestinely forms Bangkok All-Round Trade Union. AJUA forces initiate military attacks against Japanese in south. War ends, with Britain, U.S.A. and China (Chiang Kai Shek) vying for hegemony in Thailand. Several governments succeed one another in short order.

1947 November 8: Pibun stages coup; Thailand under new fascist military clique backed by U.S.A. and Britain.


1952 Communist Party of Thailand holds second National Deputies’ Masses which calls to accelerate mobilization of masses and calls for formation of national democratic liberation front on extensive scale, defining worker-peasant alliance as its foundation, with the workers as the most advanced class and the peasantry as the broadest masses. Leading cadre sent to live and work with revolutionary masses in jungle areas and prepare to build rear bases.

1955 Peaceful coexistence call from Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung (Indonesia) causes heavy repercussion. Pibun dictatorship concedes limited free speech rights and establishment of political parties followed by controlled elections in response to raging discontent.

1957 June: mass student demonstrations protest “dirty, rigged elections” and other protests follow. September 16: General Sarit stages military coup with U.S. backing, expels Pibun and promises democratic rule.

1958 October 20: Sarit stages putsch with CIA support to consolidate power, declares martial law, outlaw constitution, dissolves National Assembly, closes newspapers, bans all progressive mass organizations and establishes fascist reign of terror.

1962 U.S. stations troops in Thailand, establishing military and Air Force bases and communications centers with guaranteed access to strategic roads and unlimited rights to come and go across borders under the Thanat-Rusk Communique.

1965 August 7: Thai revolutionaries (PLAF) launch first armed attacks against regime from Phu Paan mountains in the northeastern region. Despite massive assaults, guerrilla forces grow steadily and increase area under its control over next period of time.

1966 Sarit dies. Thanom Kittikachorn (Prime Minister and Minister of Defense) and Prapas (head of the police) replace him.

1973 October 14: National Student Center of Thailand (NSCT) and others lead 100,000 students and workers in peaceful assembly demanding release of 13 students imprisoned for distributing leaflets critical of regime. Police fire on demonstrators, igniting a general uprising with up to half-million people in the streets. Prapas-Thanom regime falls and Thailand begins three-year respite from military dictatorship. New civilian government formally dedicates itself to western-style “democracy” while economic and military power remain concentrated in hands of most reactionary elements of what is
still a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society. Progressive elements raise consciousness and build base; reactionary forces regroup, developing right-wing terrorism in cities and countryside.


1976 March 20: NSCT organizes victory celebration, leading 400,000 in march across Bangkok. Demonstrators attacked by grenades in shopping center; 4 killed and 10 seriously wounded. Demonstration continues, singing “Fight! No Retreat!” as they march. October 6: bloody coup restores military dictatorship. Thousands imprisoned and killed, martial law established, civil liberties suspended. December 1: Communist Party of Thailand calls for “unification of all patriotic and democratic forces, expansion of People’s War to full scale, and overthrow of the traitorous fascist regime.” NSCT announces officially its members will join the People’s Army of Thailand in the liberated zone.

1977 September: Committee to Co-ordinate Patriotic and Democratic Forces forms to direct the war against the dictatorship, thereby uniting the Communist Party, Socialist Party, United Socialist Front, independent political, economic and social groups and individuals under one banner: “overthrow the reactionary regime and form a genuinely democratic people’s government.”

1978 First part of year, official government sources concede 38 of 72 provinces under guerrilla control. Revolutionary sources claim liberated zones extend to every province, leaving only towns still under government control.

A LETTER FROM DON LUCE

I remember the afternoon well. It was a hot New York summer day in August, 1976. I went up to the roof of our building to cool off with two members of the Union of Democratic Thais to look over documentation they had brought, along with personal reflections, from the lawyers, writers and political leaders back in Thailand.

Their analysis was clear: the U.S., by cutting economic aid to the civilian leadership and by increasing their aid to the right-wing faction of the military, was promoting a coup against the democratically elected government of Thailand. That dreadful event did in fact come to pass on October 6, 1976. Through this and a host of other examples I have come to trust the careful research of the U.D.T. I have learned to listen carefully to their analysis and their predictions. Perhaps more importantly, I have seen and often felt the depth of their love for their homeland. I have watched the pain in their eyes as they inspected photos of the swampland slums of Klong Tuyei, where hundreds of thousands of former peasants crowd into cardboard shacks waiting for jobs as cheap labor for the multinationals.

I urge one thing: read what they have to say. Listen carefully. And if you agree with them, ACT! We have had too many Vietnam wars, too many like Chile’s Salvador Allende, Korea’s Kim Chi Ha, South Africa’s Steve Biko. We must end this brutality, this exploitation of people. And we will. Together!

Don Luce September, 1978

RESOURCES:

The Union of Democratic Thais was set up in 1976 to provide resources such as speakers, films and political/cultural programs informing people about the situation in their country. Since its inception it has spread to several U.S. cities, and to England, France, Germany, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Hong Kong. If your area is not listed below, write to the New York office for further information.

East Coast:
Box 305
New York, NY 10014

Washington, D.C. area:
Box 1036
Langley Park, Md. 20787

Midwest:
Box 53294
Chicago, Ill. 60653

Europe:
c/o Luc Thibeaut
9, rue du Dauphine
93600 Aulnay-sous-Bois
France

West Coast:
Box 17808
Los Angeles, Ca. 90017

PUBLICATIONS:

Thai Information Center
Box 8995
Los Angeles, Ca. 90008

Thailand Update
Published by UDT
Box 1036
Langley Park, Md. 20789

AMPO
Box 5250
Tokyo International
Japan

Thai Information Bulletin
Published by UDT-France
in English
Published by Comite de Solidarite avec le Peuple Thai
(in French)

c/o Luc Thibeaut
9 rue du Dauphine
93600 Aulnay-sous-Bois
France

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Supalaks Jittidecharaks

BOOKLET CREDITS:

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A LETTER FROM CARAVAN

Revolutionary Base
Thailand
April 2, 1978

Dear Friends,

The people always love and cherish art which reveals truth. Truth for the good of the nation and people, from the few to the many, from the weak to the strong, from month to month, year after year, more people welcome art that reveals truth. The artists and art of the people can never die.

Our path is filled with the warm hearts of the people, who treat us as if we were their own sons and daughters. The reactionary ruling class uses every device in its power in a frantic effort to separate us from our people. They have banned our songs from print and from the airwaves. They have decreed that no-one shall sing the Songs for Life. But all their might cannot hold back the swelling current of the people's culture.

In the years since the uprising of October 14, 1973, we have seen the rapid growth of people's music groups very clearly. Likewise cultural groups of every kind, and the literature of the people. Songs for Life will not only survive but will continue to flourish!

May we learn from you,

Surachai Jantimatong
Virasak Suntornsiikk
Mongkon Utok
Pongtep Kradonchamnan
Tonggraan Taanaa
(for Caravan)
THE SONGS

MAN* AND BUFFALO/Kon Gap Kwai

Lyric: Somkrit Singson & Visa Kantap

"Man and Buffalo" is the most famous and popular of the Songs for Life because it was the first expression of the politicized students' new perception of the farmers' life. The song was written in late 1973 during the first protest rally of the farmers under the caretaker Sanya government. When leaders of the militant Farmers Federation of Thailand began to be systematically assassinated a year later, the word "guns" was added to the eighth line of the song. In a still later version, the last line has been changed to read, "Cut down the bourgeoisie!"

Sokmit Singson wrote from his own experience. After the anti-dictatorial uprising of October 14, 1973, he left Thammasat University to work as a farmer in his home village of Sadaen in the northern province of Khon Kaen. With the help of friends from Bangkok, he gradually developed his home village, establishing a series of cooperatives. He started a "university without walls" for the villagers, and incurred the wrath of the central government by refusing a $5000 government grant. During the Sanya government, he was accused of being a communist by the district military authorities, and a number of prominent Bangkok progressives came to his defense. Later on, as the repressive tactics of the right became more violent, a bulletproof vest saved his life from a shotgun blast.

Visa Kantap was one of the thirteen activist students arrested in Bangkok on October 8, 1973 for demanding a new national constitution in defiance of the dictatorial regime. It was these arrests that sparked the uprising which overthrew the Thanom-Prapas dictatorship a week later. After this, collections of his poems were printed and widely circulated. Visa was last seen boarding a cargo truck in Bangkok on October 6, 1976, the day that the military coup returned Thailand to dictatorship. Later, his name appeared on the masthead of Military Unity, a monthly magazine from the revolutionary base in the jungle.

Here is the song of death,
The death of our humanity
The rich eat our labor,
Set one against the other,
As we peasants sink deeper in debt.
And they call us savages!
We must destroy this system!
(repeat first four lines of song simultaneously with last four lines)

Come, let's go now!

*Man here stands for the Thai word for "human" which has no gender.

กันนักว้าว

กันกับคนท่าน ประสาทคน
นาถนักน้าคำ มันดอกไม้

กันกับพวกท่าน ประสาทพวก
ยากแค้นแล้วเจ็บ ในหัวใจ

กันกับพวก ความหมายมันลึกล้ำ
ร่อนรุ้มเพี้ยงไก ไม่ทรั้นแรง

ลึกเล่าท่าน มาเยี่ยมนาน
เป็นบทเพลงเสียงเพลง แห่งความคุณ

แรงขันกระงาน มาเยี่ยมนาน
ความเป็นคนสลาย ลงไปพัน

สาวนาเรื่องมา พอสุขใจ (ข้า)
ภูมิทั้นแรง แบ่งชนชั้น

ไปฝึกไปพวกเรา ไปฝึกไป
ภูมิทั้นแรง แบ่งชนชั้น

เราแบ่งเป็นแยกใจ ไปท่าน
ชนชั้นชาวนา จึงงดงาม

หน้าจากหน้าหนึ่งมอง มาทานกับ
เหยียดหยามชาวนา ว่ายังคง

สักผู้ยั้งคง คือความคุณ
EVERY HANDFUL OF RICE/Berp Kow

Words: Jit Pumisak
Music: Caravan

Jit Pumisak* was a poet and songwriter as well as an important historian, art critic, and political and social commentator. While in prison, he had a Thai classical musical instrument on which he wrote many songs during that time. After his release he joined the Communist Party of Thailand in the northeast, where he wrote many songs about peasants and the PLAT (People's Liberation Army of Thailand). One of his most important songs, "Pu Phaen Pattiwat (Revolution at Pu Phaen Mountain)" has now become the theme song for the CPT broadcast over clandestine radio called "Voice of the People of Thailand." The following song was written after his release from prison.

*See Side 2, Band 1

EVERY HANDFUL OF RICE/Berp Kow

With every handful of rice you eat:
That is my sweat you eat,
As you grow to be a man.*
This rice tastes so good
To people of every class,
But such suffering is behind it,
Such deep-rooted bitterness!

It's a long hard road from our labor
To the heavy heads of grain.
On the way to grain like this,
Nothing but harsh labor lies.
How many drops of sweat!
Each drop a knot of pain.
How many bulging tendons
To change a rice flower to food!
This reddish river of sweat,
This labor streaming down,
Is the blood of all us farmers
That you enjoy every day.

It's a long hard road.

*The Thai word has no gender.
“Word from the Village” was written by Prasert Jandam in the Isaan dialect. Perhaps because the dialect is so evocative in its use of sound, it loses much in translation. Historically, farmers beyond the Central Plains of Thailand have been suspicious of visitors who speak central Thai, since they were invariably agents of exploitation in one form or another. That is why Caravan chose to sing some of their songs in the language of the local people. Similarly, students who went to work in unfamiliar areas of the countryside during the quasi-democratic experience of 1973 to 1976 always tried to learn the local dialect.

The spirits and devils mentioned in the song occupy a central position in the day-to-day life of the average farmer. In the countryside, homes and rice seed beds often have bamboo charms placed in them to ward off the power of evil spirits. The term “town devils” refers to the urban-rural contradictions which impose heavy burdens on the farmer: such things as the low prices for the rice he produces, the demands of absentee landlords, the bogus fertilizers foisted upon him at high prices, and the depredations of vice merchants from the towns.

This song is typical of the early period after the October 14, 1973 uprising, when much emphasis was placed on understanding and expressing the oppression of the rural people. Prasert Jandam, its author, was born and raised in a farming family and is a “people’s writer” who went to work in Sabdaeng village in Khon Kaen province. There he co-authored two books of poetry with Visa Kantap, Poetry from Sabdaeng and The Water Floods the Sky, the Fish Eat the Stars. He also co-authored a book of poems with Surachai Jantimaton, Writing on the Skin of the Tiger.
From the book "The Face of Thai Feudalism" written by Jit Pumisak: "In the past, slaves and serfs were the ones who did all the work. But they were exploited and oppressed. In the slave system, all production belongs to the slave master, and the slaves are given only enough to eat so that they can continue their work. In the feudal system, half of the production went into the hands of the feudal lord, and the labor of the serfs was conscription by the lord. The lords led a life of luxury by distributing the land and then collecting what was produced on it through a system of taxation and courts. Without this method, the king of the feudal system could get no value from the land because the king never works in the fields himself."

The song paints the picture of hard work, but now a new element has entered the picture: the sound of the liberation forces doing their work in the distance.

**DISTANT GUNFIRE SOUNDS/Chaonaa**

Distant gunfire sounds,
Waking slaves to freedom.
Thus a new life comes.

Together, we farmers
Go to plow and sow.
Unite our strength
and hearts
To transform the world
with our hands.
But our labor still is stolen
Everywhere we go.
We have suffered for so long.

It is our struggle, our toil
That supports the nation.
Everyone who eats
Tastes the salt of our sweat. (2x)

Remember the old saying.
Old—but still true:
If defeated, fight again.
The stream flows on and on,
And our light still shines.
Our freedom songs
Still ring out!

Distant gunfire sounds,
Waking slaves to freedom.
Thus a new life comes. (2x)
The song speaks of the hopelessness of the weary peasants as they passively work and endure inhuman conditions from day to day. But with the appearance of the red sun—red ideas—the people awaken gradually to a sense of their power to change things. They begin to see themselves as part of a class which must unite with others to overthrow an oppressive ruling class. Now they can help themselves, as a class for themselves as well as a class in themselves.

RICE WAITING FOR RAIN/
Khaw Khoy Fon

We live like the rice,
waiting for the rain.
In this drought, death
will come soon.
So weary is this life,
Nothing left to hope for,
So we leave our home
With our children, to drift along.
But our legs are still strong,
And the red sun guides our way.

It shows us the way, the road to victory,
To the plentiful harvest
of our dreams.
We live like the rice,
waiting for rain.
How many, how many have
died of starvation?
How few, how few live
in luxury.
The many ride their buffalo;
The few ride the backs of men!
(repeat last verse)
The “Song of the Mountain Fighters” was written by Jit Pumisak (see side 2, band 1). In 1965, the Thai Patriotic Front was formed, a broad national revolutionary organization consolidated around the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). On August 7, 1965, armed insurgency was launched. This song compares the guerrilla forces to farmers who can reap the sky, and was probably written after Jit himself had joined the guerrilla ranks. One of the largest base areas of the CPT is in the Pu Phaam mountains in the northeast provinces of Sakon Nakhon and Nakorn Pathom.

**SONG OF THE MOUNTAIN FIGHTERS/Kon Pukao**

Gather the stars, gather the moon,
String them together, Unite our hearts,
Let’s bring the stars to earth!

The long-oppressed farmers
Now stand up and raise their flag
Shoulder to shoulder in the Pu Phaam*
They proclaim their struggle!

These are the jungle fighters,
These are the vanguard,
These are the stars
Whose light gives strength to the masses.

Gather the stars, the moon and the sickles,
String them together! Unite all who seek justice.
March on for Freedom!
(repeat last verse)

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* Pu Phaam = mountains in Thailand.
Jit Pumisak is considered by many to be Thailand’s most distinguished leftist intellectual. Born in the coastal province of Prachinburi in Eastern Thailand in 1930, he was raised by his mother, attending primary school in Ganchanburi province and secondary school in Pradabong (now part of Cambodia). His higher education was in Bangkok from 1950 to 1957 at Chulalongkorn University. He was an avid scholar, studying literature, art, linguistics, English, French, and economics. In the area of language he was influenced by Dr. William J. Ketney, an American linguist teaching at Chulalongkorn in 1955. In literature he was influenced by “Nay Pi,” (the pen name of Asami Ponjan), a lawyer and writer who was one of the first members of the Communist Party of Thailand. In economics he was influenced by Supaa Simanont, who translated Marx’s Capital into Thai.

Jit was the first person to do a serious analysis of Thai history using a Marxist framework. His book, The Face of Thai Feudalism, is a formidable work of critical scholarship. He wrote a long work on the origins of the Thai language, another on the role of women in Thai society, and a book entitled Art for Life, mostly on Western art. For a period of time he was a teacher at Petchburi Teachers College in Bangkok.

In the aftermath of the September, 1957 coup of Sarit Thanarat, Jit was arrested in 1958 for his political writings in a student publication. He was able to do some writing during his stay in prison, until his release in 1965. On release, he joined the armed struggle in the Northeast and was killed the following year by government troops.

When the ban was lifted from Jit’s writings after October 1973, his works were widely read and he became a hero of the student movement. His picture was widely seen on posters and even printed on school notebooks, the face very thin, a cigarette dangling from his lips.

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Ten rich men
For each hundred thousand poor,
A shame between heaven and earth.

But his lot was cast
On the side of the poor,
Speaking out all he had seen.
Prison may hold his body,
Determined to struggle for justice
His path blocked and twisted
This body, this body is
Jit Pumisak. (2x)
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So many like him were destroyed.
In the year of 1965**
Dark clouds blocked the sky
With the spell of the giant eagle
He left home and village
For guerrilla life in the jungle.
A life of unending risks.
In May of 1966
Sun and shadow fled,
On a oxcart path he died.
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He died where town and jungle meet.
He died at the edge of the forest,
His red blood soaking into the northeastern soil.
Its red color will last on and on. (2x)
He did not die in vain;
His name steadily grows.
The people still learn from his thoughts.
Jit Pumisak, thinker and writer,
Has become a candle
Giving light to humanity (2x)
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*giant eagle = U.S. imperialism
**1965-year Thai government declared it would "wipe out the communists within three years."

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โจร ภูมิศักดิ์

เขาเคยในชายป่า เลือกตั้งพักที่อยู่ ยามเย็นขึ้นแก่นยักษ์

และแล้ววันพระขา เขากล่ามากายทอดเขา ใจนางผ่านกันนั้น

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พญาหัวร้อยเก้า แค่ส่งเจ้าจากหัว เข้าเยี่ยงขึ้นทางเกี่ยน

พืนนี้ นั่นชื่อคือ โจร ภูมิศักดิ์ พืนนี้ นั่นชื่อคือ โจร ภูมิศักดิ์

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ชือโจร ภูมิศักดิ์ เป็นผู้คั้นตั้งขึ้น ดังเหี้ยนดังนั้นกัน

---

As a shooting star falls,
So fell his life.
But how long can we expect
to live?

---

JIT PUMISAK

He fell at the edge
of the forest
His blood soaked the
troubled land
A land impoverished and bleak.
(repeat)

On the day he came
Down from the mountains,
Under the giant eagle’s shadow,
His killers were gleeful.
His death brought good fortune:
Promotion, four stars and many stripes.

As a shooting star falls,
So fell his life.
But how long can we expect
to live?
Side 2, Band 2:(5:45)
YELLOW BIRD/Nok Sii Ler-ang
Words and Music: Vinai Ukrit

As they raised empty hands
Demanding freedom?
Let us pause
To honor their souls.
Let us give courage
To those who push on
In the struggle!

Spreading your wings,
Fleeing the city
Yellow Bird, you are
Leaving us now.
Your soul is free at last,
Now that your life has been ended.
(repeat)

ฝากศีลเหลือง

(พุธ) "คุณใจให้ใหม่ เทคุณารินเมื่อวันที่ ๐๘ - ๐๔ ทุกคน
คุณใจให้ใหม่ รายเลือด ความน่ากลัว และยิ่งยวดของญิุตก
วิรรณานทุ่มหมู่ชาวของเรา
ให้เราไปยังกลับถึงกรุณามารถเกิดมา
ตายไปในขณะสูญเสียชัยชนะว่างเปล่า เพื่อเรียกร้องหาเสียภาพ
ขอให้เรารักษาชีวิตนี้ และสืบไปเรื่อยลึก ไปยังพวกเขเหล่านั้น
อย่างถึงที่สุดเป็นเครื่องเดือนไม้
และเป็นกำันใจสำหรับญิุตกอยู่ที่สุดท้าย

As you soar through the sky,
A white cloud asks who you are.
Your wings reflect the sunlight.
What color is the world you fought for?

Do you remember
The October 14 bloodshed
When your brothers and sisters
Were crushed in a hailstorm
Of bullets and teargas?
Do you remember?
Brutally run down,
Tear-gassed and shot,
You don’t know, you don’t even care.
You enjoy the slave-owner’s comfort!

Stop now, you suffering classes.
Swords, guns and spears are your only way.
Lift your spirits. Together we’ll rise!
We will break through! We will go forward!

Stop now! Stop now! Stop now!
Stop now! Just stop!
Come drink cool water from the clear well.*
Open your hearts and reflect.
Stop now! Stop now! Stop now! (4x)

*The well was dug collectively and belongs to the whole village: “Listen to the masses” is what this means.

—Mao Tse-Tung On Contradiction
THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE

The hare and the tortoise are racing.
The finish-line is far away.
Neither one is discouraged
As they hurry along the route,
Along the winding route.

Their legs are so different,
There is no way to compare them.
Full of over-confidence, the hare goes fast asleep.
Full of persistence, the tortoise wins the race.

Competing against each other,
Each follows his own star.
Racing their way to heaven,
One stays behind, loses his way.
The turtle beats the rabbit.
The sun-bird* passes by.
Asking this one question:
Are we born only to compete?
Better to seek victory together!
Wake our friends from their sleep,
And together we'll travel the same road!
(repeat verse 3 and 4)

*sun-bird symbolizes a more enlightened creature.

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