

Uprisings against the New World Order: Thailand, Kyrgyzstan, and Revolution

By [Shamus Cooke](#)

Global Research, April 21, 2010

21 April 2010

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Are revolutions happening in Thailand and Kyrgyzstan? Are they instead “uprisings”? Does it matter? The distinction is important insofar as it helps to educate others inspired by these recent events, with hopes to radically change their own political and economic systems.

For our purposes, the word “revolution” will be defined as: a prolonged period of mass activity by the normally silent oppressed, with strong intentions to drastically change society to meet the needs of the majority. If successful, representatives of the oppressed majority take control of the government and replace the former ruling class. This activity throws society’s equilibrium off balance, since capitalism requires total obedience from workers and peasants, so that corporations may make profits undisturbed. Once this power dynamic is disrupted, an extended struggle for state power ensues, between those who previously wielded it — the rich — and the majority of people attempting to assert themselves politically-economically.

Revolutions are not one-act dramas, but a series of acts — some more dramatic than others — that have as their basis the underlying power structure of society: the rich owners of corporations — and the state that props them up — versus the working class and the unemployed (plus poor peasants in underdeveloped countries). The struggle for political power is at the basis of every revolution, between these two principal contending social forces. Once the working class begins revolutionary struggle, it must eventually take state power or allow it to return to the corporations and wealthy. A situation of permanent flux is impossible, since eventually one side will exert its dominance and consolidate its power.

Revolutionary periods are exceptional moments in history. They are eruptions of social tensions that once were buried deep in the consciousness of men and women after having accumulated for many years due to deteriorating economic and social conditions for the vast majority of working people. Thus, old beliefs and customs are suddenly discarded, as is silent obedience.

Are these unique characteristics present in Thailand and Kyrgyzstan? The corporate-friendly New York Times wrote a remarkable article recently about Thailand, revealing insights that help prove that an unfolding revolution does exist. The following excerpts list the changes in consciousness in the average Thai worker and peasant, changes that are apparent in all revolutions:

“...more than ever Thailand’s underprivileged are less inclined to quietly accept their station in life as past generations did and are voicing anger about wide disparities in wealth...The deference, gentility and graciousness that have

helped anchor the social hierarchy in Thailand for centuries are fraying, analysts say, as poorer Thais become more assertive, discarding long-held taboos that discouraged confrontation.”

And:

“This is a newfound consciousness of a previously neglected part of Thai society...The once deeply ingrained cultural mores that discouraged displays of anger, that prized politeness and justified the entitlements of the royalty and the elite have been eroded by technology and mobility...The traditional restraints on aggressive and argumentative behavior — the Buddhist clergy and a once deeply held fear of bad karma, among other factors — have been weakened...” (March 31, 2010).

This growth in consciousness plus the recent mass activity equals a revolution in both Thailand and Kyrgyzstan. Thousands of protestors fought off the Thai army when the military attempted to evict them from the streets of the occupied “shopping district” — 21 people were killed before the army retreated.

Now, the leading Thai general is recommending that the main demand of the protestors — the dissolution of parliament — be met. The Thai general is not suddenly a pacifist, but worried that his soldiers are not reliable enough to crush demonstrators, and may instead turn their guns on officers or generals. The elite Economist magazine worriedly writes:

“Red-shirt leaders [of the protest movement] have boasted of leaks from allies inside military headquarters. There is even a name for disgruntled, red-leaning soldiers: “watermelons,” i.e., green outside, red inside. Four years of political upheaval have left Thailand divided and disoriented. A split in the army should not come as a surprise. It is still, however, frightening.” (April 15, 2010).

Revolutions often showcase this unique phenomenon: the military is used to crush protestors until soldiers begin to side with the people. Since the military is the ruling class’ watchdog of last resort, its demise marks the crumbling of the existing political-economic system, opening doors for revolutionary struggle.

The people of Kyrgyzstan also overcame a bloody military intervention, with at least 85 killed and hundreds wounded. This bloodshed didn’t have the intended effect and those responsible for the killings are being hunted down by the new government, aided by radicalized troops who served the former government.

But the new government of Kyrgyzstan is not the end of the revolutionary struggle. In fact, many of those who lead it belonged to the former discredited government. However, the working class has its own demands, which they will continue to fight for, so the struggle is far from over. For example, two major demands of the revolution are:

- 1) Closing the U.S. airbase that feeds hundreds of thousands of troops into the Afghanistan war.
- 2) Re-nationalizing industries that were privatized after the fall of the USSR, marking Kyrgyzstan’s transition to capitalism.

These demands, and others, will constitute the basis of the ongoing revolution in Kyrgyzstan, until a legitimate workers' government is installed or until the movement is crushed by violence.

Likewise in Thailand, if the revolutionary movement succeeds — and is not drowned in blood as in 1976 or 1992 — and new elections are forced, the struggle of Thai working people will continue. The political leader most associated with the “Red Shirts” is an exiled Thai billionaire, Thaksin Shinawatra, who cannot be mistaken as a revolutionary.

Although the revolutionary movement in Thailand is raising mostly political demands at this point — the return of Thaksin and the dissolution of parliament and the Thai monarchy — economic demands are just beneath the surface: Thaksin did initiate some economic policies that assisted the urban and rural poor and in this respect stands in opposition to the Thai monarchy, which is rightly viewed as the centerpiece of the Thai ruling/corporate class.

To achieve the economic demands of the revolutionary movements of Kyrgyzstan and Thailand, both countries' economies must be radically transformed: away from an economy dominated by the corporate rule of a tiny minority and towards an economy that is run as a public utility, democratically controlled by the majority of the people (as opposed to the totalitarian rule of the former USSR).

If the revolutionary movements in Thailand and Kyrgyzstan are not temporarily halted by state repression, they will strive for higher goals. The recent successes of both movements have shown the people the enormous power they possess, a feeling that does not go away by itself. These realizations have a logic of their own, prompting the masses to work for even bigger victories, at the further political-economic expense of the ruling classes.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for Workers Action (www.workerscompass.org). He can be reached at shamuscooke@gmail.com

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