

THE QUEST FOR THAI-US ALLIANCE



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FOREWORD

The year 1947 was a turning point in Thailand's domestic politics as well as its foreign relations. The coup d'état in November 1947, and the subsequent return of Field Marshal P. Pibulsonggram as the prime minister, led to a major shift of emphasis in Thai foreign policy from that of the preceeding civilian governments of Pridi Banomyong and Thamrong Nawasawat between 1946-1947.

The ISC wishes to express its deep appreciation to Ambassador Apichart Chinwanno for permitting the ISC to publish, for the first time, his thesis *"Thailand's Search for Protection: The Making of the Alliance with the United States, 1947-1954"* as another volume in the book series on diplomatic history. This book, now titled *"The Quest for Thai-US Alliance"*, follows on from Ambassador Charivat Santaputra's *"Thai Foreign Policy 1932-1946"*, which was reprinted in 2020.

Ambassador Apichart's thesis is an attempt to explain how and why Thailand sought a protective alliance with the United States between 1947-1954. It gives a systematic and comprehensive account of political, strategic, economic and historical factors that governed the Thai policy of alignment with the West in that period. Both political development in Thailand and major foreign policy decisions are analysed to find their causes and linkages. It presents Thailand's case of a smaller state's adjustment of foreign policy goals and methods, not only as a result of a changing balance of power internationally, but also as a result of domestic conditions. Furthermore, it demonstrates Thailand's role in encouraging the American SEATO commitment, which has often been ignored in the study of the origin of American involvement in the Vietnam War.

As Ambassador Apichart's thesis is printed for the first time since it was presented to and accepted by the University of Oxford in 1985, the ISC decides to make as few editorial changes as necessary in order to keep the context of this book as close to the original thesis as possible.

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the thesis is to explain how and why Thailand sought a protective alliance with the United States between 1947 and 1954. This is done through means of a chronological account of the adjustment of Thailand's foreign policy in the context of Thai domestic politics. The thesis focuses on changes in the regional balance of power and domestic factors in Thailand which influenced foreign policy. After first examining the coup d'état in Thailand in November 1947 which led to a major shift of emphasis in Thai foreign policy, it analyses the way in which the new Thai prime minister, Field Marshal Pibulsonggram, actively sought Western approval and assistance for his government.

In particular, using evidence from the official papers seen in the United States, Britain and Thailand, the thesis answers many questions as to why and how Thailand came to join the SEATO alliance in September 1954. It is argued that the SEATO alliance was to some extent a result of Pibul's long and continuous search for an American security guarantee, despite the earlier reluctance of the United States to extend its defence obligations to mainland Southeast Asia. This is a case study of how a smaller state took an initiative in getting a great power to make an alliance commitment to a small and relatively remote state. The bargaining tool it used in this case was full cooperation in all diplomatic, political and economic matters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been jointly supervised by Adam Roberts of St. Antony's College and Robert H. Taylor of School of Oriental and African Studies. Since my arrival at Oxford, Adam Roberts has guided my studies in the field of international relations; his encouragement and penetrating observations made this thesis possible. I owe an equal debt to Robert H. Taylor who kindly extended much time and effort on every draft of this thesis, offering both inspiration and invaluable suggestions on various aspects of Thailand and Southeast Asia with which he is well acquainted. I have also benefited greatly from the analytical minds and deep knowledge of Professor Arthur Stockwin of St. Antony's College and Dr. Ruth T. McVey of SOAS who kindly

took over the temporary supervision while my supervisors briefly took their respective sabbatical leave.

I should like to express my appreciation to librarians and archivists at St. Antony's College, the Bodleian Library, the United States National Archives, the Mudd Library of Princeton University, the National Archives of Thailand, the National Library of Thailand, the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Library and Archives Division, the Thai National Assembly's Library, the British Public Record Office, the SOAS Library and the Chatham House Press Library, without whose assistance the research would not have been possible.

I should also like to thank Judith A. Stowe for carefully reading the final draft of this thesis and providing useful comments. Special thanks go to Nigel J. Brailey for reading and commenting on part of the manuscript, and for keeping stimulating correspondence with me. It is my good fortune to have been given an opportunity to interview His Excellency Pote Sarasin, to whom I am deeply grateful.

My studies in England have been supported by the Thai government which I gratefully acknowledge. Finally, I thank my wife, Pakakeo, for her perseverance and constant support.

PREFACE

The end of the Second World War heralded a new era of political relations in Southeast Asia. The Japanese military conquest of the Western colonial powers had exposed the myth of Western invincibility and stimulated nationalist aspirations among local peoples. This led to an intensification of the struggle against the reimposition of colonial rule in India, Burma, Indochina and Indonesia, each with differing outcome. The United States emerged as the dominant power in the world and began to exhibit a greater interest than ever before in the region, as the wartime Allied cohesion gave way to the suspicion and rivalry between the communist and non-communist camps. The regional balance of power was further complicated by the resurgence of China after 1949 under Communist rule.

For a smaller state like Thailand, which had never been a colony, the new regional pattern of power raised a number of questions. What kind of foreign policy best served its primary national interest, namely the preservation of independence, in the new order? Would the new China be aggressive? Would it try to intervene in Thailand on behalf of the large and economically powerful Chinese minority? For nearly a century prior to 1940, Thailand had ceased to engage in major warfare, thanks paradoxically to the dominant presence of the colonial powers in its neighbouring countries: France in Indochina, and Britain in Burma and Malaya. The process of decolonization was now taking place in some of these countries. Would there be a resumption of conflict with these traditional rivals about to reemerge as sovereign, independent states? Or would the imminent departure of the colonial powers inaugurate a new era of regional solidarity and cooperation? Another central concern in Bangkok was how to prevent a repetition of the foreign military invasion by a major power that had occurred in December 1941.

Thailand's solutions to these questions are worth studying for several reasons. For one thing, Thailand is an interesting case of a smaller state's adjustment of foreign policy goals and methods, not only as a result of a changing balance of power internationally, but also as a result of domestic conditions. For another thing, Thailand's role in encouraging the American

SEATO commitment has often been ignored in the study of the origin of American involvement in the Vietnam War. The *Pentagon Papers*, for example, are heavily Vietnam-centred to the neglect of a wider Southeast Asian picture. Thailand's decision to join SEATO is sometimes thought to be no more than a response to American diplomatic pressure. This study is an attempt to fill such a gap, by giving a systematic and comprehensive account of political, strategic, economic and historical factors that governed the Thai policy of alignment with the West in 1947-54. The method used in the study is to follow the events in chronological order, after first establishing underlying threads in the tradition of Thai foreign policy. Then, from the coup d'état in 1947 until the Indochinese crisis in 1954, both political development in Thailand and major foreign policy decisions are analysed to find their causes and linkages.

This study begins with a brief discussion of the concepts of small states and alliances. Chapter two then attempts to trace the history of Thailand's international experience with a view to identify the roots of Thai foreign policy and also to provide relevant political background. Considerable attention is paid to the crucial periods in which Thailand's independent existence was threatened, because of the strong influence these had on Thai perceptions. Chapter three is occupied not only with Pridi's foreign policy and other causes of his downfall

but also with the domestic and international consequences of the rise of Pibul in 1947. The period covered in chapter four coincides with the intrusion of the Cold War and the reevaluation of American policy toward Southeast Asia. It is contended that Pibul's motives for aligning Thailand with the West were based less on his ideological conviction than on other considerations. Chapter five deals with the impact of American aid which began to flow into Thailand following the conclusion of bilateral educational, economic and military agreements in 1950. This study tries to show that American aid not only enabled the 1947 Coup Group to obtain a favourable outcome in the domestic power struggle, but also contributed indirectly to the tension between Thailand and Burma over the issue of KMT activities in southern Yunnan and the Shan States. The main concern of chapter six is to investigate Thai perceptions of external threat arising from the setting up of the Thai Autonomous Area in southern Yunnan by the Peking government and the Vietminh invasion of Laos in 1953-54. The concluding chapter seeks to answer the fundamental question whether Thailand was pressured by the United States into joining the alliance or whether, for reasons of its own security, stability and prestige, Thailand in fact drew the US and other Western states into committing a multilateral security guarantee.

NOTES ON SOURCES

The treatment is original inasmuch as it is the first time that unpublished diplomatic correspondence and reports kept at the United States National Archives, the British Public Record Office and the Thai Foreign Ministry's archives have been used in the study of this subject.

In Thailand, post-war official papers are available to some researchers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Library and Archives Division; access to the documents is, however, restricted. Not all documents have been catalogued, and only those done are open for reading. Most of them are concerned with routine works and show very little of foreign policy decision-making. But after long and patient research there, I managed to collect some useful materials relating to Thai policies towards neighbouring countries such as Burma and Indochina. A limited amount of postwar materials can also be found at the National Archives, and parliamentary records at the library of the National Assembly. Vernacular newspaper cuttings are kept at the National Library, the Central Library of Chulalongkorn University, and the Library of Thammasat University.

The main bulk of declassified official correspondence between the Foreign Office and the British Embassy at Bangkok, consisting of both telegrams and despatches, can be found in

Siam files under volume number FO371 at the British Public Records Office in London, I regret not having time to look in detail at the 1954 documents, just released at the beginning of 1985. At Chatham House in London is kept an excellent set of English language newspaper cuttings concerning Thailand and Southeast Asia.

In the United States, primary reliance was placed on the United States National Archives in Washington, D.C., which houses voluminous files of State Department declassified papers, correspondence and reports. The main body of State Department records is arranged by subject according to a decimal classification system. Subjects and countries are identified by decimal file numbers which precede a slant mark (/). Numbers which follow a slant mark are assigned to individual documents and generally indicate the date of that document. For example, 892.00/3-1554 reads internal political affairs (8) of Thailand (92.00) dated March 15, 1954. The documents retrieved from the American Embassy in Bangkok are available at the Washington National Records Center, located in Suitland, 8 miles from the National Archives Building. Disappointingly, several State Department documents have not been declassified and were withdrawn from the files by the CIA.

The Mudd Library of Princeton University allowed access to its complete collection of John Foster Dulles papers as well

as papers of other public figures such as Senator Alexander H. Smith and Ambassador Karl L. Rankin. They also keep “the John Foster Dulles Oral History Collection”, an interesting collection of recorded interviews with those people who personally know J.F. Dulles, including interviews with Prince Wan, Pote Sarasin and Thanat Khoman by Spencer Davis in September 1964.

Reliance was also placed on available printed documents such as those in the Foreign Relations of the United States series and the Pentagon Papers. Other sources include a selection of both Thai and English language memoirs, articles, theses and books. It is perhaps appropriate here to mention two widely-read English-language books on the subject, both published in the United States in 1965: Donald E. Nuechterlein’s *Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia*; and Frank C. Darling’s *Thailand and the United States*. Although both are written by Americans, the latter in particular gives a good analysis of the impact of United States policy on the Thai political scene. To my knowledge, there is yet no authoritative Thai book on Thailand’s foreign policy of the period covered by this thesis; nothing at least comparable to Direk Jayanama’s *Thailand and the Second World War* (2 Vols. Bangkok, 1966), which gives an insider’s account of Thailand’s foreign affairs during 1939-46. On Thai politics, a useful collection of translated documents has been edited by Thak Chaloemtiarana in *Thai Politics: Extracts and Documents 1932-1957* (Bangkok, 1978).

Most Thai books on the period, while less than objective, give interesting background information and anecdotes about various coups.

This study has not sought to place a great reliance on personal interviews. This is partly because most of the principal policy-makers involved such as Field Marshal Pibulsonggram, Prince Wan Waithayakon, J.F. Dulles, Edwin F. Stanton are already dead; and partly because interviews are not normally the best method to get an accurate account after such a long period of time. Nevertheless, an interview with former foreign minister and prime minister of Thailand, Pote Sarasin, on 4 August 1982 did provide an interesting insight.

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Personal names are romanized following the preferences of the individuals concerned, when known; hence, King Chulalongkorn, King Vajiravudh, P. Pibulsonggram, Pridi Banomyong, Direk Jayanama, Prince Wan Waithayakon, Prince Viwat, and Seni Pramoj. Otherwise, names are written as they are pronounced in English rather than a literal transliteration. However, wherever a passage is quoted, the original usage is left intact. Traditional ranks and titles, conferred on the bureaucratic and military nobility until the end of the absolute monarchy,

are not translated. On a descending scale, these are Chaophraya, Phraya, Phra, Luang, and Khun.

A NOTE ON EXCHANGE RATES

The unit of Thai currency is the baht. On the eve of the Second World War, the Thai baht had been a stable currency with a value of 11 baht to the pound sterling or 2.7 baht to the US dollar. After the war, Thailand operated a multiple exchange rate system until 1955 to combat inflation and to restore financial stability. Exporters were required to surrender their foreign exchange proceeds to the Bank of Thailand at the official rate of approximately 15 baht to the dollar or 60 baht to the pound sterling from January 1946. The official rate was adjusted in May 1946, revaluing the baht to 10 baht to the dollar and 40 baht to the pound. In response to the devaluation of the pound in September 1949, the official exchange rate was set at 12.5 baht to the dollar and 35 baht to the pound. Importers and commercial banks, on the other hand, could buy foreign exchange at the open market rate. Before mid-1948, the open market rate fluctuated between as much as 82 baht and 60 baht to the pound and between 25 baht and 14 baht to the dollar. But thereafter, the baht remained fairly constant in the period covered in the thesis at around 57 baht to the pound sterling and 20 baht to the US dollar.

These open market exchange rates reflected the real purchasing power of the baht.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BFSP	British and Foreign State Papers
BPRO	British Public Record Office
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CTS	The Consolidated Treaty Series
DS or S.D.	Department of State or State Department
DSB	Department of State Bulletin
ECA	Economic Cooperation Administration
F.O.	Foreign Office
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
KMT	Kuomintang
LNTS	League of Nations Treaty Series
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
STEM	United States Special Technical and Economic Mission
TMFA, L&A	Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Library and Archives
UN	United Nations
UNTS	United Nations Treaty Series
US	United States
USNA	United States National Archives
USNA, DS	United States National Archives, State Department File

CHAPTER

1

SMALL STATES
AND ALLIANCES

Thai leaders, since the introduction of Thailand into the international states system, have consistently perceived their own country as a small power. King Mongkut, for example, had this to say of his country's predicament in 1867:

Being, as we are now, surrounded on two or three sides by powerful nations, what can a small nation like us do? Supposing we were to discover a gold mine in our country, from which we could obtain many million catties weight of gold, enough to pay for the cost of a hundred warships; even with this we would still be unable to fight against them, because we would have to buy those very same warships and all the armaments from their countries. We are as yet unable to manufacture these things, and even if we have enough money to buy them, they can always stop the sale of them whenever they feel that we are arming ourselves beyond our station. The only weapons that will be of real use to us in the future will be our mouths and our hearts, constituted so as to be full of sense and wisdom for the better protection of ourselves.¹

A century later, Thai leaders remained modest in their appraisal of their country's power and status in the world. Thanat Khoman, the Thai Foreign Minister, disappointed by the result of the Vienna summit meeting on Laos in 1961, stated that Thailand had used every means available to avoid a coalition government in Laos, but that ultimately "we were. . .

compelled to acquiesce. . .because we are a small country. We can hardly withstand the pressure from the great powers".²

In his book, *The Inequality of States*, David Vital shows us that despite the formal, legal equality of states in the modern period, states are in reality unequal. He did so by using small, unaligned states as the paradigm for all small powers and analysed their military, economic and other vulnerabilities.³ Generally, small states face a dilemma that if they remain as a single unallied unit, they have no protection from those who are stronger, that is, the superpowers, the middle powers, or even states such as themselves but which are protected by the resources and influence of some greater power or powers. On the other hand, if they seek a protector, they lose a degree of autonomy.

Given the wide disparity in relative sizes and power of countries in the world, a precise definition of what may constitute a small state remains elusive. The difficulty arises when one attempts to draw a line that would separate small powers from middle powers since there is no objective criterion or measurement which will correspond with actual or potential political and military behaviour. Vital tries to overcome the problem by offering a definition based on the size of population and the level of development. He limits the class of small states to those having (a) a population of less than 10 to 15 million in the

case of economically advanced countries; and (b) less than 20 to 30 million in the case of underdeveloped countries.⁴ According to this criterion, Thailand at the end of the Second World War would be counted as a small state because its population was no more than 18 million and its economy could hardly be described as advanced.

In his later work, Vital proposed another definition which partially solve the problem of arbitrariness inherent in his earlier one. He readily grants the primacy of the superpowers and then defines the middle and small powers in terms of the politics of the former, and particularly in terms of the balance of power between them. He points out that neither the political subjugation of a small power by a great power, nor its realignment, would in itself constitute a decisive increment to either primary power's political and military resources. In contrast, the present alignment of most of Germany and all of Japan with the United States "is beyond doubt one of the central features of the post-1945 world; and losing either or both to the Soviet Union or China would radically alter the distribution of actual and potential resources between the primary powers, perhaps irreversibly".⁵ Acknowledging that power is sometimes contingent on specific situational context, Vital defines the small power as "that state which, in the long term, can constitute no

more than a dispensable and non-decisive increment to a primary state's total array of political and military resources regardless of whatever short term, contingent weight as an auxiliary (or obstacle) to the primary power it may have in certain circumstances."⁶ Although this method of classifying a small power is still subjective and imprecise, it gives us a useful point of reference from which the small power-great power relationship and the alliance concept can be discussed.

Small states have traditionally been forced to seek protection from more powerful states, simply because they never had enough capability to defend themselves against the military attack from stronger states. Under conditions of intense large power conflict, small states may solicit outside support to redress the local imbalance of power in their favour. Even though competitive great power involvement in local conflicts can inflict such costs as more intense hostilities or restrictions on their autonomy, they may feel the costs justified if prospective benefits include regime or national survival, or in some cases attainment of revisionist foreign policy goals. Outside support can come in all kinds of forms according to the degree of obligation and involvement: a protectorate, a sphere of influence, a unilateral security guarantee, a military alliance, or just military aid.

It is important also to make a distinction between the

interests of a state and those of its policy makers. Sometimes the governments of small states see advantages in receiving political, economic, and military assistance from great powers to maintain themselves in power and to promote internal stability. Many leaders regard the possession of latest arms and equipment or association with great powers as symbols of prestige and status. Marshall Singer asserts that economic and military assistance does tend to support the regime in power. "But if the assistance given to a country is such that it strengthens the military *élite* vis-à-vis other *élites*, and particularly relative to the political *élite*, the likelihood is that in the event of a dispute among the country's power groups, the military *élite* will emerge victorious."⁷ In such a context, one should not overlook domestic motives of a small state for entering a security relationship with a great power.

When dealing with a much larger power, small states can bargain from strength or weakness. They can manipulate their assets or certain qualities which are valued by great powers. These may be their strategic location as bases, economic concessions, or diplomatic support such as the vote at the UN. A small state may actually use its weakness as a bargaining lever, by claiming that it is unable to carry out the task desired by the other party unless given material assistance or additional support. Both tactics may be effective in the short run, or as long as the great

power perceives it essential to maintain a favoured regime, to preserve a regional balance or to develop a military client state. A question that needs to be asked in any study of a small power-great power alliance is whether it is formed on the initiative of a smaller state or as a result of a great deal of coaxing by the great power. The examination can best be conducted by treating the smaller state as the subject rather than merely the object of international political process.

THE CONCEPT OF ALLIANCE

Alliance, as defined by Bruce Russett, is “a formal agreement among a limited number of countries concerning the conditions under which they will or will not employ military force”.⁸ Russett explicitly excludes both nonmilitary alignments and informal or implicit military constellations. The qualification “limited number of countries” is inserted in his definition to exclude quasi-global collective security arrangements, like the League of Nations Covenant, which binds all members to coalesce against any aggressor, even one of their own number. Because alliances, as distinct from collective security, are usually directed towards an external source of threat or a third party. Robert Osgood suggests that an alliance is:

a formal agreement that pledges states to co-operate in using their military resources against a specific state or states and usually obligates one or more of the signatories to use force or to consider (unilaterally or in consultation with allies) the use of force in specified circumstances.⁹

The central feature of any alliance is the *casus foederis* or those specified circumstances in which it becomes the duty of one of the allies to render promised military assistance to the other. Article 5 of the NATO treaty, for example, states that military action will be taken in response to an actual armed attack on one of the signatories, whereas the ANZUS treaty has a less unequivocal provision that each party will act to meet the danger “in accordance with its constitutional processes”. Alliance obligations can be either mutual or one-sided. The Japanese-American security treaty of 1951, for example, obligates both parties to consult, if Japan is attacked, whereupon the United States may come to the defence of Japan against external attack. But Japan is under no obligation to extend military assistance to the United States if the latter should be invaded. In substance, such multilateral alliances as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) similarly constitute no more than unilateral great power guarantees.

From Osgood’s classification of alliance functions one

may deduce the reasons why states enter into alliances as follows: (1) to acquire external support, military or diplomatic; (2) for domestic reasons, internal security, prestige, material assistance and so on; (3) to have some influence on the policies of allies, to restrain or control alliance partners; (4) to maintain international order.¹⁰ The decision to seek external support, the most common and basic factor in the formation of alliances, is made whenever a state's resources are deemed to be insufficient for the attainment of the desired objectives. Inadequacy of resources is, therefore, one major element in this decision. The other is the motive of self-preservation which may be expressed as perception of threat. For a majority of cases both factors combined to stimulate the decision to secure external support. But, as Holsti notes, they are not a sufficient condition for the formation of alliances.¹¹ Some states under these conditions may opt for neutrality, others for appeasement. A decision to join an alliance, for whatever reason, is made when benefits are perceived to outweigh costs. According to Liska, the gains and liabilities associated with alignment can be grouped into pairs such as protection and provocation, gains and burdens, potential in status enhancement and possible losses in capacity for independent action. Liska contends that "in order to assess a particular alignment all these factors must be compared with hypothetical gains and liabilities of other alignments; with

non-alignment; or at least with a different implementation of an unavoidable alliance".¹² The restrictions on freedom of action, in a state's view, are probably compensated by predictability of action from alliance partners. If the kind of response expected is regarded to be militarily valuable, then the decision to limit independence of action by specifying certainty if external support under set conditions will be made. As Arnold Wolfers notes,

nations enter into collective defense arrangements to ward off threats to their national security interests, as traditionally conceived, that emanate from some specific country or group of countries regarded as the chief national enemy, actual or potential. The motive behind such arrangements is the conviction that the creation of military strength sufficient to ward off the specific threat would be beyond their national capacity or would prove excessively and unnecessarily costly in view of the opportunities for mutual support and common defense.¹³

On the other hand, for many newly-independent states, a foreign policy of non-alignment can become a means of bolstering the governments in power and a focus for domestic cohesion. A policy that emphasizes independence and rationalizes a unique moral role in world politics is psychologically attractive to its practitioners. Furthermore, aid can sometimes be received from both sides without the need to forsake independent positions on

general issues. But the tactic of non-alignment is made viable only by the advent of nuclear weapons and the kind of international configuration where great powers compete for political victory and seek to avoid the escalation of military conflicts.

Holsti, Hopmann and Sullivan list three approaches to the study of the formation of alliance: balance of power theories, coalition theories, and national attributes theories.¹⁴ The balance of power or equilibrium theories put the emphasis almost exclusively on the international system. The motives for alignment derive largely from the structure, distribution of power, and the relations among states in the international system. The basic assumption is that the distribution of power in the international system tends towards equilibrium. The formation of one alliance contributes to the formation of a countervailing alliance. The prime motive for alliance formation is to prevent any state or combination of states from gaining a dominant position.

The coalition theories are drawn deductively from the game theory and the “size principle”. According to this viewpoint actors are assumed to create coalitions as large as they believe will ensure winning but no larger so as to maximise their share of the gain. This approach however gives an inadequate base from which to construct a theory of alliance formation in international politics. Alliances are often formed for purposes of defence or

deterrence. The success of defensive alliance is measured by its ability to prevent conflict, not by territorial or other gains which could be divided and maximised as rewards. Another difficulty in this approach lies in the assumption that statesmen are able to measure exact capabilities to define a minimum winning coalition.

The third approach is provided by those who emphasize one or more national attributes, other than power or capabilities, as important considerations in alliance policies. Here virtually all theories do not deny that those states faced with an external threat are more likely to seek allies than those in a more secure position. But in addition, they hold that we cannot treat states as undifferentiated entities if we wish to understand their propensity to see alliances as useful instruments of foreign policy as opposed to such alternatives as neutralism. It is necessary to take into account reasons that arise from national attributes, such as leadership needs, historical experience, general domestic needs including the requirements of internal stability, prestige, and economic interests. The present writer tends to agree with this approach. In a study of a country's foreign policy, one should not only examine international environment but also take into consideration such domestic factors as political struggle and historical legacy.

A study of Swedish and Norwegian policies following the Second World War gives some support for a proposition by Guetzkow that “the more successful a nation’s past experience with self-reliant policies, the less the tendency to join alliances”.¹⁵ Both states successfully avoided being drawn into the First World War and both tried to remain neutral during the Second, but only Sweden was successful. During the late 1940s perception of the Soviet threat led each of them to choose a policy that was consistent with its past success or failure against Nazi Germany. As a result, and after a great deal of discussion, Norway joined NATO and Sweden chose neutrality. This explanation equally applies to the case of Thailand, which attempted to carry out the tactic of neutrality and maintain maximum manoeuvrability in 1940-41, but it could not avoid Japanese invasion. Significantly, it was the same Thai leader who had ruled the country at the onset of the Pacific War who subsequently, in the late 1940s, sought external alliance.

Perhaps we could draw a brief comparison between Thailand, Cambodia, and Burma, all of which are small states in the same geographical area, and started with a similar perception of the Communist Chinese threat. Yet while Thailand pursued an alliance policy in the Cold War period, Burma and Cambodia deemed it more profitable to be non-aligned. In the case of

Burma, from the day of its independence in January 1948, it did not immediately adopt a policy of non-alignment. However, when the Communists in Burma, believed to be supported by the Soviet Union and Chinese Communists, went into rebellion, the government of Burma sought British and American military and economic aid to counter the threat. In June 1949, U Nu declared to the Burma Parliament: "It is now time that we should enter into mutually beneficial treaties or arrangements, defence and economic, with countries of common interest."¹⁶ Nonetheless, at the end of 1949, Burma became the first non-Communist state to recognize the new Communist government in Peking, which was reciprocated within two days. However, the recognition was followed by U Nu's announcement in May 1950 that the government saw the greater advantage in closer relations with the Western democracies and it would try to obtain aid from the United States and Britain.

The new Communist government in China did not modify its open hostility to the government in Rangoon until after the Korean War when Peking altered its general attitude towards Asian neutrals. Meanwhile, the Burma government signed an economic assistance agreement with the United States government in September 1950. The basic themes of Burma's foreign policy by 1952 were friendly relations with all countries,

no alignments with power blocs and no economic aid that would compromise its sovereignty. However, in March 1953 the Burma government requested the American aid program be terminated, ostensibly in order to show Peking that it was not in collusion with the United States in support of the Kuomintang forces on its territory. In June 1954 Chou En-Lai visited Rangoon and, with U Nu, announced joint adherence to the five principles of peaceful coexistence agreed earlier with the Indian prime minister. At the same time, Burma refused to join the American-sponsored SEATO alliance.

In the case of Cambodia, during the settlement at Geneva in July 1954, it secured general acceptance of its right not to be bound by any imposed neutralization and was the only non-Communist state of Indochina to have its own military commander sign a ceasefire agreement with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam representative. In fact, Cambodia had sought a specific agreement for automatic American assistance in the event of aggression against it. However, the United States turned away from specific commitments that would involve deploying ground troops in mainland Southeast Asia and was more inclined to see Cambodia as a member of the proposed security system for Southeast Asia.¹⁷ In the event, Cambodia did not join SEATO, although it was designated as one of the

protocol states with a right to invoke SEATO military protection. As the Vietminh complied with the provisions of the ceasefire agreement, Sihanouk chose neutralism after Nehru's visit to Phnom Penh in November 1954. It was calculated that a formal alliance with the United States would be unnecessarily provocative to China, and that closer relations with Peking would deter the traditional enemies, Vietnam and Thailand. Sihanouk was also influenced by the need to demonstrate to domestic critics that Cambodia's independence was genuine and not a disguised puppet status. The government commitment to the declaratory position became so strong that in September 1957 it passed a Law of Neutrality, the first article of which states that the Kingdom of Cambodia shall abstain from all military or ideological alliances with foreign countries.¹⁸

Cambodia's foreign policy of non-alignment, like Burma's, reflected a common unwillingness to become entangled in the Cold War, and it involved an attempt to take advantage of great power competition in the interest of national survival. Such a policy had been tried by the Thai prior to the Pacific War and they found it to be ultimately insufficient to prevent Japanese invasion. One crucial fact that distinguishes Thailand from its two neighbours is the absence of a strong anti-colonial suspicion toward Western powers. There was thus no domestic need for

Thai leaders to display Thailand's credentials as a genuinely independent country to rally domestic support or to foster internal cohesion. On the other hand, Thailand seems to have drawn a lesson from its experience as a sovereign state in the prewar international conflicts that in order to survive the kingdom had to have either sufficient strength to stand alone, or a binding commitment from a powerful ally to come to its defence in time of danger. But there are other factors at play which set Thailand apart from its neighbours such as the character of domestic political contest, the size of Chinese minority, the perception of external threat, and the traditional pattern of Thai foreign policy including historical rivalries with Burma and Vietnam. Thailand's posture in the early Asian Cold War provides an opportunity to examine these factors as motives of a small state for seeking external protection.

CHAPTER

2

BACKGROUND TO
THAI FOREIGN POLICY

In this chapter an attempt is made to give the reader a broad historical overview of the management of Thailand's external relations. The purpose is to point to the salient features of traditional Thai diplomacy which, it has been argued, partly contributed to the maintenance of the country's independence. The fact that Thailand has never been subject to direct colonial rule is in itself an important factor which has shaped Thailand's political, economic, and psychological outlook up to the modern period. It is often construed that Thailand's survival is due to its flexibility and its ability to play off one power against the other. Is there a basis of truth in that assertion or is it just a myth, perpetuated by admirers and detractors alike? What is the underlying historical pattern of Thai foreign policy? Does Thailand's post-1948 policy of alignment with the West represent a continuity with, or a departure from, the traditional pattern? Does it have its roots in the past?

Thailand's foreign policy experience up to its participation in the present world-wide states system should be divided into three major periods in accordance with the type of international order which existed in Southeast Asia: the Chinese tributary system, the European colonial order, and Japan's "New Order".¹ Tribute was the general rule governing traditional relations between states in Southeast Asia. Its hierarchical principle was as much a way to regulate relations among states as the modern

European concept of equality of states, international law and diplomacy. The tributary system of international order in Southeast Asia was superseded in the nineteenth century by the European colonial order. Although Thailand, uniquely, escaped direct colonial rule, the imposition of European colonial rule in Southeast Asia meant for Thailand a new set of relationships with its neighbours, now ruled by colonial administrations. Such a position was abruptly interrupted by Japan's military conquest of the region in early 1940s which ultimately brought down the colonial order.

THAILAND IN THE TRIBUTARY SYSTEM

According to popular understanding of Thai history, the Thai (or T'ai), as a description of a nation, first arrived in the area which is now the northern part of Thailand in the ninth century. These Thai migrants flowed gradually and steadily from their ancient kingdom of Nanchao in Yunnan and settled among native dwellers which then consisted of the Mon and the Khmer.² As the Mongols began their conquest of China in the early thirteenth century, the great surge southwards of Thai migration followed. About the year 1238 the Thai seized Sukhothai, then part of the Angkorian empire, and established the Kingdom of Sukhothai. Fresh impetus was given to Thai migration by the capture of the Nanchao capital, Tali-fu, by Kublai Khan's armies

in 1253.³ The power of Sukhothai rose to its pinnacle in the reign of King Ramkamhaeng (reigned *circa* 1283-1317). Sukhothai now supplanted the Khmer rule in the Chaophraya river valley and expanded its power to the south into the Malay Peninsula. The Thai also absorbed the best elements of civilization with which they came into contact, indeed Sukhothai of this period has been called the “cradle of Siamese civilization”.⁴

Having consolidated his authority in the Chaophraya river valley and established some kind of alliance relationship with other Thai chiefs in the surrounding principalities such as Chiangmai and Payao, Ramkamhaeng sent a series of tributary missions to the Imperial court of China.⁵ The first Sukhothai embassy to Yuan court in 1292 was a response to China’s demands for tribute. According to Suebsaeng Promboon, tributary missions from Siam to China had a dual purpose. They were sent to promote good diplomatic relations as well as to gain trade privileges. Thai kings, by sending missions to China, obtained recognition from Chinese emperors, which in turn became a means of strengthening the senders’ legitimacy and political influence.⁶

After the death of Ramkamhaeng, Sukhothai declined and lost all political influence in the area of the lower basin of the Chaophraya river, as many of its dependencies asserted their independence. In the middle of the fourteenth century a new Thai

kingdom emerged at Ayudhya. It soon became the main centre of Thai power in the central Chaophraya river valley. The kings of Ayudhya followed the Sukhothai practice and took the first opportunity soon after the defeat of the Mongols by the Ming to send tributary missions to Nanking. Since the Chinese emperor usually accepted only missions from reigning kings, the Thai saw acceptance of such missions as “a confirmation of *de facto* kings as *de jure* rulers of Siam”.⁷ Throughout the Ayudhya period, regular tributary missions were sent to China, especially on occasions of the enthronement of a Thai king or a Chinese emperor. The relationship between the two countries was peaceful and cordial as China never made military attacks on Siam, nor did it try to interfere in any way with Thai sovereignty. The political motives in sending tributary missions to China were gradually surpassed by the economic motives, as the Thai discovered that their long list of gifts given to the emperor were reciprocated by even more valuable Chinese gifts. Moreover, members of the mission were often permitted to conduct private trading in China before returning home. Thus, maritime trade that was operated within the tributary framework flourished and brought vital revenues and profits to the Thai court.⁸

The Ayudhya era ended in 1767 when the capital city of Ayudhya was sacked by the Burmese army. But the Thai recovered quickly under the leadership of King Taksin and his

general, Chaophraya Chakri. The latter became the founder of the present dynasty and established Bangkok as the capital of Siam in 1782. The Bangkok kings continued and expanded the lucrative tributary trade with China. Between 1782 and 1854, fifty five tributary missions were sent to the Imperial court of China, or an average of 2 missions every 3 years.⁹ As from the second decade of the nineteenth century onwards, the private junk trade from Siam to China accelerated to an unprecedented degree, rapidly outstripping traditional tributary trade, while formal tributary missions continued to be sent to sanction it until 1853.¹⁰

Tributary relations did not exist solely between China and its peripheral neighbours. Among such powers in Southeast Asia as Siam, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and other small principalities, tribute served partly as the order of relations during peaceful times. Prior to the introduction of the European state system, a state in mainland Southeast Asia was thought of not as an area of precisely defined boundaries, but rather as a royal capital centre from which power and control radiated outward in concentric circles which diminished in strength as distance from the centre increased.¹¹ In some remote areas this diluted authority would meet that of a neighbouring state, and such border principalities were often tributaries to several suzerain powers simultaneously. Normally a tributary was expected to pay

a regular token of submission, such as gold and silver ornamental trees or local produce, and contribute manpower or troops to its stronger neighbour. The latter, in return, promised its vassals protection from other powers. The refusal to acknowledge the suzerainty of the stronger or to carry out vassal obligations often resulted in warfare and subjugation. But most states seem to have experienced recurrent cycles of consolidation and disintegration. The kingdom of Ayudhya was one of the more powerful entities in the Southeast Asian subcontinent. During the long reign of King Trailokanat in the fifteenth century, a strong, centralized, social, administrative, and legal system was created which was to endure largely unchanged into the nineteenth century. Occasionally the kingdom suffered from palace revolutions and violent dynastic changes normal in such societies, as well as from local conflicts with rival Thai states in Chiangmai and Lanchang in the north and northeast, the Khmers in the east and the Burmese in the west. Twice in its long history of conflicts with Burma, first in 1569 and again in 1767, Ayudhya was attacked and destroyed by the invading Burmese armies, followed by brief periods of Burmese suzerainty. On the other hand, the Thai raided a passive Cambodia at intervals and continued to look to it as a source of booty and labour for their vast underpopulated land.

The restoration of Thai power after the fall of Ayudhya by King Taksin and his successor, Chaophraya Chakri who became

King Rama I, laid firm foundations for Siam's strength in the nineteenth century. During the consolidation period successive Burmese attacks were decisively repulsed. The Laotian Kingdoms of Vientiane and Luang Prabang were conquered and reduced to vassalage. Thai suzerainty in Cambodia was reestablished, and much of western Cambodia, comprising the provinces of Angkor and Battambang, was annexed to Thai territories. In the south, the Malay states of Pattani, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu were brought under closer supervision and surveillance.

However, by the time King Rama I died in 1809, the power of Vietnam began to revive under Emperor Gia Long after three decades of civil war. Both Cambodia and Laos were forced to send dual tribute to their two powerful neighbours and Thai interests began to clash with those of the Vietnamese, particularly in Cambodia. The Vietnamese had, since the mid-fifteenth century when they had succeeded in throwing off Chinese domination, been slowly expanding southwards. By the early seventeenth century they had moved into the Mekong delta region of Cambodia; a hundred years later they had annexed and absorbed this territory. By the end of the eighteenth century, while Siam still had little difficulty in controlling succession to the Cambodia throne, its claims of suzerainty came under serious challenge from the Vietnamese. The first half of the nineteenth century saw a great struggle between Siam and Vietnam for primacy in Cambodia.

As the British defeat of Burma in 1826 diminished the Burmese danger to Siam, King Rama III decided to take up the Vietnamese challenge more resolutely. In 1829, Siam completely defeated a Vietnamese-supported Laotian revolt by Chao Anu, the Vientiane ruler, and set up a defensive zone against Vietnam by depopulating the area beyond the Mekong to make the assertion of Vietnamese influence more difficult.¹² Then, when the news of a rebellion in Saigon in 1833 reached Bangkok, a Thai army and a naval force were dispatched to restore Thai supremacy in Cambodia and to attack Vietnam. After initial victory, the Thai forces encountered heavy Vietnamese resistance in Cochinchina and were forced to retreat. The Vietnamese invaded and occupied Cambodia; then attempted to annex and convert Cambodia into a Vietnamese province.¹³ At the end of 1840 the Cambodian people rebelled, massacred isolated Vietnamese garrisons and petitioned the Thai for assistance in expelling the Vietnamese. This presented Siam with an irresistible opportunity to displace Vietnam as the dominant power in Cambodia. For years the Thai had been on the defensive, concentrating on the fortification of the frontier provinces in the fear that the Vietnamese would attack Siam. So, they took the role of liberator and saviour of Buddhism, placing a Cambodian prince who had long lived under Thai protection on the Cambodian throne. For the following five years Thai and Vietnamese armies, aided by rival Cambodian

factions, fought each other intermittently on Cambodian soil without decisive result. The Vietnamese eventually offered peace to break the deadlock. In 1847, Siam reached an agreement with Vietnam, placing Cambodia under the joint suzerainty of the two countries. As its protégé was accepted by all as the king of Cambodia, Siam regained its dominant position in Cambodia. But the most significant gain for Siam was the security of having Cambodia as a buffer between itself and Vietnam.

For the moment peace was restored in Thai-Vietnamese relations, but the equilibrium looked precarious. A succession dispute in Cambodia could well again have sparked off another war between the two countries. However, the potential danger of conflict between Siam and Vietnam was suddenly removed, just as the perpetual Thai-Burmese conflict was, by the imposition of colonial rule upon Siam's rivals and the setting up of a new European colonial order in Southeast Asia.

Such historical antagonisms among regional states, giving rise to mutual fears and prejudices, provide some explanation for the revival in the pattern of intraregional conflict following the end of colonial interlude. For example, pre-colonial experience of rivalry between Siam and Vietnam for political influence and strategic advantage in the interposing states of Cambodia and Laos have partially shaped their post-colonial attitudes and actions. Thus, when French colonial rule in Indochina was

removed in the 1950s, Siam and Vietnam looked set to resume their historical rivalry for dominance in Laos and Cambodia. By the same token, Cambodian fear of its larger neighbours was not without historical justification.

The salient features of Thai foreign policy towards its neighbours during the Sukhothai, Ayudhya and the early Bangkok era were: continual cultivation and maintenance of cordial relations with powerful China; regular efforts to counter threats and hostility from its neighbours of comparable strength such as Burma and Vietnam; and intermittent attempts to dominate and control its weaker neighbours. This pattern underwent a complete revolution during the era of European colonialism when relations between Siam and neighbouring states of Southeast Asia were submerged beneath relations between Siam and the expanding metropolitan powers. The advent of the colonial system and the intense projections of extraregional powers totally altered the balance of power and the shape of inter-state relations in the region.

THAILAND IN THE EUROPEAN COLONIAL ORDER

The Europeans had been present in Southeast Asia from the fifteenth century when they began regular trading and missionary activities in the region. But it was only in the

eighteenth and nineteenth century that the Western colonial powers, principally Britain, France and Holland, made the greatest impact on the pattern of political relations in the region. The Industrial Revolution which began in Britain in the eighteenth century stimulated British interest in the eastern seas in a quest for sources of raw materials and outlets for manufactured goods. But none of the Western colonial powers were any longer interested in just profit-making; they were more assertive in their demands for free trade and dignified treatment and in their demonstration that their rule also meant order and sound administration.

By the early nineteenth century, Britain was the dominant power in Southern Asia. It dominated India, had a foothold at Penang and Singapore in the Malay Peninsula, and was beginning to extend its authority into Burma. Its primary interests were India and protection of its trade with and sea route to China. A secondary British interest in Southeast Asia was the promotion of free trade in the region. It was this trade interest, as well as the desire to secure recognition of their possession of Penang, which led the Government of India in 1821 to dispatch John Crawford as an envoy to Siam. But Crawford's proposal for freer trade was rejected by the Thai court, apparently because it was contrary to the pre-existing Thai system of international relations and state trading. The other reason is that Siam had stayed in isolation

for so long since a revolution in 1688 had led to the expulsion of French influence from the country.¹⁴ It saw no reason why it should renew contractual relations with European powers, who might again meddle with its internal affairs or become a source of danger. From Crawford's writings one has evidence that the Thai court was aware of British power. For example, one of the Thai officials was quoted as saying that "the English were a dangerous people to have any connection with, for that they were not only the ablest, but the most ambitious of the European nations who frequented the East".¹⁵

In 1825, the British sent another envoy, Henry Burney, to Siam to elicit Thai military aid against Burma. But he failed to obtain it. As the tide of the Anglo-Burmese War changed, Burney's mission altered to one of ensuring Siam's neutrality. The negotiations focused instead on trade and Malayan problems. In 1826, after the news of the Burmese defeat reached Bangkok, Siam signed a treaty which opened the country to freer trade. In return, the British conceded to Thai claims in Kedah, and recognized, in ambiguous terms, Siam's sphere of influence over the other Malay states of Perak, Kelantan and Trengganu.¹⁶ The Thai acceptance of the treaty was due largely to their apprehension of British power and ambition which had been clearly demonstrated in their defeat of Burma, a power whom the Thai held in awe.¹⁷ To counterbalance British power, Siam

signed a commercial treaty similar to the Burney treaty with the United States in 1833.¹⁸

But the Thai policy of accommodating British trade aims was difficult to pursue for two reasons. First, the concessions which King Rama III was asked to give hit directly at his trade monopolies and thus reduced his revenues, an important source of his power and patronage. Secondly, the treaty similarly hit at the power of the nobles who now had to face the prospect of competition from foreign traders in their traditional preserves. By 1840, the King and his officials had to find a way to circumvent many provisions of the treaty by a system of tax-farming, giving rise to much frustration and hostility on the part of British traders.¹⁹

In 1850, Sir James Brooke was sent out by the British government to negotiate a new treaty with Siam. But Brooke's proposals met with rejection by the Thai court. Brooke's failure was traditionally ascribed to his arrogance, his lack of proper credentials from Queen Victoria, and King Rama III's displeasure with Westerners over the Hunter affair.²⁰ These factors no doubt helped undermine negotiations. But the main reason for Thai rejection may have been the strong resistance from conservative elements at the court, particularly from powerful noble families. The king had absolute power only in theory because in practice he had to rely on the nobility for tax collection, administration

of outer provinces, and the maintenance of law and order.²¹ The Bunnag family was at the time the most powerful noble family in Siamese politics. Two most important ministries of *Phraklang* (treasury and foreign affairs), and *Kalahom* (military affairs and southern provinces) were held concurrently by the head of the Bunnag family, Dit Bunnag. At the same time, his brother, That Bunnag, retained the post of deputy *Phraklang*. As much of the Bunnag wealth and power was based on their trade monopolies, they were more likely to resist further erosion of this important privilege. In addition, King Rama III was particularly weak during the 1850-51 period because he was ill and dying.²²

Whatever the reasons for Siam's rejection of a revised treaty, Sir James Brooke was so angered by what he thought to be Thai intransigence and arrogant attitudes that he urged the British government to use force to secure an agreement. London, however, did not respond. A change of government in Siam was anticipated; it was felt that a new regime would be more liberal and conciliatory. Besides, the British were preoccupied with events in the Crimea and felt in no real position to undertake any military action against Siam. But Brooke was not alone in failing to secure a treaty. A few months earlier, an American envoy named Balestier had similarly been rejected and he likewise advocated strong action be taken by the American governments.²³

As it happened, there was no military demonstration against Siam. King Rama III died in April 1851, and Prince Mongkut, who had been passed over for the succession to the throne in 1824, was enthroned by the Bunnags.²⁴ His full brother, Prince Chuthamani, was elevated to rule jointly with him as his coequal and second king. A new generation of the Bunnag family also took over. Dit's eldest son, Chuang Bunnag, was appointed *Kalahom*, while Chuang's brother, Kham, became *Phraklang*. Their father and uncle, who together had run both ministries for more than twenty years, were given honorific royal titles of Somdet Chaophraya and, having reached old age, began to retire from public life. The new ruling party in Siam was most informed about the West.²⁵ The British defeat of China in the Opium War, followed by the British victory in the second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852, convinced them that the traditional policy of isolationism was no longer feasible, now that the British, while pressing hard for treaty revision and trade liberalization, were in a position to threaten Bangkok from both Burma and Malaya. They were well aware that if China failed to maintain its isolation against Western pressure, it was imperative for Siam, were it to remain free, to come to terms quickly with the new regional balance of power. Chuang Bunnag, the most influential man in the government, apparently believed that free trade would not necessarily be detrimental to the country's (and Bunnag's)

revenues, as the reduction of tariff duties and the loss of monopoly rights would be compensated by the increase in the volume of trade. No sooner had King Mongkut ascended the throne in 1851 than the government relaxed trade restrictions by reducing import duties and permitting the export of rice. On 18 April 1855 the Siamese government signed a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with a British envoy, Sir John Bowring.

The historic Bowring treaty of 1855 had twelve articles, the major points of which were:

(1) British subjects were placed under British consular jurisdiction.

(2) British subjects were permitted to trade freely at all the seaports of Siam. They were allowed to buy or rent lands, situated anywhere within a distance of 24 hours' boat journey from Bangkok.

(3) Measurement duties were replaced by import duties of 3% and specified export duties.

(4) British merchants were allowed to buy and sell directly with individual Siamese except for opium.

(5) British shipping was to enjoy the same rights and privileges as Siamese and Chinese shipping.

(6) Britain was guaranteed a most favoured nation status if Siam concluded treaties with other nations.

(7) The treaty could be revised after ten years if either party desired.²⁶

The concession of extraterritoriality was made because it was realized that jurisdiction over foreigners had been a main cause of disputes between Asian and European governments and often led to the latter's punitive expeditions. Thus, the government's policy was to satisfy British aims and to minimise sources of friction which might give cause for British intervention.²⁷ A series of treaties similar to the Bowring model were then entered into with most Western powers, including France and the United States in 1856, Denmark in 1858, Portugal in 1859, Holland in 1860, Prussia in 1862, and Belgium, Italy, Norway and Sweden in 1868.²⁸ By these means, the king and his ministers hoped to integrate Siam into the international system of civilised states by making Siam known to the West. In addition, they tried to pursue a policy of direct negotiations with sovereigns or home governments in the belief that Siam would be better treated by them than by their consular representatives or their colonial officers.

The Bowring treaty had a profound consequence for foreign trade in Siam. Britain, the most advanced industrial and financial nation, took full advantage of being the first country to sign a treaty and came to dominate most of Siam's trade. Britain's predominant position was also aided by the geographical proximity of its companies, through which most of Siam's exports were conducted. Just as important, though, Siam

not only allowed but encouraged British economic dominance. The Thai believed that this would ensure British goodwill and that a strong British presence would deter France from taking any action against Siam. By 1892 Britain informal control of the Thai economy was pervasive. In that year 93% of Siam's imports and 85% of her exports went to the British empire, and British ships accounted for 87% of the tonnage stopping at Bangkok.²⁹ The British dominance in the service sector was almost complete. Up to 1894 nearly all the insurance companies and banks in Siam were British.³⁰ The growth of British economic interests in Siam in the 1870s and 1880s was to become a factor in a British decision to intervene on behalf of Siam against French encroachment.

In the meantime, the Sino-Siamese junk trade which had been flourishing over the previous century began a slow and steady decline. In 1830, the Chinese still dominated Siam's external trade. But by 1880s the British had captured over 70% of the annual shipping of Siam, while the junk trade had declined to an average of 2-3% a year.³¹ King Mongkut had already stopped sending tribute to Peking altogether after 1853, ostensibly because of the unrest then taking place in China due to the Taiping rebellion. Moreover, the ritual of tribute presentation, hitherto regarded as an indispensable sanction for vigorous trade, had by the 1830s already lost much lustre as private and uncontrolled trade rose to replace it.³² As China was forced to

open up the country to the West, there was no longer any point in continuing to send tribute missions. In political terms, the move represented a realistic appraisal of the shift in the balance of power in Asia in the light of the advent of the Western colonial powers. As recorded in the minutes of the ministers' meetings on the Chinese demand for tributes submitted to Mongkut, the tribute to China was discontinued in order that the Europeans should not misunderstand the status of Siam.³³

Siam had, in all probability, been saved from engaging in perpetual and destructive wars with Burma when the latter was colonized by the British. Yet this peace and security was obtained only because the East was brought into the Western political and economic system and so at the risk of being absorbed by one of the Western powers. By the astute policy of accommodation, Siam saved itself from the fate that befell its neighbours. But that policy alone proved to be insufficient in coping with the unrelenting pressure from expansionist France in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Fundamental internal reform was soon perceived to be an urgent necessity if the kingdom was to survive.

THE FRENCH COLONIAL EXPANSION IN INDOCHINA

In 1861 the French, who had just turned their conquests

in Cochinchina into a permanent colony, became increasingly interested in Cambodia. Cambodia, however, was regarded by the Thai as one of their suzerain territories which had significant strategic value as a buffer against their regional enemies. Moreover, Cambodia paid tribute to Siam and contributed substantially to the treasury revenues. The French, having defeated Annam, regarded themselves as the heir to the Annamite claims of suzerain rights over Cambodia. They also saw the control of Cambodia to be of strategic importance as protection of Cochinchina's western flank.³⁴

In August 1863 the Cambodian King accepted a French offer of a treaty of protection. The Thai protested to both the British and the French governments that the treaty ignored their title as joint suzerain over Cambodia. They went for a secret agreement with King Norodom of Cambodia in December 1863, whereby he explicitly restated the vassal status of the Kingdom of Cambodia.³⁵ The disclosure of this secret document constrained the French, who had yet to pacify Cochinchina, to negotiate with Siam. On 15 July 1867 a Franco-Thai treaty was signed in Paris, whereby the French recognized Siam's claims to Battambang and Siem Reap in return for Siam's recognition of the French protectorate over Cambodia and the annulment of the secret treaty of 1863.³⁶

One of King Mongkut's reasons in giving up Cambodia

was his suspicion that the British and the French had done a deal over Siam. The British desire to settle outstanding border disputes with Siam in 1863-64 seemed to suggest to him that the British had abandoned Siam to the French and were thus making preparations for a common border with French territories.³⁷ In his letter to Phraya Suriyawong, Siam's ambassador to France, the King wrote in March 1867:

The British and the French can entertain no other feeling for each other than mutual esteem as fellow human beings, whereas the likes of us, who are wild and savage, can only be regarded by them as animals. We have no means of knowing whether or in what way they have contrived beforehand to divide our country among themselves.³⁸

So great was the extent of his fear of the French threat that King Mongkut seriously considered requesting British protection if French pressure proved beyond resistance.³⁹ What this means is that in the reign of King Mongkut the Thai did not really play one side off against the other, since in the final analysis they preferred the British to the French. Their strategy was to rely on British diplomatic support to curb the French. Playing-off would imply that the Thai also use French support to curb the British, something they scarcely did because they feared and distrusted the French more than the British.

The Franco-Thai treaty of 1867 established a French protectorate over Cambodia and left the crucial question of Siam's claim of suzerainty over the Laotian states unsettled. But the 1870 Franco-Prussian war was to give the kingdom a respite by diverting French attention temporarily from their East Asian ambitions. In the decade that followed, the French concentrated in expanding only in Vietnam. This breathing-space was welcome because an internal political crisis had to be resolved. On his father's death in 1868, Prince Chulalongkorn at the age of fifteen succeeded to the throne. For five years, power was in the hands of Chaophraya Sri Suriyawong (Chuang Bunnag), now appointed as the regent. When he became king in his own right, young Chulalongkorn embarked on a series of reforms, announcing the abolition of slavery, changing the judicial and financial systems, and setting up a council of state and privy council to advise him. Reaction to the forceful moves by the King and his supporters led to a major political crisis, the so-called Front Palace Incident, in December 1874.⁴⁰ In consequence, the King was forced to delay reforms until more than a decade later, when most ministers of his father's generation began to pass from public life.

Having subjugated Tongking in 1884 and terminated its war with China by the Treaty of Tientsin in 1885, the French began to turn their attention to Laos, aiming to secure the Mekong as a natural border for their Indochinese empire. They demanded

of the Thai the right to establish a consulate at Luang Phrabang to protect non-existent French commerce in the Mekong valley.⁴¹ After protracted negotiations, the Thai eventually conceded in May 1886 the establishment of a French vice-consulate in Luang Phrabang in return for a limited form of French recognition of Thai suzerainty there. Auguste Pavie, the French vice-consul designate, already departed for the post even before the news of the French Assembly's rejection of the arrangements reached Bangkok. In Luang Phrabang, Pavie soon discovered that the Thai ability to pacify these regions was tenuous. On the departure of Thai troops from Luang Phrabang, a group of Chinese marauders attacked the city and put to flight the local Thai representatives. By the end of 1887 the French began to revive the rival claims of Vietnamese suzerain rights over the Lao principalities east of the Mekong. In 1888 on the pretext that they were going to suppress the Chinese marauders on the borders of Tongking, the French marched unopposed into Sipsong Chuthai. These events brought home to the Thai government the urgency of the need to reorganize the central administration. It responded by expanding the areas of jurisdiction of the permanent commissionerships of Luang Phrabang, Nongkhai and Ubon in the Mekong valley. In 1891, the King dispatched his half-brothers as High Commissioners to Nongkhai and Bassac.⁴² In Bangkok, an actual cabinet was formalized in 1892, with its ministries structured

on functional lines. The King's half-brother, Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, was appointed to take charge of the Ministry of the North, which he later turned into the Ministry of Interior, to plan and implement a major administrative reform.

The French government was at this time under tremendous pressure from colonial enthusiasts at home. One of these was Franoise Deloncle, a French consular officer who argued that France had rights derived from those of Vietnam over the old Vientiane kingdom, even to the west of the Mekong. Siam should be confined as of old to the Chaophraya river valley.⁴³ Auguste Pavie, who took up the position of French minister in Bangkok in June 1892, also urged Paris to take a resolute forward policy. Siam, meanwhile, made preparations to reinforce its positions across the Mekong. In 1893, the French stepped up their troop activities in the disputed area and provoked armed clashes between French and Thai forces.

As war with the French was imminent, the Thai turned to the British for help. In November 1892, for instance, Frederick Verney, the Thai government representative in London, proposed that the British enter into a defensive arrangement with Siam. Failing that, the Thai government proposed an Anglo-Thai Agreement, whereby Siam would not cede any territory to any foreign power without British permission. In turn British would protect Siam against any attempt to annex it.⁴⁴ However, British

Foreign Secretary, Lord Rosebery, rejected these proposals because he did not want to be dragged into a Franco-Siamese conflict in which Britain had no interest. The British were not interested in the plight of the Siamese Laotian states and were keen to keep out of the conflict with France.⁴⁵ In March 1893 Rosebery informed the French that the British would not intervene in any French dispute with Siam. By adopting an attitude of “cautious diplomatic reserve”, Rosebery indirectly encouraged the French to proceed with their expansionist plans.⁴⁶

In April 1893 French troops seized several islands in the lower Mekong and demanded the evacuation of all positions held by Siam on the east bank of the river. Bangkok appealed to London for assistance but the British urged the Thai to capitulate and not provoke the French. The Thai protested against the French demand and suggested international arbitration. But the French refused.⁴⁷ Thereafter the Thai attitude hardened. The reasons for this may have been that King Chulalongkorn, then seriously ill, had become obsessed with the idea that the French were about to take over the entire nation and that only armed resistance could save Siam. Evidence also suggests that within the cabinet, the “war party” which favoured resistance was dominant.⁴⁸ In addition, the Thai may still have harboured hope of British support. They were probably encouraged by the francophobic attitude of local British business agents and even

by the private, unofficial counsel of the British minister in Bangkok.⁴⁹ Whatever the reasons, Siam opted for a policy of military resistance.

In May 1893 Siam counterattacked and forced French troops to evacuate the island of Khone. In several skirmishes that followed, a French officer named Groscurin was killed, and another, Captain Thoreux, was captured. The French demanded the release of Thoreux and sent gunboats to Bangkok. As the French ships forced their entry up the Chaophraya river, the Thai forts at Paknam opened fire on the French vessels but failed to stop them. This incident of 13 July 1893, generally known as the Paknam Incident, only caused the French to increase their demands. Siam's initial refusal to accept unconditionally the French ultimatum of 20 July also meant that it had to submit to the harsher terms of the ultimatum of 29 July after the French had subjected Bangkok to a naval blockade. In essence, the 20 July ultimatum demanded the cession of Siam's territories on the east bank of the Mekong including the islands; indemnities of 2 million francs; and the punishment of those responsible for the death of Groscurin and for the attack on French ships.⁵⁰ Later demands consisted of French occupation of Chantaburi pending evacuation by Siam of the east bank of the Mekong and the prohibition of Thai troops within 25 kilometres of the Mekong.⁵¹

At this juncture, there was a danger of a clash between France and Great Britain. Rosebery became concerned over France's real intentions with regard to Siam. The combination of the French actions after 20 July served to convince Rosebery that the French were no longer aiming just for the acquisition of Siam's part of Laos, but that they were aiming to acquire Siam also. The British were particularly perturbed at the way the French kept making additional demands, the latest of which seemed to them to be an attempt to obtain an indirect hold on Battambang and Siem Reap. The loss of these two provinces would leave Bangkok open to future French pressure and place the independence and integrity of Siam in jeopardy.⁵² Here the vital interest of the British was at stake as it was British policy "to keep a buffer between the French frontier and that of India, in order that a vast expenditure and danger may not be incurred by the immediate proximity of a great military power on our Southeastern flank".⁵³ Besides, the French blockade of Siam was a challenge to British trade dominance in Siam and to British prestige in Southeast Asia. The British did not want to see their commercial interests in Siam imperilled. As Rosebery put it, "as we possess practically a monopoly of Siamese commerce we do not wish to see our trade destroyed by the tariff wall which the French erect around their possessions".⁵⁴ The British ambassador in Paris was instructed to obtain a clear statement

from the French government regarding French aims; the threat of “grave measures” was used.⁵⁵ On the other hand, the British advised the Thai to accept the French ultimatum immediately and unconditionally so as not to give France the excuse to annex Siam proper. The French government assured the British that France would respect the independence of Siam; on 31 July 1893 both governments signed a protocol agreeing to establish a neutral zone between their respective empires.⁵⁶ On 1 August Siam accepted all the conditions laid down in the French ultimatum and two days later the blockade was raised.

On 3 October 1893, the Franco-Thai treaty was signed incorporating the terms of the French ultimatum and supplementary French demands such as French jurisdiction rights for Asians under French protection.⁵⁷ Siam had no way of resisting French demands and its fate was totally at the mercy of the two European powers. The British and the French now became engaged in a protracted negotiation to delineate the buffer zone between their respective colonial possessions. The British wanted to preserve Thai independence in order to safeguard their vast economic and commercial interests in Siam as well as to avoid having a coterminous frontier with France. They also desired to exclude any third power, be it Germany or Russia, from gaining political influence or an economic foothold in Siam. In July 1895 the Liberal government fell and

Lord Salisbury returned to the Foreign Office. In August Salisbury, in his discussion with Courcel, French ambassador in London, dropped the British attempt to get a buffer on the upper Mekong and offered an exchange of Mong Sing, a town on the east bank of the upper Mekong, for a joint guarantee of Siam's neutrality. In October, in order to resolve the impasse arising from French opposition to a guarantee of Siam's "existing frontiers", Salisbury proposed that Britain and France only guarantee the central part of Siam, the Menam Chaophraya valley.⁵⁸ On 15 January 1896, both countries signed the joint declaration which guaranteed the independence and territorial integrity of the Menam region. In this agreement, neither Power would advance their forces into the Menam valley nor acquire exclusive privilege or advantage there; nor enter into any separate agreement permitting a third Power to take any action from which the signatories were themselves bound by the declaration to abstain. Central Siam thus became a buffer between French and British possessions in mainland Southeast Asia.⁵⁹

It is clear that Siam's resort to armed resistance during the Paknam crisis of 1893 was a complete failure, and that it was only British intervention which prevented further humiliation of Siam by France. Moreover, throughout this period Siam was excluded from the Anglo-French negotiation in London and Siam had no part whatsoever in the 1896 declaration. In essence the

declaration was only an agreement between France and Britain not to enter into war against each other on account of Siam. It left in doubt the question of Siam's rule on the Malay Peninsula, in the southeastern provinces bordering Cambodia, and in the whole of what is now northeast Thailand.

The whole 1893-1896 crisis had clearly demonstrated to the Thai government its impotence before the Western powers and spurred greater efforts toward modernization. In late 1895 the King recovered from his illness, and the government then set out with renewed zeal to attain a more efficient centralized authority, a greater control over the provinces and distant dependencies, an improvement of economic conditions and revenue collection systems, a modernisation of the armed forces, and an extensive reform of the legal process. Of greatest importance was the extension and consolidation of centralized, judicial and financial control over outer provinces and former vassals under the direction of Prince Damrong. Commissioners were appointed from Bangkok to supervise groups of provinces organized into *monthons*, and semi-independent provincial nobles were gradually displaced by salaried civil servants. This was to be reinforced by a modern system of communications and an effective bureaucratic structure. The administrative reform and the modernisation programme were intended to project Siam's image as a modern sovereign state, and to identify Siam with the

Western concept of statehood, within a stable, defined frontier under a modern central jurisdiction. It was also an attempt to establish firm centralized control upon outlying provinces to prevent further nibbling away by Siam's colonial neighbours.⁶⁰

Modernisation was important to Siam's survival because it strengthened the nation and minimised the risk of disputes between European colonial and Thai officials over such issues as lawlessness or the breakdown of civil administration. One should recall that the British imposed the "Residential System" of administration in the mainland Malay states of Pahang, Perak, Negri Sembilan and Selangor in the 1870s because of what they saw as the anarchic state of administration in those states. In the King's view, as expressed to his Minister of Interior in January 1896, the threat to the independence of Siam could be met by three measures: by maintaining peaceful relations with the neighbouring colonial regimes, by preserving the internal peace of the kingdom, and by improving the kingdom's administration to match that of the European regimes themselves. These measures were interdependent. The efficiency of provincial administration and the development of the national economy would engender necessary increase in government revenue, which in itself was essential to finance further administrative reforms. The increased income would also provide the government with the means to purchase military equipment and to improve communications,

which would augment the power of the government to enforce law and order and to preserve internal peace. Internal stability would, in turn, stimulate trade and forestall any possible pretext for foreign powers to intervene in the government of the country.⁶¹

The administrative and economic reforms did not proceed without obstacles and setbacks. Resistance to change came from provincial rulers and the nobility struggling to preserve the status quo. In 1902, three separate rebellions broke out in the north, in the northeast and in Pattani in the south – clearly a reaction to the imposition of central control. But the government was able to suppress them with its modernized army.⁶² By 1910 Siam had been transformed into a cohesive, centralized state within defined boundaries.

For the British government, the 1896 Anglo-French declaration still left out the question of its strategic and commercial interests in the Malay Peninsula which, it feared, could be threatened if some foreign third power was able to obtain a footing in the area.⁶³ Thus, on 6 April 1897 the British entered into a secret agreement with Siam, whereby the latter undertook not to cede any territory or to grant any commercial concessions in the Malay Peninsula to a third Power without British consent. In return Britain would back Siam in resisting aggression in the region.⁶⁴ In effect Siam allowed its southern

provinces to become a protectorate of Britain, while the latter recognized Siam's rights over the Malay Peninsula. But the British were to find this secret convention inadequate to protect their economic interests as Siam's control over local Malay rulers was not complete, and the latter were able to grant commercial concessions on their own without reference to Bangkok.⁶⁵ The British feared that the Germans would be able to acquire coaling stations in the Peninsula and thereby pose a threat to British naval supremacy in the East. The desire to deny the Germans this strategic advantage forced them to review the issue and ultimately led them to negotiate with the French to clarify and codify the 1896 declaration.

In the early 1900s, the rapid development of international events compelled France, then Russia's ally, and Britain, a Japanese ally by the treaty of 1902, to come to a friendly understanding. The deteriorating situation in the Far East between Russia and Japan engendered fear in Britain and France that they would be drawn into conflict if a Russo-Japanese war should break out. They were also worried by the growing German threat and wished to avoid the sort of danger of colonial confrontation as highlighted at Fashoda. As regards Siam, the rising German influence there convinced them that it was better for them to cooperate and regulate the affairs of Siam between two powers rather than between three or four.⁶⁶

To terminate their disputes and to forestall future difficulties, Britain and France concluded the *Entente Cordiale* on 8 April 1904. The part of this agreement that concerned Siam was a clarification of the declaration of 1896. Britain acknowledged eastern Siam as being in the French sphere of influence while France recognized British influence in western and southern Siam and the Upper Mekong Shan States. Neither Power would annex Siamese territories in their sphere of influence without agreement from the other Power.⁶⁷ As a result of the Anglo-French Entente Agreement, Britain acquiesced in the execution of the Franco-Siamese treaty of 13 February 1904, under which Siam was forced to cede two enclaves on the west bank of the Mekong opposite Luang Prabang and Pakse in return for the retrocession of Chantaburi province which the French had occupied since 1893 as a guarantee for treaty implementation.⁶⁸

The 1904 Entente Agreement finally resolved for Britain and France the issue of Siam. It also lessened the colonial threat to Siam. The Thai, now recovering from their loss of self-confidence which the Paknam crisis had brought, began to feel that they could determine the course and fate of their own nation. They no longer just aimed for survival, rather survival had to be on their terms, namely that Siam should be truly independent, and have complete autonomy of policy within the confines of its territory. Thus, although more territorial

concessions were made to France and Britain in 1907 and 1909 respectively, they were done voluntarily and on the initiative of Siam in return for the revocation of French and British extraterritorial rights over their Asian subjects in Siam. As the *quid pro quo* for the extra-jurisdictional concessions, Siam surrendered to France the eastern provinces of Battambang, Siemreap, and Srisophon, whilst Britain was given the Malay provinces of Kedah, Trengganu, Kelantan, Perlis and adjacent islands.⁶⁹

When the First World War broke out in 1914, King Vajiravudh, who was educated in Britain, was personally on the Allies' side but decided to declare Siam neutral. This was partly because Thai people were still bitter about French encroachment on Thai sovereignty and territorial integrity, and some high officials favoured the Germans. The King waited until the tide was turning against Germany and took the plunge. He declared war in July 1917 on the pretext of the German methods of submarine warfare and sent a small expeditionary force to Europe. As a result, Siam became a full member of the League of Nations, a condition conducive to the revision of unequal treaties. The Thai delegation to the Paris Peace Conference began the process of negotiations with Britain, France and the United States with a view to concluding new treaty arrangement restoring to Siam complete judicial and fiscal autonomy. In 1920, the United

States took the lead and revoked all American extraterritorial rights and privileges in Siam, except for a right to evoke by its consular officials any case in which an American citizen was accused.⁷⁰ Japan followed suit in March 1924.⁷¹ But negotiations with European powers proved more difficult. After laboured negotiations in Europe, Siam finally regained fiscal and judicial autonomy when new treaties with France and Great Britain were concluded in 1925.⁷²

THE COUP D'ÉTAT OF 1932

The administrative reform and modernisation which had been carried out in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) and continued by his successors had several political consequences in Siam. One of these was the great increase in the political power of the king at the expense of old noble families such as the Bunnags, whose economic privileges were whittled away. From the late 1880s, extensive control of state affairs had gradually been taken over by Chulalongkorn's own half-brothers. He also sent his numerous sons for long periods of study in Europe. On their return, they were promoted to leading government or military positions in place of their uncles. As part of the modernisation process, a number of schools and a military cadet academy were established in Bangkok to train a future élite for civil and

military service. Some gifted young Thai commoners were also sent to study abroad on government scholarships. But their chance of high promotion was small in view of the monopoly of higher appointments enjoyed by royal princes. The frustration of this new educated élite at being barred from the centre of power was one of the causes of a coup d'état in June 1932.⁷³

The coup d'état was carried out without bloodshed by a group of civilian intellectuals and junior- and middle-ranking officers of the armed forces. The nucleus of the coup promoters had been students in Europe and were influenced by Western political ideas. Their objective was to bring about change in Siam, the first step of which was the abolition of the absolute monarchy and the introduction of a constitutional form of government. They believed that a Western-style democracy would bring progress and modernity.⁷⁴ In addition, they were influenced by the rising tide of nationalism in Asia. China had for twenty years been a republic; India and Burma were rapidly achieving autonomous institutions; in French Indochina and the Netherlands East Indies the demand for self-government was growing. While Siam was not under nominal colonial rule, the coup promoters were dissatisfied with Siam's position of inferiority under the existing treaties, the supremacy of Western nationals in commerce and industry, and the dominant position of the increasing numbers of Chinese immigrants in trade.

As already mentioned, the new educated class of civilian élite and military officers resented the royal monopoly of power. Thus, their common desire to break through the barriers to the ruling power became an important bond which drew them together in staging the coup.⁷⁵ Their discontent was further compounded by a series of government economic measures such as military retrenchments, and a cutback in government expenditures necessitated by the world recession and excessive spending in the earlier reign of King Vajiravudh (1910-1925).⁷⁶

The promoters of the 1932 coup d'état are collectively known as the Khana Rhat or People's Party. The People's Party is generally seen as comprising three factions: a civilian faction, a junior military faction, and a senior military faction. The most eminent leader of the civilian faction was Pridi Banomyong, a French-educated lawyer. During his sojourn in France from 1920 to 1927, Pridi met other Thai students from both civilian and military branches of government. Together they formed a small discussion group in Paris and in 1927 secretly plotted the end of the absolute monarchy.⁷⁷ One member of this Paris discussion group who was generally credited as a leader of the junior military faction was Plaek Kittasangka. Plaek was then attending a course at the French artillery school at Fontainebleau. Later when he was promoted captain in the Thai army, Plaek assumed the official name of Luang Pibul Songgram, the name by which he is best

known. On their return to Siam, members of this Paris group began to recruit new members. Since neither the civilian faction nor the junior military faction possessed sufficient strength for a successful seizure of power, they needed the participation of more senior ranking military officers. By 1931, they managed to persuade some senior officers in the army to join them.

The senior military officers who provided leadership and forces for the coup and who were regarded as leaders of the People's Party were Colonel Phraya Phahol Pholpayuhasena, then Deputy Inspector of the Artillery Section in Bangkok, and Colonel Phraya Song Suradet, then Director of the Education Section at the Military Cadet Academy. Both had been trained in Germany before entering government service. While Phahol was the nominal leader of the People's Party, Song was the mastermind of the coup plan.⁷⁸ The smooth seizure of power on 24 June 1932 was due not to the strength of the coup group but to their clever strategy and bluffing tactics in taking control of Bangkok, the seat of central government. In this respect, King Chulalongkorn's centralization of government, while increasing royal political power, could be said to have facilitated an easy overthrow of the absolute monarchy.

A provisional constitution, drafted by Pridi, was then promulgated which effectually stripped the king of all political power. Although Phraya Manopakorn Nitithada, a conservative

judge who was not one of the coup promoters, was nominated as Prime Minister, and a number of senior civil officials from the old regime were given ministerial positions, all power was vested in the hands of the People's Party. They constituted a majority of the appointed Assembly and the People's Committee, the body which had overall control of government policy.⁷⁹ In the armed forces the majority of high-ranking officers were purged while Phahol was appointed army commander with Song as his deputy. All royal princes were excluded from the Assembly, the People's Committee and ministerial positions.

Under the permanent constitution of 10 December 1932, the king became a constitutional monarch. A State Council, similar in outlook and function as the British cabinet, replaced the People's Committee. Half the legislative Assembly was to be elected and half appointed by the executive. When over half the population had obtained primary education or when ten years had passed, the legislature was to be fully elected.

Having taken control of the government, the People's Party began to show signs of splitting with Song vying with Pridi for leadership. In April 1933, Mano, the Prime Minister, alarmed at the leftist tendencies of some ministers, notably Pridi, who had submitted a National Economic Plan branded by conservative officials from the old regime as "communistic", prorogued the appointed Assembly and promulgated a strict anti-communist

law.⁸⁰ He succeeded in doing so with army backing given by Song. Pridi, who had relied on the support of the Assembly, had to leave the country for France at government request in mid-April. This aggravated a split within the People's Party between the senior military faction led by Song who supported the Prime Minister on the one hand, and the junior military faction led by Pibul who backed Pridi on the other. Phahol found himself in an uncomfortable position in trying to bridge the gap between the two factions.⁸¹ But the gap was not narrowed. The junior military faction was now anxious that power was slipping through their hands and that they could be next on the road to political obscurity. In June 1933, a second coup d'état was effected by the junior faction with Phahol as the figurehead and a new cabinet under Phahol was formed.⁸² Song, Mano and other *ancien regime* officials such as the Foreign Minister, Phraya Srivisan Vacha, were ousted from the government. The Assembly was reconvened. Pridi was invited back in September and reappointed to the cabinet as a Minister without portfolio.

In October a royalist countercoup was attempted by Prince Bovoradet, a pre-1932 Defence Minister. The Bovoradet Revolt was bloodily suppressed by government forces on the outskirts of Bangkok. The field commander of the government troops, Lieutenant Colonel Pibul Songgram, emerged as a hero in crushing the revolt and subsequently he was appointed as the

Defence Minister. Pridi, having been cleared by a commission of enquiry set up to investigate whether he was guilty of the communist charges against him, became the Minister of Interior. As a result of the resolution of the armed struggle, the power of the new ruling élite was firmly established and their political rivals were defeated and discredited. The army thenceforth began to view its national role as the custodian of the constitution and the government.

THE RISE OF JAPANESE INFLUENCE IN SIAM

The period that followed the political upheavals of 1932 and 1933 was the period of consolidation and stabilization. Under Phahol, the ban on communism was retained, a Press Act in 1934 legalized censorship, and the formation of a political party was prohibited. The government adopted part of Pridi's Economic Plan in a much-modified form and extended cooperative credit to the peasants. It took measures to regain control of industry and commerce from European and Chinese dominance. Those industries producing sugar, paper, textiles, and cement were nationalized; larger taxes were levied on foreign residents. Expenditure on education quadrupled in four years. But the military budget also doubled in the same period and in 1937 twice as much was spent on defence as on education. The

military expansion was undertaken under the direction of Pibul who became the cornerstone of the new regime. Pridi was also eminent in the government, moving from the Ministry of Interior to take over the Foreign Affairs portfolio. The new ruling party, imbued with Thai nationalism, was determined to reshape Siam's relations with foreign powers on the principles of equality and reciprocity. With the promulgation and enforcement of all Thai legal codes and the expiry of existing treaties, new treaties with Western powers were negotiated and concluded in 1937, in which Siam regained its full legal and fiscal autonomy.⁸³

In the meantime, by the 1930s Japan had become a power in Asia. In fact, many well-informed Thai had professed their admiration for Japan as a potential world power since it defeated Russia in 1905. When the League of Nations voted unanimously to impose sanctions on Japan in protest against its aggression in Manchuria in February 1933, Siam was the only Asian country to abstain. This decision was apparently taken on the ground that Siam should avoid getting entangled in major powers' disputes and must take an impartial stand.⁸⁴ It could also be interpreted as a cautious move to avoid antagonizing the new force in the regional balance of power.⁸⁵

But if Siam merely exercised caution at the League of Nations, domestic politics in Siam soon began to shape its policy in favour of closer relations with Japan. Immediately

after the second coup of June 1933, there was a secret meeting at government headquarters between Phahol, Pibul and the Japanese minister to Siam. Phahol and Pibul expounded their fear of Western intervention and pleaded for Japanese support. In reply the Japanese minister urged the need for Siam to free itself from the British grip on its economy.⁸⁶ Thereafter Japanese influence in Siam was on the rise. A sizeable number of Thais were sent to Japan for training and education, whilst a number of Japanese experts and technical advisers were appointed by the Thai government. Arms and equipment for Thai armed forces were purchased from Japan and cheap Japanese manufactured products penetrated Thai markets. By the end of the decade, Japanese influence in Siam was second only to that of Britain. In the international scene the fall of Canton to the Japanese in October 1938 signalled the arrival of Japanese military power and there seemed to be little to stop their expansion southwards.

In December 1938, Pibul succeeded the retiring Phahol as Prime Minister. He also retained the defence portfolio and took over the Ministry of Interior as well as being commander-in-chief of the army. Pridi was given the Ministry of Finance. Any fear which existed in some quarters that Pridi would resurrect his socialist Economic Plan of 1933 was soon dispelled as he showed an awareness of the need to maintain the stability of the currency and international confidence in Siam's financial standing. Just

as he launched into a full-scale reform of local government on becoming Minister of Interior in 1934 and undertook the revision of all Siam's treaties when transferred to the Foreign Ministry, so Pridi on taking over the finance portfolio energetically embarked on a fiscal reform and the formulation of a new revenue code. He also played a prominent role in introducing a series of nationalistic economic legislation, which aimed at weakening the Chinese grip on the economy.

THAILAND'S IRREDENTISM

The outbreak of the Second World War in Europe in September 1939 had little direct effect on Siam. The Thai government simply declared a policy of strict and impartial neutrality. But inside Siam, the force of irredentist nationalism was gathering momentum. One of the early champions of Pan-Thaiism was Luang Wichit Wathakan, Director General of the Department of Fine Arts and Minister without Portfolio. He claimed that many people of Thai extraction, speaking the Thai language and sharing Thai culture, could be found in the protectorate of French Indochina, the British Shan States of Burma, and south China. These people, Wichit argued, lived under oppressive foreign rule and they should be united under the leadership of Bangkok.⁸⁷ The "Pan-Thai" philosophy was then

modified into a narrower irredentist claim for the return of those territories ceded to France and Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The rise of Thai irredentist nationalism was concretely manifested when in June 1939 Pibul decreed that Siam was to be known henceforth as “Thai-land”.

In late August 1939, an opportunity for the Thai to negotiate the revision of Franco-Thai border arose when the French minister in Bangkok, Paul Lepissier, officially proposed to Pibul a mutual non-aggression pact.⁸⁸ France apparently felt the need to secure its colonial rear in anticipation of a war with Germany, following the announcement on 21 August 1939 that Germany and Russia were about to conclude a non-aggression pact. The Japanese had been expanding their campaign in China throughout the summer; now they were poised to seize the opportunity to attack Indochina in the event of an outbreak of war in Europe. In October, the Thai notified France that they would be prepared to sign such a pact but the long-standing frontier problem should be resolved at the same time. Specifically, the Thai suggested negotiations which would lead to a new delimitation of the riverine boundary to conform with the internationally accepted *thalweg* principle.⁸⁹ Thai nationals had encountered numerous difficulties in using the Mekong for navigation or fishing purposes because the existing arrangement had been to regard all the islands and sandbars in the river to

be under Indochinese sovereignty, no matter how close they might be to the Thai bank. In late October, the French agreed in principle to consider the revision of the border. Meanwhile the Thai also discussed a similar pact with Britain and arrived quickly at an agreement. But negotiation with the French was not so simple due to opposition from French colonial officials in Indochina. After much heated debate within the French administration, the French government finally informed the Thai in early April 1940 that it was prepared to agree to a readjustment of the Mekong frontier.⁹⁰

Although Japan had no common border with Thailand, the Thai wished to maintain their strict neutrality by proposing to conclude a similar non-aggression pact with Japan. The Japanese government, on the other hand, wanted to reach “a special political understanding” with Thailand, which envisaged future political and military cooperation between the two countries. Feeling that time was not yet ripe to counter the Thai proposal with this idea of special understanding, the Japanese offered to sign instead a treaty of friendship and mutual cooperation including a guarantee of territorial integrity, a provision for the exchange of information and a mutual pledge not to assist enemy states in time of war. Eventually, the Thai cabinet accepted these terms, only to find that the Japanese were anxious to sign their treaty before the British and the French signed theirs.⁹¹

On 12 June 1940, Thailand simultaneously signed non-aggression pacts with France, Britain and Japan. With respect to Franco-Thai border questions, there was an exchange of secret letters between France and Thailand, spelling out the revision of Thai-Laos frontier according to the *thalweg* principle. A joint commission of representatives from both countries would be set up to define the precise borderline.⁹² However, the French defeat at the hands of Germany, leading to the ceasefire of 22 June 1940, and the subsequent establishment of the Vichy regime interrupted the process and transformed the whole complexion of the situation.

First, Japan began to apply pressure on Indochina by demanding the closure of the railway between Haiphong and Yunnan to prevent the transit of Allies' supplies to Chiang Kai-shek's forces. Further demand was made in July for troop transit rights through Indochinese territory and the establishment of military airfields in Tongking. The Thai government was greatly concerned that French Indochina would be annexed by the Japanese. Pibul believed that such a development would pose a threat to Thailand's security. As he saw it, such a strategic setback could be partially offset by the retrocession of two Laotian provinces situated on the west bank of the Mekong. This would enable Thailand to use the river as a natural defence line against Japan, if French Indochina should succumb to the Japanese.⁹³ In

addition, Pibul felt that former Thai territories should revert to Thailand in the event of France having to abandon its colony.⁹⁴

Pibul was also suspicious that the new Vichy government was going back on the promise of border readjustment as the latter kept postponing the arrival of the negotiating team. His suspicions were further strengthened when Lepissier made a request in August that the non-aggression treaty come into force immediately without having to be ratified. The Thai government then sounded out the opinions of the governments of Britain, the United States, Germany and Italy to obtain their support. When the French government again asked for immediate ratification of the treaty on 10 September, the Thai government replied that before the non-aggression pact could be ratified, not only would the French have to resolve the *thalweg* issue but they would also have to cede to Thailand the two enclaves on the west bank of the Mekong opposite Luang Prabang and Pakse, which the French had taken from the Thai in 1904. In addition, the Thai memorandum requested a written assurance from the French that in the event of their military collapse or withdrawal from Indochina, the whole of Laos and Cambodia would be returned to Thailand so that it could re-establish its “natural” frontier along the Annamite chains.⁹⁵ These demands were rejected outright by the French.

Apart from having an important strategic reason for

making this demand, Pibul had also been under increasing domestic political pressure for the return of the “lost territories”. Irredentist sentiment was riding high in the Bangkok press. In the Assembly itself, Pibul received a unanimous vote of approval for the demands he had put to the French.⁹⁶ Pibul could not now abandon the irredenta without loss of his own personal prestige and political support. His diplomatic offensive had failed to change the recalcitrant attitude of Vichy and the authorities in Indochina. Nor was his effort to win American and British support for his case successful. The Americans insisted on the maintenance of the status quo and the British, while expressing unofficial sympathy, followed suit. Unable to secure British and American support, Pibul now turned to the Japanese.

According to Flood’s thesis based mainly on Japanese sources, on 28 September 1940 Pibul’s private envoy was instructed to inform the Japanese naval attaché in Bangkok that henceforth Thailand would rely on Japan. Three days later Pibul himself allegedly made a secret oral commitment to Japanese naval attaché, Commander Torigoe, that Thailand would allow Japanese troops to cross its territory if necessary and it would provide Japan with supplies and raw materials, in return for a Japanese guarantee to assist Thailand in regaining its irredenta. Whatever Pibul had really told Torigoe, the Japanese appear to have believed that they had got an explicit pledge from Pibul.⁹⁷

That Pibul should seek Japanese support at this juncture for his irredentist claim is plausible. He probably anticipated British defeat at the hands of Germany as the British Isles were coming under incessant German bombing raids. Japan, having just joined the triple alliance with Germany and Italy, looked set to become the dominant power in East Asia. Pibul seems merely to have followed his predecessors' policy of relying on the support of the strongest sympathetic regional power in pursuing national interest, only this time the interest was not to prevent the loss of territory but to regain it.

In late November 1940 fighting broke out between French and Thai forces along the border as each party accused the other of border violations, and a state of undeclared armed hostilities arose. At first, hostilities were restricted mainly to bombing raids along the border, Soon, strengthened by Japanese arms supplies, Thai troops began to advance into Cambodia and the two Mekong enclaves. But in January 1941, the Thai navy suffered a heavy blow in a major naval battle, and the land battle also came to a stalemate. To pre-empt British intervention, the Japanese government stepped in and insisted that both parties accepted its offer of mediation. The ceasefire agreement was signed aboard a Japanese cruiser in Saigon on 31 January 1941. In the subsequent Tokyo Peace Convention of 9 May 1941, Thailand did not obtain the return of the whole of Laos and Cambodia that Prince Wan

Waithayakon, head of the Thai negotiating team, originally demanded. The French concede only the two Laotian enclaves on the west bank of the Mekong, the Cambodian provinces of Battambang and part of Siem Reap as well as accepting the *thalweg* line as the borderline in the Mekong. Thailand had to pay six million piastres (equivalent to something over 4 million baht) to compensate the French for the assets they were losing in the ceded areas.⁹⁸ The agreement was disappointing for Pibul who had expected more territorial gains. Yet it was a triumph over the French, something Pibul could claim to soothe the irredentists.

In return for Japanese supervision of the implementation of the agreement, both France and Thailand committed themselves not to enter into any agreement whether political, economic or military with a third country which might be detrimental to the interests of Japan.⁹⁹ It is interesting to note that at one point in the negotiations the French delegate offered to part with other less fertile areas like north Luang Prabang on the east bank of the Mekong, stretching right up to the Chinese border instead of the fertile province of Battambang. But the Thai refused on the grounds that the territory in question was contiguous to China and they had no wish to have a common frontier with China at any point.¹⁰⁰

THAILAND IN JAPAN'S "NEW ORDER"

In July 1941, after the Japanese forced France to allow them to establish naval and air bases in southern Indochina, the United States and Britain responded by freezing Japanese assets and imposing a trade embargo. To the Thai, the Japanese military advance in Indochina seemed ever more menacing as they were now faced with the uncomfortable prospect of having Japanese troops along their entire eastern border. The Japanese, while reneging on their promise to provide Thailand with sufficient oil supplies, pressured the Thai government for some baht credit loans to buy Thai tin and rubber. There was little the Thai could do but to extend to the Japanese a credit of 10 million baht, to be repaid in gold. Apparently, the Japanese were trying to enforce the terms of the secret pledge Pibul had made nine months earlier and seemed to have forgotten it ever since. In August, the Japanese made a further request for a 25-million-baht loan on condition that part of the counterpart in gold bullion was to be earmarked in Tokyo. The Japanese also presented to the Thai government various other demands for cooperation including recognition of the Manchukuo and Nanking government.¹⁰¹ In reply, Pibul compromised by recognizing the Manchukuo regime but he refused to accord recognition to the government of Wang Ching-wei in Nanking on the grounds that

Thailand had never had any diplomatic relations with China.

Pibul seems to have sensed by this time that the Japanese threat to Thai sovereignty was growing. The American minister to Thailand reported his conversation with Pibul on 9 August, in which Pibul “indicated he had finally reached the conclusion that he could not trust the Japanese,” but observed that “Japan is a great power and Thailand could not make successful opposition without outside assistance.”¹⁰² In an attempt to convince the Allies of Thailand’s resolve to resist the Japanese, Pibul got the Assembly to pass legislation in September making it mandatory for every Thai citizen to wage a total war against anybody violating Thai sovereignty. This entailed scorched earth tactics to deny all food and property to the enemy.¹⁰³ By mid-October, Pibul was so alarmed that he made a desperate plea to both Britain and the United States for military equipment and aircraft to bolster Thailand’s defence. He also wanted to know what steps Britain would take if the Japanese invaded Thailand.¹⁰⁴ But the British felt there was little they could offer. They were themselves short of arms and had to rely almost entirely on American military equipment supplied under lend-lease arrangements. The United States’ attitude was that it would offer Thailand the same sort of aid it had given China if Thailand were attacked and endeavoured in good faith to defend itself.¹⁰⁵ All the Western powers could offer at this juncture

were 12 field guns, 24 howitzers and some ammunition, much to the displeasure of Pibul.¹⁰⁶

By early December, Pibul seems to have given up hope of Western support. He argued in the cabinet meeting that if the Thai fought the Japanese, they would be beaten by superior forces. Not only that, the Japanese would also get rid of the government and replace it with a complaisant regime composed of opponents of the People's Party.¹⁰⁷ But the Thai cabinet was divided on what to do. There were those who thought that Thailand's safe course was to ally with Japan; others believed that the West would win the war in the end; and the third group insisted on the policy of neutrality. As a result, Thailand stuck to its declared policies of strict neutrality and resolute defence of its territorial integrity.

On 8 December 1941, Japanese troops entered Thailand at several points along the southern coast and across the border from Indochina. Several battalions were also landed at the mouth of the Chaophraya river and advanced to Bangkok. The Thai army in the south put up stiff resistance immediately without waiting for orders from Bangkok. Pibul himself hurried back from his inspection tour in the eastern border area and went directly to the emergency cabinet meeting. The Japanese ambassador gave the Thai government three possible choices: to allow Japanese troops to pass through Thailand; or to sign an alliance treaty to defend Thailand; or to join in an offensive and defensive alliance

against Britain and the United States. The Thai cabinet decided to order a ceasefire and allow the Japanese troops to pass through Thailand.¹⁰⁸ This course of action by the Thai government did not lack justification. Since the Western powers could afford no support, resistance to the overwhelming invading forces of the Japanese would have been to no avail except to court destruction. In acceding to the Japanese demands on 8 December, Thailand was assured by Japan that its sovereignty, independence and honour would be respected. If Thailand were to refuse Japanese troops passage and facilities, it was felt that the Japanese would have obtained them by force anyway even by destroying Thailand. An accommodation to the Japanese demands was seen as the only way to hang on to national sovereignty and to protect lives and property. After all, this was not a Thai war: it was a war between Japan and the West.

But soon Japanese victories, especially the destruction of the American fleet at Pearl Harbour and the sinking of two British battleships, the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales*, must have convinced Pibul that Japan was going to win the war. He wanted to lead Thailand onto the winning side in the war and gain all the benefits, including the return of lost territories in Indochina, Burma and Malaya. But first he had to eject the anti-Japanese elements from his cabinet. Pridi was elevated, at the request of the Japanese, to a non-political position in the three-man Council

of Regency. Vilas Osathanondh, a Minister without portfolio and the Director General of Public Relations Department, was dropped from the cabinet, while Direk Jayanama, the Foreign Minister, resigned and was later assigned to the post of ambassador in Tokyo. Thereafter the Thai government proceeded to sign a formal treaty of alliance with Japan on 21 December, and declare war on Britain and the United States on 25 January 1942. Pibul's concern, as he confided to an officer on the Army General Staff, was to ensure that Thailand was on the side of the victor in this war.¹⁰⁹

The reaction of the Allies to Pibul's declaration of war differed. The British government promptly responded in kind but the United States only announced its intention "to treat Thailand for economic warfare and other purposes as enemy-occupied territory", unless Thai forces engaged in military operations against the Allies.¹¹⁰ The American decision to ignore Thailand's declaration of war was partly ascribed to the bold action of the energetic Thai minister in Washington, Seni Pramoj, who denounced and dissociated himself from the actions of the Thai administration at the outbreak of the Pacific War. Just like Pibul, Seni wanted to be on the winning side too, but he had faith in the strength of the United States. Thus, although Pibul's declaration of war led to the severance of diplomatic relations between Thailand and the United States, Seni was allowed to

retain his diplomatic status as Thai minister in Washington. With the assistance of his military attaché, Seni set up a Free Thai movement in the United States which cooperated closely with the Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.) under General William J. Donovan. At the same time a group of Thai students from Britain wanted to establish a similar Free Thai movement in Britain. But owing to the lack of trusted leadership and their status as enemy aliens, these students had to enlist in the Pioneer Corps of the British Army. At the start of 1943 they were sent to India to receive specialised training under the aegis of Force 136, a branch of Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.) which like its American counterpart O.S.S. undertook such operations as dropping agents behind enemy lines, procuring intelligence and carrying out sabotage, if possible with the support of existing local resistance movements.¹¹¹

During the Japanese occupation, the Thai government, while maintaining close cooperation with Japan in political, economic and military matters, was allowed to control its own armed forces, and take care of Allied nationals interned in Bangkok and Allied properties. The Thai army was in fact assigned the task to campaign in the difficult terrain in the Shan States, possibly a Japanese ploy to keep Thai troops away from Bangkok. In foreign affairs, Thailand eventually granted recognition to the puppet Nanking government of Wang Ching-wei but resisted

the exchange of diplomatic representatives. Domestically, Pibul's dictatorial power greatly augmented as he declared himself "The Leader" of the people and actuated martial law on the pretext of national emergency. His position seemed to be strengthened when the Japanese formally transferred the British Shan States of Kentung and Mongpan and the British Malay states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu to Thailand in July 1943.

However, Pibul's social and cultural policy aroused much popular resentment against the government. A national cultural council, set up at the end of 1942, issued numerous cultural reform edicts covering dress, fashion, manners, language, marriage, health and so on. Some regulations such as the compulsory wearing of hats and the banning of betel nut chewing were quite unpopular, while others concerning dress were a great inconvenience particularly for government officials whose salaries remained fixed.¹¹² Moreover, wartime economic hardship began to bite. Soon after the Japanese invasion, foreign trade rapidly ground to a halt and revenues consequently plummeted. This was compounded by the establishment of exchange parity between the Thai baht and the Japanese yen, which in effect devalued Thai currency by about a third.¹¹³ Lack of shipping also accounted for severe shortages of essential commodities such as medicines, soap, and clothing, traditionally imported from Europe. Sugar, matches, cooking oil, petrol and kerosene had to be rationed.

Under growing Japanese pressure for loans to finance their military activities, the Thai government could do nothing but print more banknotes which only fuelled inflation.

On the international scene, early Japanese victories in 1942 turned into a stalemate a year later. By 1944, the Japanese began to suffer several setbacks from Allied counterattacks. Pibul soon realized that he had backed the wrong horse. Thus in April 1944, he decided to send an officer from his army general staff on a secret mission to the Shan States to open up a channel of communication with Chiang Kai-shek through a Free Thai-O.S.S. agent and the Kuomintang's 93rd Division based in Yunnan.¹¹⁴ However, beyond this initiative Pibul was prevented from making further clandestine contact with the Allies by the fall of his government in July 1944. Apparently, the opposition in the Assembly took heart from the Allies' successes in Europe and in the Pacific and began to question the wisdom of supporting Pibul. Some members of the Assembly were probably scared by Allied broadcasts from Delhi, confirming widespread rumours in Bangkok that those who supported Pibul's regime might be treated as war criminals at the end of the war.¹¹⁵

On 24 July 1944, after two of the government's bills were defeated in the Assembly, Pibul tendered his resignation. Khuang Aphaiwong, the deputy Speaker of the Assembly and a civilian member of the People's Party, was appointed Prime Minister by

the Assembly. Khuang promptly replaced Pibul's army clique in the cabinet with civilian promoters as well as several naval members of the People's Party. In so doing, he was able to count on the support of the navy and the police. Next, to neutralize Pibul's military command, he demoted Pibul from his position as supreme commander and persuaded old Phahol to become nominal commander-in-chief of the armed forces with Luang Sinad Yotharaks as his deputy. To save his face, the government appointed Pibul to a sinecure of Superior Adviser to the State.¹¹⁶ Khuang also enhanced his personal popularity by rescinding many of Pibul's unpopular cultural measures.

Japanese acquiescence in Pibul's downfall probably resulted from their suspicion of Pibul's treachery and the knowledge that, whoever was in office, the resources of Thailand could not be withheld from them. But they may also have been worried that Pibul's rising unpopularity would reflect on their own position in Thailand. Besides, it did their image with other Asian nations no harm to be seen to refrain from interfering with Thailand's internal affairs.

The mastermind behind the move to oust Pibul was none other than Pridi Banomyong, now the sole regent and leader of an underground resistance movement inside Thailand.¹¹⁷ Since he was promoted to the regency council at the early stage of the Japanese occupation, Pridi had set up a clandestine network to

conduct anti-Japanese activities. After several attempts, he finally succeeded in making contact with the Free Thai abroad, some of whom parachuted into Thailand in April 1944. With some difficulties, direct radio contact with the Allied headquarters in Calcutta was eventually established in August, whereupon the Free Thai resistance movement constantly supplied the Allies with valuable intelligence on Japanese capabilities and troop movements.¹¹⁸ Now with Khuang securely installed as Prime Minister and appearing outwardly to cooperate with the Japanese, Pridi could expand his Free Thai activities on a vast and elaborate scale. The movement recruited and trained a force of some 50,000 men with the aim of aiding the Allies' forces when Allied military operations against the Japanese in Thailand were ready to commence.¹¹⁹ In the event, the swift surrender of the Japanese following the dropping of two atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 rendered Allied military operations in Thailand unnecessary.

RECONCILIATION WITH BRITAIN

On 16 August 1945, the day after the Japanese surrender, Pridi took a calculated move to proclaim the declaration of war on the United States and Britain null and void because, he claimed, it was contrary to the will of the Thai people and the

provisions of the constitution.¹²⁰ In the same declaration, Pridi proposed to return the British territories received from Japan in mid-1943 to the British as soon as the opportunity permitted. He pledged full cooperation with the United Nations and just compensation for any damage which might have resulted from laws passed during the war.¹²¹ The Thai government further announced that all Thai-Japanese treaties concluded immediately before and during the war would be terminated.

The Khuang government resigned the following day to emphasize Thailand's repudiation of all commitments with Japan. Seni Pramoj was invited back from Washington to become Prime Minister, as he would be in a most favourable position to negotiate peace terms with the victorious allied powers. In the intervening period, Thawee Bunyaket, Pridi's close Free Thai colleague, took over as head of a caretaker government.

The American government responded sympathetically to Pridi's announcement and viewed Thailand as a victim of Japanese aggression and not as a co-belligerent of Japan.¹²² President Chiang Kai-shek of China made a similar response and stated on 24 August that Thailand's declaration of war on the United Nations was the result of Japanese pressure and expressed his hope that Thailand would regain its original status of independence and equality.¹²³

In contrast, Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, stated officially in the House of Commons on 20 August thus:

Siam's association with Japan inevitably leaves many practical questions for settlement. These will be examined, and our attitude will depend on the way in which the Siamese meet the requirements of our troops now about to enter their country; the extent to which they undo the wrongs done by the predecessors and make restitution for injury, loss and damage caused to British and Allied interests and the extent of their contribution to the restoration of peace, good order and economic rehabilitation.¹²⁴

The reasons for the difference in the British attitude to that of the American and the Chinese were that the British had suffered massive losses in lives and properties from the war. They now faced a daunting task of alleviating appalling famine and shortage in their large empire in Asia. When the war ended, they understandably looked to relatively undisturbed Thailand as the main source of food to feed hungry people of the world. In addition, while the Americans had relatively minor economic interests in Thailand which enabled them to adopt a lenient view toward Thailand, the British had occupied the dominant position in commerce and the extractive industries in prewar Thailand and thus suffered more serious losses than any foreign power as a result of the Thai declaration of war. The British were particularly piqued by Pibul's opportunistic annexation, with Japanese approval, of the two Shan and four Malay States in 1943.

They also felt that the unobstructed passage of Japanese troops through Thailand had facilitated attacks on Malaya, Singapore and Burma engendering the loss of British lives and extensive damage to British interests. Thailand, in their view, must be incorporated into any future defence arrangements for Southeast Asia.

On 4 September 1945, Admiral Mountbatten, in the name of the Allied powers, presented the Thai military mission at Kandy a provisional “military agreement” to be signed within 48 hours. Most of the twenty-one demands of the military agreement resembled standard Allied military instructions which applied to other countries being liberated such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark. It involved imposing Allied control over Thai industries, shipping, finance, exports, and the reorganization of Thai armed forces. However, the United States government, suspicious of British motives and believing that the British demands would prejudice American interests in Thailand, intervened through the American ambassador in London who secured a promise from Prime Minister Attlee to delay any signing on economic terms. As a result, the military agreement, which was signed on 8 September 1945, contained only five articles dealing with necessary military matters.¹²⁵ This allowed Allied troops under British Major General Geoffrey Evans to move into Thailand to disarm the Japanese.

Thereafter, the peace negotiations moved on to the proposed political agreement to liquidate the state of war between Britain and Thailand. The United States took an active interest in the negotiations to protect Thailand's sovereignty and succeeded in forcing some minor adjustments of British terms. An Anglo-Thai Formal Agreement was finally concluded at Singapore on 1 January 1946.¹²⁶ Four days later, formal diplomatic relations between Thailand and the United States, and between Thailand and Britain were simultaneously reestablished.

POSTWAR POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THAILAND

After concluding the peace agreement with the British, Seni Pramoj resigned, feeling that he had accomplished his mission. He also felt isolated in his own cabinet, packed by Pridi with his Free Thai colleagues.¹²⁷ Following the general election in January 1946, Khuang Aphaiwong was able to defeat Pridi's nominee, Direk Jayanama, in the half-elected, half-appointed Assembly vote and became Prime Minister. His success was partly due to his own personal popularity and partly because he was believed to have less drastic ideas on demobilization than his opponents, thus causing the military section of the 1932 coup promoters in the Assembly to favour his selection as Prime Minister.¹²⁸ Khuang's cabinet contained none of Pridi's

supporters, but included Seni as Foreign Minister and Phraya Srivisan Vacha as Finance Minister. The latter, being responsible for Pridi's exile in 1933 on a communist charge, was Pridi's *bête noire*. It is clear that there was a cleavage within the civilian group as Khuang and Seni broke away from Pridi's Free Thai clique. The reason which held them together behind Pridi during and immediately after the war was a common desire to serve the country in the face of foreign occupation. Once Thailand came to terms with the British, the political cohesion evaporated. Khuang who formerly belonged to the civilian clique of the People's Party no longer wished to remain under Pridi's domination. Seni, on the other hand, was a junior member of the royal family and never reconciled himself to trust Pridi.¹²⁹

The Khuang government was short-lived. On 17 March 1946, a group of MPs led by Thong-in Bhuripat, an MP from the northeast, introduced a bill calling for fixed price controls on various basic commodities. Khuang opposed the bill on the ground that the government lacked the machinery and personnel for effectively administering such a scheme, and that, if it was started immediately, the scheme would merely give additional scope to corruption among government employees, causing greater hardship to the public. The bill nevertheless was passed by a vote of 65 to 63 and Khuang resigned.¹³⁰

At first Pridi was reluctant to give up his prestigious

position as Elder Statesman, which was given to him on the King's return in December 1945. But after a campaign by his parliamentary supporters, Pridi decided to become Prime Minister on 24 March 1946. Meanwhile, Khuang and Seni garnered support from royalist and anti-Pridi elements to form an opposition party known as the Progressive Party. This party later renamed itself the Prachatipat (Democrat) Party. The common denominator of this heterogeneous group was its opposition to Pridi and the People's Party clique. Pridi himself set up the Sahacheep Party to counteract the activity of the Progressive Party. The Sahacheep Party was dominated by politicians from the poor northeastern region of Thailand, whose prominent leaders were Thong-in Bhuripat and Tiang Sirikhan. The party was generally considered left of centre. It advocated cooperative farming and marketing of rice so as to eliminate Chinese middlemen.

One of the first tasks which Pridi undertook on coming to power was a revision of the 1932 constitution. The fundamental changes in the new constitution promulgated on 9 May 1946 were the adoption of a bicameral legislature whereby the 80-member Senate was to be elected by the 178-member House of Representatives, and the banning of permanent government officials from political appointment. Since the new Senate was immediately elected by the then half-appointed and half-elected

Assembly, Pridi succeeded in packing the Senate with his supporters and thereby ensuring overall parliamentary support for at least three more years. With the important exception of initiating, discussing, and passing a non-confidence vote in the government, which was to be wholly a House prerogative, almost all other vital matters would have to be settled by Senators and Representatives in joint session. On 5 August 1946, elections were held to replace the appointed half of the House members and in these elections Pridi's supporters secured a majority of the seats.

With the adoption of the new constitution which legalized political parties for the first time, the Constitutional Front Party was formed. It consisted mainly of former civilian members of the People's Party and had the backing of Pridi. Among the important leaders of this party was Luang Thamrong Nawasawat, a former Rear Admiral and a founder member of the People's Party. Another prominent leader was Direk Jayanama, a 1932 coup promoter and former Foreign Minister. If the Sahacheep Party represented the progressive wing of Pridi's supporters, the Constitutional Front could be said to represent the conservative wing.

On 9 June 1946, four days before his scheduled departure for further education in Switzerland, the young King Ananda was found shot dead in his bedroom. The mysterious circumstances of the King's death aroused wild speculation. The view officially

propagated was that the King met his death by accident, but there was a spate of rumours and accusations in which Pridi was insinuated as being the instigator of a murder. Despite investigations ordered by Pridi, public confidence in his government plummeted. It was apparently due to these sinister allegations that Pridi resigned office on 21 August 1946, even though he pleaded ill health and a need for rest. Indeed, Pridi remained very much the power behind the scenes during the subsequent Thamrong administrations.

THE UN MEMBERSHIP

After the Second World War, the foremost objective of Thailand's foreign policy was to become a full member of the United Nations. As Direk Jayanama observed, being a member of the United Nations brought benefits to Thailand in four ways. First, the United Nations provided security and justice for a small power like Thailand. Secondly, membership of this world organization confirmed international recognition of Thailand's independence. Thirdly, Thailand hoped to receive economic, social and cultural aid for development from the United Nations. Finally, it demonstrated Thailand's cooperation to build and maintain peace and security in the world.¹³¹ Given this diplomatic objective, Thailand strove to make peace with the victorious

Allied powers. Diplomatic relations with Britain and the United States were established on 5 January 1946. Less than a month later, a Treaty of Amity between Thailand and the Republic of China was concluded to be followed by an official exchange of diplomatic representatives for the first time in history. However, when Thailand applied for UN membership on 3 August 1946, France declared its intention to veto the application on the ground that a *de facto* state of war between France and Thailand had not been terminated. The Soviet Union also indicated its opposition, pointing to the absence of diplomatic relations and the existence of the anti-Communist law in Thailand as the obstacles.¹³²

Since the end of the war the French had demanded the return of Indochina territories ceded to Thailand by the Vichy government as a prerequisite for the liquidation of a state of war between France and Thailand. The Thai government was reluctant to cede the territories to France because it knew that such a move would be politically very unpopular. Recalling public enthusiasm for the border campaign in 1940, the Thai leaders – who viewed France as a defeated rather than as a victorious country – feared a sharply negative, public reaction to any voluntary surrender of territory considered a legitimate part of Thailand. They also argued that Thailand had not declared war against France and maintained that these territories had been obtained by a valid

treaty from the legal French government. For these reasons, Thailand, while returning promptly former British territories in Burma and Malaya, clung to these Indochina borderlands.

Basing their main hope on international anti-colonial sentiment, the Thai tried to enlist support from other major powers. Britain and the United States, however, came out in favour of the retrocession when they let the Thai government know that they did not recognize the territorial transfer in 1941. The fact that independence movements had sprung up in the three Indochina states at the war's end complicated the matter for the French. Thailand gave as much support as it could to these movements partly in sympathy, and partly to prevent the consolidation of French authority in Indochina. This included allowing refugees and the Free Lao government to cross the border and seek sanctuary from French attacks. Some sympathetic Thai citizens voluntarily joined the independence armies, which made occasional cross-border raids into Laos. This led to French charges of Thai collusion with their rebellious subjects. In May 1946, the French shelled the Thai border town of Nakorn Phanom and raided Thai villages near Nongkhai. The government filed a complaint to the United Nations against French aggression.¹³³ The French, pressed by the British and Americans who feared that political instability in Thailand would jeopardize rice deliveries, agreed to take the territorial question to the International Court.

But again, Indochinese resistance to the French, this time in Cambodia, stirred up the matter. On 7 August 1946, the so-called Siem Reap Incident took place when a group of Free Cambodians attacked the Grand Hotel in Siem Reap, killing seven French officers, and claimed to have captured a substantial amount of French weapons. Accusing the Thai of complicity with the rebels, the French retaliated by withdrawing the case from the International Court and stating their intention to veto the Thai application for UN membership.¹³⁴ Unable to obtain any external support for its territorial claims and anxious to gain UN membership, the Thai government reluctantly gave in. In November 1946, it signed a Franco-Thai Agreement of Settlement, annulling the May 1941 treaty and restoring the disputed territories to France. In return, France withdrew its objection to Thailand's UN membership and agreed to refer the question of border adjustments to an international conciliation commission.

As regards the Soviet opposition to Thailand's entry into the United Nations, the Thai government acquiesced in the abrogation of the 1933 Anti-communist Act on 22 October 1946 to pave the way for a resumption of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.¹³⁵ After intense negotiations in New York, the Soviet Union finally withdrew its opposition to Thailand's application for UN membership. On 15 December 1946, Thailand became the 55th member of the United Nations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, then, what can we say about the traditions of Thai foreign policy? Most Western and Thai writers tended to associate Thailand's traditional diplomatic style with the image of a unique ability to bend with the wind like the bamboo. Sir Josiah Crosby, a former British minister to Thailand, for example, writes that Thai diplomacy has been "undeviatingly one of studied neutrality" and that "Siamese statesmen had proved themselves to be past masters in the art of playing off these two countries [Britain and France] against one another whenever it suited them to do so".¹³⁶ Edwin F. Stanton, the first postwar American ambassador to Thailand, also subscribed to this notion in these words: "As a Thai statesman explained it to me, 'We Thai bend like the bamboo but we do not break.' They bent under Japanese pressure but secretly organized an underground resistance movement which spied out Japanese military movements and attempted to sabotage their activities".¹³⁷ Referring to this bamboo simile, Likhit Dhiravegin, a Thai political scientist, drew a conclusion that "the basic foreign policy of the country is to watch the 'direction of the wind' and bend accordingly in order to survive. Inevitably this will necessitate the leaders to adopt a flexible short-range policy. The ultimate goal or the long-range policy, if one may call it so, is survival i.e.,

political independence. The present writer would like to term this Thai national style as ‘bamboo diplomacy’ . . .”¹³⁸

Certainly, Thailand’s success in maintaining its independence in the colonial era has appeared both to Thai and Western scholars to make Thai political experience unique amongst that of other Southeast Asian nations. But any assertion that Thailand’s survival was attributed to its clever diplomatic manipulation is too simplistic and reflects only part of the picture. For while in some periods Thailand showed remarkable skill in adapting itself to the changing balance of power, the success of its policy was often dependent on the policies and interests of outside powers. For example, it was Chinese restraint, either because of their benevolence or inability, in not interfering in Siam’s internal affairs, despite the latter’s nominal status as a tributary, that gave rise to the development of an independent Thai state free from Chinese political influence. When the British colonial order was introduced in Southeast Asia in the early nineteenth century, Siam’s survival was also largely due to the conciliatory attitude of the British. As the British economic stake in Siam grew and the French westward expansion came ominously closer to the British territories, Siam gradually attained greater geopolitical significance in British perception. Thus, when the crisis of 1893 arose, the British strove to prevent a French absorption of Siam’s heartland to preserve their own

strategic and economic interests, even though the British had earlier rejected Siamese requests for a formal security guarantee. This qualification was not an attempt to take away credit from Thai foreign policy makers, but merely to put their achievement in a proper perspective.

Characteristically, however, Thailand's foreign policy is a response to changes in the regional balance of power. During the era of the tributary system, there was an absence of great power intervention in Southeast Asia: the Chinese were either unable or unwilling to interfere with regional politics in a consistent fashion; and the European powers still lacked the capability to project their power effectively in the region. Siam, a regional power in its own right, was preoccupied with the contest for dominance with other regional powers of comparable strength. Its policy was to ensure the allegiance or subordination of those principalities surrounding the kingdom, mainly by military rather than diplomatic means. The main security concern was to prevent these buffer areas from becoming bases of hostile powers.

With the advent of the colonial order in Southeast Asia, Siam now had to face a new and much stronger power than those it had ever contended with. But it was able to avoid being colonized because its leaders, unlike the Burmese, were aware of British aims and power in Asia and adopted a policy of accommodation in the form of the Burney and later the Bowring

treaties. With the signing of the Bowring treaty, Britain came to dominate Siam economically, without actually colonizing it. Since then, Siam has been brought into the Western capitalist orbit and dependent on the larger international political and economic system. Almost a century of British dominance in Siamese external trade was only interrupted by the Japanese intrusion in the 1930s.

Traditionally, foreign policy, like politics in general, has been the exclusive domain of only a small proportion of the population, almost entirely located in Bangkok. Domestic pressures outside the élite were usually non-existent, reflecting in part the religio-cultural belief among the people at large that those in power achieved their position by superior merit, either past or present, and that deference to their authority was right and proper. Since the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932, the élite has consisted of the military, ranking government officials, a few professional politicians and intellectuals. Thai politics has in fact been labelled “a bureaucratic polity”, because it is characterized by competition between cliques within the élite focused around a few central figures with institutional bases in the military or civil bureaucracy.¹³⁹ The object of competition is power, status and prestige as well as financial rewards which accompany control of the government. Thanks to the economic dependence of Thailand upon foreign trade, the outcome of

clique competition was not divorced from the strength and attitudes of external patrons. This was clearly demonstrated when the political structure in Thailand was transformed in 1932. The change from the absolute monarchy to the constitutional form of government was welcomed by the British who viewed it benevolently as a part of the modernisation process. Yet the attempt by Pridi to introduce a socialist economic program was immediately constricted by domestic and international objections. The ascendancy of the military and Thailand's adoption of nationalism and autarchy in the late 1930s were facilitated by the relative decline of British power and the corresponding rise of Japanese influence. In contrast to British primacy throughout the previous century, it became more difficult to discern who was the predominant regional power. From total reliance on British protection, Thailand was thus able to shift its foreign policy to neutrality and independence; it even took advantage of French defeat in Europe to enrich itself territorially.

However, when the Pacific War broke out, the regional balance of power was severely disturbed. Japanese hegemony in Asia allowed Pibul to establish a dictatorial rule. Toward the end of the war, Pibul's outside patron weakened and the civilians, supported by the Allied powers, were able to assert their political supremacy. Their position was sustained by the

approval of the United States and the presence of Allied troops in the country. Pridi's domestic and foreign policies were then increasingly governed by the criterion of securing the Allied support, coupled with opposition to the restoration of French colonial rule in Indochina and support for Asian nationalism. As we shall see in the next chapter, by the end of 1947 the military reasserted themselves as they detected American reluctance to become Pridi's personal power base and the visible shift of American policy emphasis from anti-colonialism to anti-communism. The return of the military was further facilitated by civilian political dissension, mounting economic problems, and the untimely death of young King Ananda in June 1946. By the time Pibul resumed office, Southeast Asian politics was on the verge of another radical transformation in the form of decolonization and the coming of the Cold War.

Another feature central to an understanding of Thai domestic politics and its relationship with foreign policy is the absence of a colonial experience in Thailand. Conservative institutions such as the royal court and the Buddhist religion were never humiliated or disgraced by foreigners. There was no need for nationalist armed struggle; society was never mobilized to fight for independence; and thanks to the historical continuity, the nation never faced an identity crisis. There existed in Thailand no such strong and deep-seated suspicions

of Western colonialism as held by other emergent states in Asia.

Nonetheless, one effect of Thailand's experience with the colonial powers was the loss of loosely-held vassal states and border areas of the nineteenth century Siamese empire. But the usual emphasis on the areas ceded to the colonial powers often obscures the success Thailand had in establishing firm control over other equally tenuously-held areas. These areas were: Chiangmai, Lampoon, Phrae, Nan and the other northern Laotian principalities, which historically had been independent or under Burmese control as often as under Thai suzerainty; the whole of what is now northeast Thailand, which historically together with the eastern Laotian states formed Lanchang kingdom; and four ethnically Malay provinces in the south. As Benjamin Batson observed, "in view of the complete destruction of the Thai state in 1767, followed by a century of European colonial expansion, the success of Siam in preserving control over so many of its peripheral areas is striking, and a consequence in part of the reorganization of provincial administration in the Fifth Reign [Chulalongkorn], which tied outlying areas closer to Bangkok and prevented local incidents or misunderstandings from developing into serious confrontations with Siam's colonial neighbours."¹⁴⁰ The result of administrative centralization at the turn of the century was to make Siam a modern state within defined boundaries; and successful integration of these outlying

communities to central Siam has significantly enhanced the strength and cohesion of the society. In consequence, Thailand has fewer ethnic, cultural, religious and other societal cleavages than other Southeast Asian countries. Owing to this, the Thai government has had little need to manipulate foreign policy for “nation-building” purposes which were so important in a country like Indonesia.

Thailand’s policy of alignment with the West in the period under study clearly has its roots in history. For one thing, the traditional and conservative Thai ruling élite was unlikely after a century of economic development within the Western capitalist orbit to orientate themselves towards a revolutionary communist system. For another, in their perception, the cornerstones of Thai foreign policy had been the retention of the international recognition of Thailand’s independence and the adjustment to the vicissitudes of regional powers. They had good reasons to believe that Thailand’s survival had been the result of a sensitive accommodation with the strongest economic and military powers in the region. But the success of such a policy ultimately depended on the interests of the dominant power in question. In the last resort, the only way a small state such as Thailand could ensure its independence and survival was to make necessary concessions and appropriate internal adjustments. As Peter Lyon summarily put it, “Though it [Thailand’s traditional

diplomatic style] is often construed as one of neutrality, in fact it has always been a diplomacy which has been “hard” towards small neighbours and “soft” towards the dominant regional powers: China before the Opium wars, then Britain, then Japan, and, particularly evident ever since 1954, the United States.”¹⁴¹

CHAPTER

3

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF
THE COUP D'ÉTAT OF 1947

On 8 November 1947 a coup d'état took place in Thailand, replacing a constitutionally-elected civilian government with an army-nominated civilian government. The leader of the coup was Field Marshal Pibul Songgram, the former Prime Minister who had declared war on Great Britain and the United States in January 1942. Indeed, at the time of the coup he was still viewed by many in the West as a militarist and a dictator, guilty of collaboration with Tokyo from the start. Yet in less than six months after the coup he reemerged as the Prime Minister of Thailand. Even more perplexing was the fact that he continued to hold office for almost another decade as a firm and reliable ally of the United States, the power that had been the lynchpin of the victorious Western alliance against militarism and fascism. The fateful coup d'état represents a crucial turning point because it not only brought back Pibul with his new direction in Thai foreign policy, but also introduced into the Thai political scene a new breed of army politicians who were to hold the reins of government during the ensuing three decades.

A number of important questions need answering. How did the coup come about? Did the foreign policy of the Pridi-dominated civilian government contribute to its own downfall? What were the real causes of the coup? In view of the foreign policy change afterwards, it is essential to ascertain if there was any foreign involvement in the coup. This could only be

established by going into detail about the causes and character of the coup, as well as the Western reactions to the return of Pibul. The question why Pibul was able to make a quick rapprochement with the Allied Powers also deserves close attention. This chapter is an effort to answer these important questions in the hope that Thailand's foreign policy at the inception of the Pibul regime is seen properly in its domestic context. The first part of the chapter attempts to investigate the causes, or motives, of this coup d'état and to show the interplay of foreign policy and domestic politics in postwar Thailand. In the second part, the coup itself and its consequences, both on Thailand's political configuration and the direction of Thai foreign policy, are examined.

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF PRIDI BANOMYONG

Perhaps the best starting point to investigate the whys and the wherefores of the coup is an examination of Thai foreign policy in the period prior to it, since its direction played as much a part as economic deterioration and militancy within the military in stirring the army to the outright seizure of power.

Despite his resignation of the prime ministership in August 1946 in favour of his supporter, Luang Thamrong Nawasawat, Pridi remained the real power behind the

government, still the “Elder Statesman”, advising and influencing government policies as well as acting in some capacity as foreign policy overlord. For example, in November 1946 he embarked, at the invitation of various foreign governments, upon a well-publicized, three-month, goodwill tour to China, the newly-independent Philippines, the United States, Great Britain, France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. One of his principal tasks on this tour was to lobby for Thailand’s admission to the United Nations. This important goal was attained on 16 December 1946.

Meanwhile, a concept of Asian solidarity was evoking a widespread interest among local independence movements. On 1 January 1947, the Vietminh, Free Lao and Free Cambodian representatives in Bangkok met and signed a joint memorandum appealing for UN intervention in Indochina. In the memorandum they advocated a federation or united states of independent countries of Southeast Asia, comprising their own countries, Burma, Thailand, Malaya and Indonesia. They hope to use American diplomatic channels to transmit their appeal to the Secretary General of the United Nations. Edwin F. Stanton, American minister to Thailand, sent an accompanying message to the State Department in which he urged Washington to assist in the transmission of the appeal and consider what steps the United States could take to settle the Indochinese problem. Washington,

however, showed no enthusiasm and advised Stanton to return the document to the Indochinese representatives in Bangkok.¹

At the New Delhi Asian Relations Conference, held from 23 March to 2 April 1947, Nehru called for Asian unity and regional cooperation. But as the conference proceeded, rivalry between China and India for regional leadership was marked. The Chinese even succeeded in preventing New Delhi from being selected as the site of the planned second session in 1949. It was agreed that the 1949 Asian Relations Conference, which never took place, should be held in China. Many small countries felt that China and India were vying to fill the power vacuum left by the anticipated withdrawal of European powers from Asia.² On their way back to Bangkok from this conference, the Thai delegation stopped in Rangoon. Here they met Burmese nationalist leader Aung San who urged Thai leadership in regional affairs.³ Thailand, with the advantage of being the only independent country in Southeast Asia as well as having a central geographical location, was seen by many exiled Indochinese nationalists in Bangkok as the natural leader of an independent federation of Southeast Asia.

Pridi himself appears to have concluded that colonialism had no future in Southeast Asia. He started to toy with the idea of championing the cause of Asian independence movements. In early March 1947, he was reported

to have proposed to Daridan, the French chargé d'affaires in Bangkok, in a "purely personal and unofficial capacity" that France grant Laos full independence. Thailand would thereafter recognize and enter into treaty relations with a sovereign independent Kingdom of Laos which would be expected to develop largely within the Thai orbit.⁴ This idea was of course rejected by the French. One may surmise from Pridi's overture that it was in a nature of *ballon d'essai* to capitalize on French difficulties with Vietnam. But his intervention in the presentation of Thai case to the International Conciliation Commission, to be examined below, suggests that he was perhaps anticipating imminent French withdrawal from Indochina. That Pridi had by this time arrived at this conclusion is conceivable in view of a gradual but continuing contraction of the British empire in Asia and the difficulties the French and the Dutch were facing in their respective Asian colonies.⁵ This may have led Pridi to launch a new foreign policy initiative of advocating independence for Laos and Cambodia in an attempt to win their goodwill and also to secure a leadership status and strong influence in the expected new regional order. The Southeast Asian Federation scheme, it was thought, would serve to allay dissatisfaction at home for his failure to retain the disputed territories.

On 29 April 1947, Pridi left Bangkok for Washington at the crucial stage of the International Conciliation

Commission's deliberations.⁶ Although the Thai government issued a communiqué subsequently, seeking to dissociate him from the presentation of Thailand's case before the Commission,⁷ Pridi had in fact, according to American chairman of the Commission William Phillips, instructed the Thai delegation to make an extreme demand for the retrocession of all of Laos and a large part of Cambodia.⁸ Phillips informed State Department officials that Prince Wan and Prince Sakol, the Thai delegates, were very irritated at Pridi for having insisted upon the presentation of the original Thai demand, "presumably for domestic political reasons", and refusing to retreat therefrom in any way.⁹ The Commission, Phillips said, was fully satisfied that there were no appropriate Thai claims to Cambodia. But in his discussions with Prince Wan who was the Thai member of the Commission, Phillips discovered that the Thai were very reluctant to receive any territory from Laos which might be considered by the Lao people as a dismemberment of their emergent country. It appeared to him that "the Siamese believe the French will be out of Indochina within a few years and they wish the friendship of Laos".¹⁰ Accordingly, Prince Wan did not seek the return of the Mekong westbank enclave of Lanchang, nor even any modification in the Thai-Laos border, even though Phillips himself suggested the transfer of Bassac to Thailand. The Commission, on the other hand, felt unable to recommend

a transfer of all of Laos to Thailand because this “would raise serious legal questions as to the competence of the Commission to make such a recommendation”.¹¹

The stated purpose of Pridi’s May visit to Washington was to discuss “on an informal and personal basis the equally personal proposal advanced by M. Georges Picot,” the French negotiator, for the formation of a Southeast Asian Union. He did in fact do this but was unsuccessful. According to the Thai government communiqué of 5 July 1947, Picot had in April expressed his personal opinion to Prince Wan, the Thai ambassador in Washington, that instead of discussing border adjustments, the two sides should consider setting up a federation or union of Thailand, Cambodia and Laos along the lines of the Pan-American Union, with Bangkok as the centre, for the purpose of mutual promotion of economic matters, communications, Mekong irrigation schemes and the consideration of other problems. The Thai government had then conveyed this message to Elder Statesman Pridi, and requested him to proceed to Washington to confer with Picot. Pridi was said to have replied to the government that “several leaders and politicians in countries in this area [presumably a reference to Free Lao and Free Cambodian leaders] had expressed to him that a Southeast Asian Federation would improve economic conditions and bring peace and prosperity to the area; and that

a number of European and American journalists had expressed similar views to him.”¹²

When Pridi met Picot on 10 May, it became clear what Picot’s proposal was all about. Picot suggested that the Thai should drop their appeal to the Conciliation Commission and instead open negotiations on the establishment of a union on the pattern of the Pan-American Union. And with Pridi’s consent he would submit this proposal to the French government for approval. But France should represent Laos and Cambodia in the union, as these two countries were part of the French empire. Pridi countered that the union should be considered as a separate issue from the border adjustments. He contended that as the Pan-American Union was a union of independent countries, Laos and Cambodia should thus be given independence. The Picot-Pridi talks in Washington rendered no fruitful result. On 8 June, Pridi left Washington to continue talks in Paris. But there he met with a rebuff from the French authorities who told him that the French government preferred to await the outcome of deliberations of the Conciliation Commission before considering “the private opinion of Picot”.¹³

It is clear that Pridi knew even before his departure from Bangkok that Thailand’s chance of recovering the disputed territories from France was slim. The failure to regain these territories threatened to deal a major political blow at the

Thamrong administration, already under heavy fire because of economic deterioration and corruption. To soften the blow, Pridi decided to probe the alternative policy, namely to win independence for Laos and Cambodia. Obviously, from Thailand's point of view, its endeavour in extracting from France independence for Laos and Cambodia, if successful, would bestow upon its enormous prestige in the region. Laos and Cambodia could be drawn into the Southeast Asian Federation, in which they would be expected to accept Thailand's leadership.

On 27 June 1947, the International Conciliation Commission presented its report basically rejected all Thai territorial claims. Whether or not the Picot proposal was a French ploy to distract the attention of Pridi or indeed the Commission from Thailand's claim for border adjustment, the Commission seems somehow to have been influenced by it. It recommended in its final report that a "technical consultative commission" be set up in Bangkok, on which interested governments [French and Thai] could be represented, to consider not only problems affecting the Mekong but also the related problems such as irrigation and public health. The only positive aspect from the Thai point of view was a recommendation for a minor adjustment of the boundary to follow the *thalweg*, the main channel of the Mekong, thereby giving Thailand certain islands in the river. In fact Pridi was already informed on his arrival in

Paris of contents of the draft recommendations and was much upset by them.¹⁴ In Paris also, he was disillusioned by the negative French attitude toward the question of independence for Laos and Cambodia within the Pan-Southeast Asian Union. He returned a disappointed man to Bangkok on 21 June, having achieved none of his objectives. The government reaction to this negative outcome was to draw public attention away from the territorial issue. Prime Minister Thamrong announced to the press conference on 1 July that Thailand and France were considering co-sponsorship of a Southeast Asian Union with Bangkok as its headquarters.¹⁵

On 5 July, the government issued a long communiqué which recounted the events leading to Pridi's trip to Washington and emphasized Pridi's insistence on the independence of Laos and Cambodia as a *sine qua non* for any union. It sought to make clear that Pridi had in no way been responsible for the presentation and argumentation of the Thai case before the Conciliation Commission. On the subject of border adjustment, the communiqué left an impression that the deliberations of the Commission were not yet over. The government refused to release any information about the Commission hearings before the return of the Thai delegation from Washington.¹⁶ Apparently, this was a futile attempt to delay as long as possible the disclosure of the bitter truth. It was not until 11 August that the government admitted defeat

in its report to Parliament on the border adjustment issue. The members of Parliament expressed their general dissatisfaction with the Commission's recommendations, but left the matter of conveying their sentiments to the discretion of the government. The Opposition leader, Khuang Aphaiwong, criticized Pridi's suggestion of independence for Laos and Cambodia as an unnecessary provocation of the French.¹⁷

But Pridi was not finished yet: behind the scenes he gave a considerable impetus to the idea of a Southeast Asian Federation. The idea had been advocated before by many Indochinese nationalists in Bangkok. Now with Pridi's sanction, things began to move. On 8 September 1947, an organization known as "Southeast Asia League" was formally inaugurated in Bangkok with a declared purpose to serve as a foundation upon which Southeast Asian Federation could be built. In a sense, the formation of the League could be discerned as Pridi's answer to the French proposal, tendered through Picot, for the establishment of a Pan-Southeast Asian Union. On the other hand, Pridi himself, writing some 27 years later, was to ascribe his motives for forming the League to "a desire for mutual defensive assistance among small countries in Southeast Asia in face of impending threats from two emerging giants, China and the newly-independent India".¹⁸ It is difficult to know whether this was Pridi's only purpose at the time. But what was unmistakable in the latter

half of 1947 was the Thai government's open support for the Southeast Asian nationalists. In September, Thai Foreign Minister Arthakit Banomyong, Pridi's half-brother, made a speech before the United Nations' General Assembly supporting Indonesian independence. On 1 November 1947, the Thai government issued a reply to the International Conciliation Commission, rejecting its recommendations and insisting upon "the strict adherence to the principle of self-determination as the only means of attaining peace and tranquillity in Southeast Asia."¹⁹

Since the Khuang government of early 1946 Thailand had secretly allowed arms to be smuggled to the independence movements in Indochina and had engaged in intensive propaganda work in the disputed Cambodian provinces.²⁰ These activities had been permitted to continue by the subsequent Pridi and Thamrong governments during 1946 and 1947, clearly in the hope of undermining French authority in Indochina. But Thai sympathy could also be ascribed to the fact that the Thai governments were composed mainly of the members of Free Thai Movement who had wartime connections with an anti-Japanese resistance movement in Laos. Indeed, a good number of Free Lao members had been given instructions in the theory and the practice of guerrilla warfare by Free Thai members and some by the American O.S.S. officers during the Pacific War.²¹ There can be little doubt that several prominent members of

the Thai government were, to some extent, sympathetic towards the anti-colonial movements in Indochina. The Vietminh, for example, were allowed to open information and arms-purchasing offices in Bangkok, and until 1948 the Thai government did not seek to prevent the Vietminh agents from transporting arms to the guerrilla bands in Indochina or from using the Vietnamese refugees as sources of funds, supplies, and recruits.²² As the French troops recaptured one town after another in Laos in early 1946, thousands of Vietnamese refugees were permitted to cross to the Thai side of the Mekong along with the Lao Issara (Free Lao) government to seek sanctuary from French attacks. It was estimated that the combined total of the Vietnamese refugees from Laos and from Cambodia was about 46,700 and comprised some 13,000 families.²³ The Thai government also allocated a fund of 3 million baht in April 1946 as aid to these refugees and was prepared to put aside an annual sum of 5 million baht to help Indochinese refugees.²⁴

Such tacit sympathy and support for the Indochinese people were quite congruous with general patriotic, anti-French feelings of the Thai people and, in the context of the unsettled Franco-Thai dispute in 1946, did not rouse any substantial opposition in the country. But the direction of Pridi's foreign policy of May – November 1947 in increasingly open support of Indochinese independence may have raised doubts in some

quarters in Bangkok as to the wisdom and desirability of continued provocation of the French, on the issue far less satisfactory than the territorial claims. Many saw Pridi's policy as a risky departure from the past tried-and-tested policy of giving top priority to maintaining good relations with the colonial powers. Further deterioration of Franco-Thai relations and a possibility of Thailand becoming embroiled in the conflict in Indochina especially alarmed the royalist, conservative elements, such as the Democrat Party, who had most to lose from its destabilizing effects. When the Thamrong government announced its rejection of the Commission's recommendations in November, Khuang, the Democrat Party leader, charged that advocating independence for the Indochinese states would "only arouse suspicion. . . about the motives of Siam and would lead them [Westerners] to believe that the nation had aggressive intentions."²⁵ Moreover, the formation of the Southeast Asia League as a springboard for a future Federation, which had never been precisely defined, may also have raised many questions about Thailand's precise role in such a project, particularly in the army circle, traditionally a firm supporter of the Thai unitary state system.²⁶

In addition, many of the Bangkok élite were unhappy, to say the least, about Thai membership of the League's executive committee which had been dominated by close Free

Thai associates of Pridi from the northeastern region, such as Tiang Sirikhan and Thawin Udon, respectively elected as the president and public relations officer. Tiang, a former Deputy Interior Minister, was a member of Thai delegation to the Conciliation Commission hearings. Being a leading figure in the Free Thai Movement from the northeast, Tiang was used by Pridi as liaison officer with the Free Lao, Free Cambodian, and the Vietminh. Thawin was another important Free Thai leader and member of Parliament. Other Thai members in the League's executive committee included Manoj Vuthathit, a delegate to the New Delhi Asian Relations Conference, as assistant secretary, and Sukit Nimmanhemmin, a leader of Sahacheep Party, as librarian. Both, albeit not from the northeast, were very close to Tiang.

But the really prominent members of the executive committee were the Vietminh representatives, Tran Van Giau and Le Hi, who assumed the posts of vice-president and treasurer respectively. The crucial job of general secretary was taken by that dynamic figure of Prince Souphanouvong, the Foreign Minister of the Free Lao Cabinet and future Pathet Lao leader. The eminent presence of the Moscow-trained Communist, Tran Van Giau, and leftist Souphanouvong must have helped to kindle renewed suspicions of Pridi's motives in launching his Southeast Asia League. The concessions to the Soviet Union of the previous December: the Assembly's repeal of the 1933

Anti-Communist Act which had been followed by the emergence of a Thai Communist Party, and the acceptance of a Soviet legation in Bangkok, apparently the result of Moscow's emulation of French blackmail in threatening to veto Thailand's membership of the UN, all began to receive a new interpretation, recalling Pridi's alleged admiration for the Soviet Union back in 1933.²⁷ Rumour was also circulated in Bangkok of the impending arrival of a Soviet minister to establish a legation with some 200 staff,²⁸ the number of which seemed, in the absence of a single material Russian interest, to be totally unjustifiable. In addition, the conservative royalists and military, witnessing the higher profile of labour unions and other left wing movements, the association between some leaders of the pro-government Sahacheech Party and Chinese Communists, and the profusion of hammer and sickle flags during the labour rally on 1 May 1947, became apparently apprehensive that Thailand was going Communist.²⁹ Charges of communism were levelled against the government by some Senators when it tried to introduce tough laws against corruption and profiteering in August 1947.³⁰ It was this fear of communism among Thai conservatives that the military played upon when they staged the coup d'état on 8 November. After the removal of Pridi, the Southeast Asia League sank into total oblivion, and Pibul soon reversed the course toward regionalism and turned squarely back toward the West.

THE ISAN QUESTION

An important factor that exacerbated the suspicions of the opposition was the participation in the Southeast Asia League of the politicians from Isan, Thailand's poverty-stricken region of the northeast. These Isan leaders who also featured prominently in the Free Thai governments of 1944-45 and in the Thamrong governments of 1946-47, probably as a reward for their allegiance to the Free Thai Movement during the war, were later to be arrested by the post-coup Pibul government on charges of attempting to separate Thailand's Isan region and join the Indochinese states led by the Vietminh to form a Communist-dominated Southeast Asian Federation.³¹

The Isan question was a legacy from the colonial era and had much to do with the development and basic makeup of the modern Thai state. It has continued to complicate domestic Thai politics and condition Thai attitudes towards the countries of Indochina right up to the present day. For centuries part of Isan, together with French Laos, had formed the old Lao kingdom of Lanchang, whose politico-cultural tradition was in active competition with the Ayudhya-Bangkok central Thai tradition.³² The population and territory of Isan was eventually subordinated by the Siamese king in 1778 when he sent troops to occupy Vientiane and exact tribute from Luang Prabang. After the

vain revolt of Chao Anou of Vientiane in 1826, the Siamese established their power in the Mekong valley, devastated Vientiane, and depopulated the area beyond the Mekong as a defensive measure against Vietnam.³³ In 1893, the French detached Vientiane and the rest of east-bank Laos from Bangkok's control and, albeit pursuing to the limit the local territorial claims of their Lao east-bank dependents, finally in 1904 settled for a stable, permanent frontier with Bangkok, and a partition that left most of the Mekong west-bank Lao under Siamese rule.

The failure of French colonial ambition was due partly to the advent of Thai administrative reforms and the expansion of modern communication and transportation networks just before the turn of the century which placed the outlying area including the northeastern region under the firm, centralized control of Bangkok. This process continued unabated after the coup d'état in 1932 which introduced a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary elections into Thailand.

However, the Mekong, which became a border, had not eradicated the kinship of the people on both banks, and their communication remained relatively uninterrupted. The population of Isan had expanded rapidly, exceeding that of the Mekong east-bank and soon coming to match the population in Siam's heartland, the Chaophraya river valley. This threatened to unbalance the kingdom and only prompted fear and contempt

in Bangkok rather than the necessary sympathetic concern for its problems.³⁴ Lurking behind the fear of Isan domination was a suspicion in Bangkok that the Isan people wish to reunite with their brothers across the Mekong. This anti-Isan prejudice was compounded by the fact that the Isan MP's of the 1930s, feeling rather left out from the government and frustrated in expressing their constituents' grievances, were often forced to propose radical solutions and thereby earned a reputation of being vocal, radical and anti-government.³⁵

When Pridi decided to organize the Free Thai Movement against the Pibul regime and the Japanese occupation, many Isan political leaders joined him and set up training camps for Free Thai members in various provinces of Isan, the largest of which was in the range of the Phu-Phan mountains in Sakol Nakorn province, under the command of Tiang Sirikhan. Tiang, in a joint effort to liberate Thailand and Laos from Japanese occupation, developed close ties with the Free Lao Movement in Laos. As Pridi successfully ousted the Pibul government, he brought his Isan Free Thai supporters into government and lent support to the Free Lao struggle against the French. But by 1947, most of the opposition seem to have felt that the Bangkok-Isan alliance had already outlived its usefulness in retaining national unity and integrity. The French had already reoccupied their part of Laos and thus temporarily forestalled any Lao secessionist threat

to Isan. Looking rather superciliously and somewhat jealously at the presence of the country bumpkin northeastern politicians in influential government posts, many of the Bangkok élite were further perturbed at the evident dilution of Bangkok's control of the northeastern region in which the local leaders had been given almost a free hand. This latter development was wholly objectionable for those adherents of the unitary tradition such as the military establishment who must have felt that the time had come to restore the old order of total Bangkok-centred authority. It was also becoming clear by this time that the goodwill displayed by the Western powers toward Pridi after the war had already secured all that could have been expected from it. Thus, it was not entirely a coincidence that the November coup was staged on the threshold of governmental success in acquiring British consent in the abrogation of the Formal Agreement.³⁶

THE INTERNAL SETTING IN 1947

The Formal Agreement was a treaty terminating the state of war between Thailand and Great Britain, signed, after lengthy negotiations, at Singapore on 1 January 1946. It imposed some restrictions on Thailand's export of all its main raw materials until 1 September 1947; required a surrender, free of charge, of the whole of Thailand's end-of-war rice surplus, estimated at 1.5

million tons; and obliged Thailand to sell all additional surplus rice to the Allies at negotiated prices. In addition, the British refused to release Thailand's quite substantial frozen assets in London on the ground that they were needed to cover the settlement of claims for compensation of various British firms and individuals.³⁷

However, the free delivery of 1.5 million tons of rice proved impracticable because most of the rice was not under the effective control of the Thai government but was in the hands of Chinese traders and hoarders.³⁸ In May 1946, a new agreement was negotiated. The British agreed to change their policy to one of procurement by purchase at a basic rate of 12.5 pounds sterling per ton of rice and to reduce the amount demanded to 1.2 million tons.³⁹ This proved insufficient to persuade hoarders to release their rice because of much higher prices obtainable by smuggling to Malaya, Hong Kong, Burma or Indochina. By late autumn, it was apparent that Thailand could not hope to achieve the target of 1.2 million tons by May 1947. Further negotiations were concluded with United States participation on 24 December 1946 to extend the dateline of the May 1946 agreement to 31 August 1947, with a new and lower target of 600,000 tons and a price of £24 a ton, this being more in line with the £28 per ton export price obtainable in Burma.⁴⁰ The British nonetheless requested a commitment by the Thai government to keep this

level of export prices throughout 1948 as a *quid pro quo* for the waiving of their original demand.⁴¹ Yet at the termination of the Tripartite Agreement of 31 August the British agreed to raise the price to parity with the prevailing rate in Burma in return for Thailand's undertaking to maintain its price and export control on rice. The Thamrong government followed this up by proposing in September the revision of the Formal Agreement of 1 January 1946, and the abolition of all the restrictions and controls embodied in it. The final abrogation was to be delayed by the 8 November coup and the settlement of compensation claims. The Formal Agreement was in fact not to be abrogated until January 1954.⁴²

By taking advantage of the desperate British need for its rice, the Thai government succeeded in forcing the British to yield one concession after another and backtrack from their original demand for free rice. And yet this success could not save the Thamrong government from widespread public discontent. As it happened, the rice agreement had directly contributed to the growth of smuggling and corruption within government bureaucracy.⁴³ The problem of consequent rice shortages and its soaring price became one of the sources of government unpopularity and was to be given by the military as a justification for mounting their coup in 1947. Field Marshal Phin, a coup leader, remarked that despite Thailand's position

as one of the world's richest rice-growing countries, its people had to queue up to buy low grade rice.⁴⁴

Another major economic problem facing the postwar governments was inflation, the hardest hit victims of which were the salaried civil servants. Between 1941 and 1947, the cost of living had risen as much as fourteen times,⁴⁵ due mostly to the wartime situation where the government had been forced to print and circulate a large amount of money as loans to the Japanese government for its occupation troops' expenses. It was reported that the amount loaned to Japan during 1941-45 totalled more than 1,230 million baht.⁴⁶ Other contributions to inflation were the government budget deficit throughout, and immediately after, the war years; and the provisions in the Anglo-Thai Formal Agreement of January 1946 limiting Thai exports of important commodities such as rice, tin, rubber and teak, thereby denying Thailand its much needed foreign currencies. Although in 1946 Pridi had managed to secure loans of \$10 million from the US and 50 million rupees from British India to buy necessary capital and consumer goods, the problems remained grave. According to the *Annual Report of the Bank of Thailand* in 1947, the Thamrong government resorted to selling 339,489.62 grams of gold reserves domestically for 14.8 million baht and nearly 8 million grams in the United States for \$9 million.⁴⁷ This caused the resignation of Prince Viwatthanachai Chaiyan, the first Governor of the

Bank of Thailand and the country's leading financial expert.⁴⁸ By the time the government stopped the local sale of gold in April 1947, statistics revealed that out of a total of 2,200 million baht in circulation the previous November an actual reduction of only 17 million had been effected.⁴⁹ The government's failure to solve the problems of inflation and shortages of necessities such as clothing and medicine attracted mounting public criticism. In May 1947, the government faced another wave of attacks from the press. The outcry erupted when it was discovered that many MP's, instead of distributing agricultural implements given them by the government to share out amongst their needy constituents, sold them for personal profit. Government cooperative stores set up to sell goods at very low prices became a source of further corruption and black marketeering and had to be closed down, after a mere six months in operation, with an estimated loss of 50 million baht. Other scandals were connected with the sale of cattle, the Bangkok pig abattoir monopoly, and the sale of government textiles.⁵⁰ The main brunt of criticism fell on the Deputy Minister of Finance, Thongpleo Cholabhum, under whom the Food Distribution Organization had the most appalling record of inefficiency, graft, corruption and favoritism.⁵¹

As a consequence of chaotic postwar conditions of economic depression, social dislocation, easy acquisition of arms through the black market and the sudden demobilization of the

army, crimes were rife in the cities and the countryside. The serious deterioration of law and order was one of the factors which moved the opposition party to call for a general debate and a vote of censure in May 1947. Although the government defeated the Opposition by a handsome majority, the week-long debate, broadcast on national radio for the first time, stimulated intense public attention and discussions.⁵² Among the eight issues on the agenda that the Democrat Party had put forward were: the erosion of law and order; financial crisis; economic mismanagement; lack of credibility in Thai foreign policy; negligence of the welfare of government officials; corruption; failure to promote education; and inability to explain the King's death.⁵³

The last item had been plaguing the government ever since the fateful incident took place on 9 June 1946. On that morning the young King Ananda Mahidol was found dead in his bed with a bullet wound in his forehead. The cause of his tragic death has never been fully explained. The first official communiqué stated merely that the examination of the royal remains by the Directors General of the Police Department and the Medical Department led to the conclusion that the King must have been playing with his pistol as he often had done when the accident occurred. What prevented the government from coming out with a clearer and more explicit explanation is still anybody's

guess.⁵⁴ But the opposition party seized the opportunity to deal a fatal blow to Pridi's political future. Sinister rumours about the assassination plot began to be bandied about. For instance, the American chargé d'affaires, Charles W. Yost, reported to the State Department that "within 48 hours after the death of the late King two relatives of Seni Pramoj, first his nephew and later his wife, came to the Legation and stated categorically their conviction that the King had been assassinated at the instigation of the Prime Minister [Pridi]".⁵⁵ There was also shouting in the darkness of a cinema that Pridi was behind the assassination of the King. Meanwhile, the royalist newspaper *Prachathipatai* published a leading article declaring flatly that the King had been murdered having been shot through the back of the head and that in these circumstances the Prime Minister should resign at once.⁵⁶ As a result of this attack, the editor was arrested giving the Democrat Party further cause for protest.

On 18 June 1946, Pridi set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the case. On 2 July, he declared a state of internal emergency and proceeded to censor the press. Perhaps as a precaution against trouble from the military, Pridi appointed the Police Chief, Major General Luang Adul, his Free Thai comrade, as the commander-in-chief of the army on 27 June. Despite all these forceful responses, the slanderous attack had already inflicted irreparable damage on Pridi, casting a shadow of doubt

against him in the public mind, and thereby undermining his political standing in the country. The report of the Commission of Inquiry was not concluded until 1 November 1946, prior to which Pridi had already resigned as Prime Minister on the ground of ill health. In it the Commission ruled out the possibility of accident, and expressed the opinion that on the basis of the evidence submitted the death could have been caused by either suicide or assassination but it was impossible to hand down a definitive finding. Immediately after the publication of the report Prime Minister Thamrong announced the formation of a special committee, consisting of seven Cabinet members, to study the report and indicated that the government would issue an official statement after such study was completed.⁵⁷ The inconclusive nature of the report served only to fan further rumours and wide speculation.

As we have seen, the death of King Ananda and the government failure to offer adequate explanation of the tragedy had severely undermined Pridi's popularity. His endeavours to lead Thailand to the forefront of Southeast Asian nationalism evoked suspicions among his opponents. Adverse economic conditions and the mounting venality and indiscipline of Pridi's followers already generated an atmosphere which was propitious for the November 1947 coup. Yet there were two other major reasons which directly motivated the army into overt and

militant action. These two reasons, which we will now proceed to discuss, are the discontent at the government inability to control the Chinese minority and the resentment in the army against the civilian government.

THE CHINESE MINORITY IN THAILAND

The Chinese were the largest group among all the various minorities in Thailand.⁵⁸ Most of the Chinese minority lived in the urban areas and dominated business and commerce. Their success was due primarily to the structure of Thai society in which the vast majority of the population lived by land and undertook the role of farmer-producers. The rest of the Thai population had neither the skill nor the inclination to enter into business and trade. In fact, they disdained these professions and traditionally strove for a job in the government, which they looked upon as conferring both status and security. In these circumstances, the Chinese minority filled the void left by the Thai and became middlemen, big and small traders, and businessmen.⁵⁹

The Chinese in Thailand had been arriving as immigrants from the eastern coast of China for centuries. The earlier settlers were well assimilated in Thai society and were involved mainly in local economic activities. It was the political development leading up to the revolution in China in the early twentieth

century which inspired the rise of nationalist sentiment on the part of the overseas Chinese in Siam and encouraged a strengthening of ties with their homeland. Moreover, the new Republican China under Sun Yat-sen showed more attention to overseas Chinese and abandoned the earlier Manchu practice of indifference, and even hostility, toward them. With the new Chinese regime's sanction and through improved means of transportation, the number of Chinese emigrants rose rapidly. Chinese women began to arrive in Siam in sizable numbers with their husbands, resulting in a decline in intermarriage between Chinese male migrants and local women. This slowed down considerably the process of assimilation and further enhanced the conspicuousness of the Chinese as a distinctive ethnic and cultural group. They established their own Chinese schools, Chinese newspaper, and secret societies. In 1910, the Chinese organized a strike in protest against the government imposition of a poll tax and caused major economic disruption in Bangkok for five days.⁶⁰ It suddenly drove home to the Thai hosts the extent to which the Chinese visitors controlled their economy. King Vajiravudh, writing under various pen-names, began to criticize the lack of Chinese loyalty to the country and branded them "the Jews of the East".

Eventually, the Thai government began to introduce some restrictive measures directed at the Chinese such as the

immigration law of 1927, which imposed immigration fees for the first time. According to Skinner, the year 1927/28 witnessed over 150,000 Chinese arriving in Siam,⁶¹ the highest figure ever in Thailand's history. Fear on the part of the Thai that they would be "swamped" in their own country was compounded by their realization of the economic power of the Chinese, as the latter so effectively demonstrated in an anti-Japanese boycott in 1928. The post-1932 government policies were aimed at weakening the Chinese hold on the country's economy on the one hand, and encouraging assimilation on the other. The provisions of Compulsory Education Act of 1921 were applied for the first time in Bangkok in 1933 and inspection of Chinese schools became overnight strict and uncompromising to a degree. These moves meant that Chinese schools throughout the country could teach Chinese only as a foreign language and for a maximum of seven hours a week.⁶² A sharp rise in immigration fees and a Thai government refusal to enter into diplomatic relations with the Chinese government can be ascribed to this desire to reduce the Chineseness of the local community.⁶³

The earnest attempts of the Thai government to wrest economic control from the Chinese started after the change of government in December 1938, when Pibul became Prime Minister and concurrently Minister of Interior. The new Minister of Finance, Pridi Banomyong, declared that a primary

goal of the government was the entry of ethnic Thai into the profit-producing activities of the country.⁶⁴ The new administration established various kinds of government-subsidised factories to produce certain commodities in direct competition with Chinese factories. Successive legislation was enacted in March and April 1939 to assert government control in various industries. These were the Salt Act, the Tobacco Act, the Act for the Slaughter of Animals for Food, the Revenue Code, the Signboard Act, the Vehicles Act, and the Liquid Fuels Act.⁶⁵ These restrictions adversely affected both Chinese and European economic interests in Thailand, but the China-born Chinese were the principal victims. In addition to economic and cultural issues, there was also a political dimension to the conflict between the Thai government and the Chinese community. This political problem derived from the Sino-Japanese war at the time. In July and August 1939, the police carried out a series of raids on Chinese schools, printing press, newspaper offices and Chinese association headquarters, unearthing their illegal political activities in cahoots with Chinese secret societies such as the collection and remittance of funds for the Chinese national war effort and the organization of an anti-Japanese boycott.⁶⁶ Since the declared foreign policy of the Thai government then was one of strict neutrality, it could not tolerate such anti-Japanese activities by the Chinese in the country. Several hundred Chinese were arrested and deported.

During the war, the government persisted with its nationalistic policies: the Chinese schools were virtually obliterated, twenty-seven different occupations and professions were reserved for Thai nationals only, and Chinese nationals were prohibited from acquiring land. In sum, restrictions and controls on the Chinese, had steadily increased in the 1930's and intensified on a large scale after the advent of the Pibul government in 1938. The anti-Chinese measures were a product of Thai nationalism, ostensibly aiming at reducing the economic power and cultural solidarity of a strong and capable minority. They inflicted severe hardship on the Chinese and instead of fostering a voluntary assimilation process, they left a feeling of resentment within the Chinese community. For several reasons, they failed to undermine the dominant position of the Chinese in rice and teak milling, or in the other major fields of trade, finance or labour.⁶⁷

Right after the Second World War, there was an ugly incident which served to exacerbate prejudices and mistrust between the Chinese and the Thai. Upon hearing the news of the Japanese surrender, the Chinese in Bangkok celebrated the Chinese role in the Allied victory and hoisted Chinese flags along with those of the other powers without the Thai flag. When the Thai authorities warned them that they were violating the law which stipulated that any foreign flags flown in Thailand

must be accompanied by a Thai flag, the Chinese ignored them. Behind this flag dispute was Thailand's delicate position, as its war defeat and Allied retribution were staring it in the face. The Chinese in Bangkok saw Thailand as a defeated enemy and may have mistakenly expected Chinese troops to enter Thailand. On 21 September, one of these disputes erupted into a serious clash between the Chinese and the Thai, the latter including both police and armed civilians, on Yaowarat road in the centre of the Chinese quarter in Bangkok.⁶⁸ The fighting lasted for more than one week. This led to strong protests from the Chiang Kai-shek government which demanded measures to prevent a recurrence as well as compensation for the Chinese victims. To calm the situation, the Seni government had to set up a Sino-Thai Security Corps to prevent further such incidents.

Meanwhile, the Thai government, eager to accommodate the Allies' demand, agreed to conclude a Treaty of Amity with China on 23 January 1946, providing for an exchange of diplomatic and consular representatives and specifically the protection of the rights of respective nationals, particularly in regard to immigration, freedom of assembly, occupation, education and publication.⁶⁹ The arrival in September 1946 of the Chinese ambassador, Li Tieh Tseng, meant that for the first time in history the three million odd Chinese in the country would be officially represented. Backed by the diplomatic

representation of their home government, the Chinese community now had a better opportunity than ever before to apply pressure on the Thai government. American ambassador, Edwin Stanton, made an observation at the time that the presence of a Chinese diplomatic representative had interjected a totally new element into the situation, and latent Chinese nationalism had become more open, belligerent and demanding.⁷⁰

In fact, many restrictions on Chinese schools were completely lifted. The Thai government, while anxious to foster the assimilation of the great number of Chinese immigrants, was compelled to reach a compromise with respect to demands pressed by the Chinese embassy. As a consequence, Chinese schools were allowed to function almost freely, and by the end of 1947 they numbered over 400. Another major issue was the question of Chinese immigration to Thailand. During 1946, Chinese immigrants poured into Thailand at a rate of 3000-5000 per month,⁷¹ causing the Thai government and people once again a great deal of uneasiness. In view of the facts that around 20 percent of the population was Chinese and nearly 80 percent of all business was concentrated in the hands of Chinese traders, Thai anxiety and alarm were readily understandable. In May 1947, the government gingerly moved to impose an annual quota of Chinese immigrants at 10,000, compared to 200 for other nationalities.

The postwar civilian governments' cautious accommo-

dation to the Chinese generated resentment among Thai nationalists, including influential elements in the military. For example, coup promoter Lieutenant General Kat Katsongkhram cited the government's inadequate control of Chinese immigration, Chinese profiteering causing economic problems, and the government's inability to enforce the laws on the Chinese, as some of his reasons to stage the coup.⁷² Skinner also pointed out that the strikes of Chinese labourers and smuggling, hoarding, and bribery by Chinese rice merchants were considered especially damaging to the recovery of Thailand's economy and international standing. In his opinion,

The adverse economic effects of the Rice Agreement [the Anglo-Thai Formal Agreement] and the smuggling and corruption which it fostered were prominent among the factors underlying the November 1947 coup d'état. To the extent that Chinese merchants contributed to corruption and inflation, they share responsibility for the downfall of the Thai administration which, of all administrations since the 1932 revolutions, had been most consistently friendly to the Chinese.⁷³

THE ARMY DISCONTENT

The last key reason for the 1947 coup was the discontent in the army. After the war the army's morale was low, its greatest

hero and wartime leader, Pibul, had been put on trial and its troop strength had been cut down by the civilian leadership. The military particularly resented the way in which the northern army was withdrawn and demobilized from the occupied Shan States of British Burma at the end of the war. The two Shan States, Kengtung and Mongpan, were Japanese rewards for Thailand's collaboration. But the Thai army had to send its own troops to occupy the territories, resulting in considerable casualties from sickness and hardship. The withdrawal, the return of territories, and the premature retirement of many of its officers were bad enough in themselves, but the disorderly and confusing fashion in which the withdrawal of troops from the Shan States was handled added further injuries to its pride. Lacking adequate transportation and government funds, many of the soldiers decided to walk home and broke ranks to fend for themselves. They were treated by the people as though they were surrendered Japanese soldiers. Far from being received as war heroes, the army was deprived of any triumphant return. The sight of Free Thai volunteers parading as heroes in Bangkok with their brand new uniforms and weapons supplied by the Allies was to army officers like rubbing salt onto the wound.⁷⁴

The immediate postwar period saw a temporary eclipse of the army's dominance in Thai politics. The new Constitution of 1946 forbade serving military officers and civilian officials

from concurrently being members of Parliament and the cabinet, thereby excluding military officers from active political roles. The army's budget was severely cut. In the period from 1945 to 1947, the army's share plummeted to less than 20% of a total military budget, itself cut down by more than half.⁷⁵ The navy also received better treatment than the army because of their active participation in Free Thai activities. Another cause for army resentment was the appointment of Rear Admiral Luang Sangworn Suwannacheep, a leading Free Thai supporter, in charge of the military police. He was later also appointed as the Director General of the Police Department. General Kat, one of the coup plotters who had himself been a Free Thai collaborator, seems to have reflected the bitterness felt in the army when he noted that "while it was all right to praise the good work the Free Thai had done, it was not fair for the press and some politicians to belittle the army by saying that in the fifty years or so of the army's history it could not accomplish what the Free Thai did in two years, namely, steer the country safely towards being on the winning side."⁷⁶ Such were the roots of intense resentment among the army officer corps in 1946-47.

THE EMERGENCE OF PIBUL

These disaffected army officers must have taken fresh

heart at a dramatic announcement by Pibul that he intended to return to active political life.⁷⁷ Pibul had been arrested on 16 October 1945 and put on trial under the War Crimes Act, promulgated six days earlier, for his part in bringing Thailand into war against the Allies. But in March 1946, he was freed by the High Court on the ground that an Act could not be made retroactive and hence the War Crimes Act was unconstitutional. Having kept a very low profile for a year, Pibul reentered the political limelight in March 1947 when he revealed that he was thinking of forming a conservative party, the Thammathipat Party. His reason for attempting this political “comeback” was “because he could no longer bear to see the deplorable situation the country was in”. He also felt that he could no longer remain quiet but had to return to “clear himself of charges being made against him”.⁷⁸ Pibul’s timing coincided with the final departure of the last of British forces that had been in Thailand since August 1945, although the main body of these troops had left the previous October. It was possible that Pibul felt, following President Truman’s “block Communism” speech to Congress on 22 March, that the moment was opportune both for that reason and because the fear of communism was rising within the ranks of the army and the conservatives including the Democrat Party. He probably calculated that the rightist policy which he would pursue and which would form a major plank of his political

platform would appeal both to the anti-communist elements in Thailand and to the United States.

In reaction to talk and publicity in Bangkok in favour of Pibul's return to active political life, the British and American ambassadors called on both Pridi and Prime Minister Thamrong, and expressed their strong objections. The British ambassador reported himself having spoken to Thamrong in the following strong terms:

- a) that we did not fight the war to see the re-establishment of a fascist regime headed by an arch-collaborator with the Japanese;
- b) that it was an insult to the intelligence of the outside world for the Marshal to prate about his attachment to democracy and his determination to cooperate with the United Nations;
- c) that if and when the present publicity became known its effect on Siam's reputation abroad would be deplorable; and
- d) that today no country could lightly ignore world opinion.⁷⁹

The British embassy also expressed publicly its displeasure at the prospect of Pibul's return by issuing a statement in reply to press enquiries on 28 March 1947 that:

The British Information Service cannot comment on Siamese political affairs. It is not forgotten however that it was under the leadership of the ex-dictatorship that Siam declared war on British and American democracies.⁸⁰

Both Pridi and Thamrong expressed their belief that Pibul would not be able to return to power either through party manoeuvring or by means of a military coup d'état, apparently pinning their faith on the loyalty of the navy and Adul, the army commander. Pridi made a suggestion to the British and American embassies that they should send personal letters to the Thai Prime Minister, expressing their concern over the possibility of Pibul's return to power. Such letters, Pridi felt, would discourage Pibul and his followers and might result in their quietly retiring from the political arena.⁸¹ The British government strongly favoured such action but would only act in conjunction with the United States. The State Department had a different idea. In his instructions to Ambassador Stanton on 17 April, Secretary of State Acheson pointed out that the impressions in Washington were: first, the possibility of Pibul becoming prime minister was already diminishing; secondly, the probability was increasing that the next prime minister would be Khuang supported by Pibul; and thirdly, Pridi was anxious to have the United States intervene for personal reasons rather than political reasons of national interest.⁸² Thus, both the British

and American embassies refrained from sending parallel letters to the Thai government as suggested by Pridi. It appears from this evidence that the Americans were not as strongly anti-Pibul as the British. In fact, they were competing actively for political and economic influence in Thailand. British policy was mainly to preserve their commercial interests, the prerequisites for which were general stability and a government not hostile to Britain. They strongly opposed Pibul lest the latter would bring back the nationalist and xenophobic policies, pernicious to their interests. In addition, the British feared that the return to power of Pibul would have wider repercussions on the area such as the temporary disruption of the rice procurement scheme, the danger of Thai expansionist tendencies, and the hindrance to British plans for increased influence with the Thai armed forces, with the object of integrating the latter in the general defence system for Southeast Asia.⁸³ The Americans, on the other hand, were trying to break British commercial supremacy. This was difficult because the shortage of dollar exchange had militated against American hopes of trade expansion in Thailand. Although Pibul's reemergence was not welcome because he was thought to have militarist inclinations, the United States realized that the pro-American Democrat Party, led by Khuang and Seni, could be voted back to office with the support of Pibul and other dissident elements in Parliament. It was believed that the

Democrats would be more ready than the pro-British Thamrong government to draw upon Thailand's sterling resources for dollar purposes. As the British ambassador, Geoffrey Thompson, put it, "It is the darling ambition of the Americans to see the Opposition [the Democrat Party] back in office".⁸⁴

Khuang indeed challenged the government by calling a general debate and a vote of censure in May. As already mentioned, the vote failed to oust the government but the debate did stimulate intense public discussions and added fuel to criticism against the government. By November, according to contemporary observer John Coast, Bangkok was thick with speculation about the intended resignation of the government, and rumours of imminent coups d'état: "an army coup, a navy coup, an Adul coup, a Democrat coup."⁸⁵ The atmosphere was engendered by frequent rumblings of discontent within the army. Day after day, the press attacked the government's failure to reduce widespread corruption, the mishandling of rice control leading to rice shortages, the scandals regarding smuggling activities carried on with the complicity of highly placed officials, the unsolved mystery of the King's death, the corrupt activities of government supporters in Parliament, and the inefficiency and corruption of the Food Distribution Organization. The growing activities of left-wing groups, the Vietminh involvement in the Southeast Asia League and the impending arrival of Soviet

diplomats conjured up the spectre of communism in the eyes of the royalists, conservatives and military. Against this background, a coup group was formed, a plot hatched, and on 8 November they struck bringing about in its chain a change in national leadership and with it a new direction in Thai foreign policy.

THE COUP D'ÉTAT

The leaders of the coup d'état, known as Khana Ratthaprahan or the "Coup Group", were composed mainly of some thirty junior army officers of approximately 30 to 40 years of age. Most of them were active battalion commanders of the First and the Eleventh infantry regiments in Bangkok.⁸⁶ It was this group of young officers who supplied the troops and fire power crucial to any coup success. Their instigators and chief planners were their seniors, middle-ranking and/or retired officers, the most prominent of whom were Colonel Kat Katsongkhram and Lieutenant General Phin Chunhawan. Kat, probably the real moving spirit behind the coup, had been a military promoter of the 1932 Coup and had served Pibul as Deputy Finance Minister in 1942-43. He was responsible for drafting a new constitution and getting Prince Rangsit, chairman of the regency council, to sign it on the day of the coup in order to legitimize the coup. Immediately after the coup, Kat took command of Bangkok

garrisons as assistant commander of the armed forces under Pibul and Phin who became commander-in-chief and deputy commander respectively, Phin was a professional soldier, devoid of a previous political record. He was forced into retirement at the end of the war, having fought in the Indochina War in 1941 and been in charge of the troops occupying the Shan States of Burma during the Second World War. He seems to have been brought into the plot, by virtue of his former service with the northern army and perhaps at the instigation of one of his sons-in-law, Colonel Phao Sriyanon, as figurehead of the Coup Group. Phao was a former aide to Pibul and, because of his links to both Phin and Pibul, was to emerge as a figure of major importance over the ensuing decade.

Since these army commanders were relatively unknown, they needed a leader who had both national stature and the support of the army. Pibul fitted their needs perfectly because of his continuing popularity in army circles and his high public reputation. Although it was officially stated that Pibul was not a member of the conspiracy but had been drafted into service as leader immediately following the success of the coup, Pibul seems to have been fully cognizant of the plan, even if he did not actually mastermind it. He appears to have been initially reluctant to be propelled straight to the fore. He at least made an attempt to affect change through legal means by asking Thamrong

to dinner on 6 November. Pibul warned Thamrong that drastic measures had to be taken immediately and suggested that Adul be made deputy prime minister, and he, Pibul, commander of the army, to placate the military officers whom he stated could not be stopped unless this was done.⁸⁷ Thus up to and including 8 November all of the important government leaders, including Pridi, Thamrong, and Adul, were aware of the imminence of an army coup. Thamrong had also been under pressure from Adul to make drastic changes including even the government's resignation.⁸⁸ But Thamrong's decision to resign came too late, the coup plotters decided to go ahead and brought forward the timing for action to just before midnight of 8 November.

By 8 o'clock of the following morning, the coup d'état could be considered completely successful without bloodshed. All other forces, including the air force, navy, police and military police, offered no resistance. Government leaders such as Elder Statesman Pridi, Prime Minister Thamrong, and Admiral Sangworn, the chief of police, fled into hiding.⁸⁹ At the coup headquarters, Phin gave the first press interview. He said the coup was effected by the military group for the sake of the people. They could not stand by and watch the deterioration of the situation. The mystery of the King's death, corruption, rice smuggling and shortage, and corrupt practice of MP's were more than he or the army could take. Another reason was to give Pibul a chance to

prove himself. At 9 o'clock, Pibul was brought to the Ministry of Defence amidst loud cheers and immediately assumed the post of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. He proclaimed that public opinion wanted a change, but this could not be effected by constitutional means because the Thamrong government had a large majority in Parliament. The army thus decided unanimously to get rid of it. The new government would be charged with the strengthening of the economy particularly in the matter of rice. It would re-open the investigation into the King's death and hold an official inquiry into allegations of corruption on the part of former government officials. He would efface himself from politics immediately following the formation of a provisional government. The provisional government would function for not more than 90 days by which time a general election would provide a government elected by popular vote.

The reluctance of Pibul to form the government himself must have stemmed from his uncertainty regarding possible reactions from the Allied Powers, particularly the United States and Great Britain. Moreover, the Coup Group leaders may have decided to step back from taking over the government themselves in order to substantiate their altruistic pretensions. They thus invited Khuang and Seni, the Democrat Party's leaders, to form a caretaker government. Khuang accepted the prime ministership on condition that the army not interfere with the administration

but would only be responsible for the maintenance of peace and order.⁹⁰ Having received such assurance from Pibul, he then proceeded to form a cabinet viewed by the American ambassador of the time as composed of “some of the most intelligent, capable and honest men to be found in the Kingdom”.⁹¹

The new regime did its best to placate major powers by giving numerous assurances that it would keep faithfully to all Thailand’s international obligations; that its only desire was to establish a firm and honest government; and that Pibul himself would retire within ninety days. In addition, the Coup Group leaders made an effort to discredit Pridi and his Free Thai supporters. General Phin on 15 November gave a press interview in which he made a number of sensational allegations to the effect that the military command had come into possession of conclusive evidence that the late King had been assassinated and that this was linked with an alleged Free Thai plot just uncovered to stage a general uprising on 30 November to establish a republic.⁹² The military also arrested Chalieu Pathumarot, former Pridi-appointed private secretary to the late King, and the two royal pages who were on duty on that fateful morning. Kat further added flagrant details and innuendoes to Phin’s allegations.⁹³ This kind of smear campaign to implicate Pridi in the King’s death aroused public feeling against Pridi and managed to destroy his prestige, even though there was

no solid evidence nor reasonable motives whatever of Pridi's connection to the death of the late monarch.

On the other side of the picture, Pridi and Thamrong managed to escape to the naval base outside Bangkok and, for a few days, toyed with the idea of armed resistance to overturn Pibul. Emissaries were sent to sound out British and American opinions, only to encounter discouragement from both embassies. Their rationale for advice against any counter-offensive was based on a desire to prevent bloodshed and the calculation that such actions might lead to disorder which would only be detrimental to their national interests. Pridi eventually decided on 19 November to leave Thailand. He told the British ambassador that he had reached the conclusion that the recent allegations about his implications in the King's death had lost him much support in and out of the navy, and he appealed for assistance from the British and American ambassadors to help him leave the country.⁹⁴ With the assistance of British and American naval attaches, Pridi and a couple of his followers were safely put on board a Shell Oil Company tanker on its way to Singapore on 23 November.⁹⁵

Anglo-American policy at this juncture was to wait and see whether the new regime was firmly in control and adhered to its international obligations. Meanwhile, their respective embassies continued to do business with the Thai authorities on

a *de facto* basis and withhold official recognition of the Khuang government. The French government took a much more hostile view of the coup and the return of Pibul, who had been responsible for attacking French Indochina in 1940 and subsequently annexing, with Japanese support, some Cambodian and Lao territories. It proposed to Britain and the United States that the three countries take the following actions: a public warning, the suspension of economic facilities, the severance of diplomatic relations, and reference of the matter to the United Nations as a “situation threatening peace and international security”.⁹⁶ The British and American governments, however, dismissed French apprehension as exaggerated and insisted on a cautious policy of deferring recognition.

Although the general situation in Thailand appeared calm, beneath the surface the Free Thai members in the north-east led by Tiang Sirikhan and the naval factions that supported Thamrong were still contemplating a possible armed revolt. On 25 November, Pibul gave up his post as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and became instead commander-in-chief of the army. Khuang explained the retention of Pibul’s services that:

What the rest of the world do not realize is that Siam has two armies. . . Pibul is the only man strong enough to disarm the Free Thais to allow Siam to continue its peaceful existence. I realize the world is prejudiced against Pibul, but my government still needs him for internal peace.⁹⁷

On 27 November Pridi, at the suggestion of the British ambassador in Bangkok, issued two statements from Singapore, one of which was a formal denial of the allegations that he was implicated in the death of the late King. His other statement was to appeal to his friends in the Free Thai Movement to refrain from the use of force. He reminded them that “the organization of Free Siamese was formed solely for the purpose of fighting against the Japanese and certainly not amongst the Siamese themselves”.⁹⁸ As a result, the Free Thai leaders disagreed among themselves and the possibilities of armed counteraction diminished considerably. Furthermore, a number of former cabinet members were forced by the Coup Group to sign statements renouncing their official duties or were arrested and detained by the military. The politicians under arrest on charges of resistance activities, corruption, and complicity in political murders included Wichit Lulitanon, former Finance Minister; his deputy, Thongpleo Cholphum; Thong Kanthatham, former Deputy Minister of Interior; and Thawin Udon, Sahacheep Party leader.⁹⁹ Warrants were also issued for Thong-in Bhuripat and Tiang

Sirikhan. By the end of December, Pibul was so confident of internal security that he relinquished all the emergency power granted to the Military Command since 19 November. This special power of search, seizure and arrest had been given to the Military Command by the Senate for a period of ninety days for the express purpose of suppressing any counter coup and ensuring the stability of the new regime.

A general election was held on 29 January 1948 to fill the one hundred seats for the House of Representatives. According to the provisional constitution introduced by the Coup Group on 9 November 1947, Parliament was to be composed of two equally constituted chambers. The first chamber, the Senate, comprising 100 appointed members had already been in operation prior to the elections. Its members, selected by a five-man Supreme Council of State, were mostly “venerable gentlemen, picked for their integrity and record of past service – mostly before 1932.”¹⁰⁰ The second chamber was the House of Representatives to consist of 100 popularly elected members. The absence as candidates of most of the former leading supporters of Pridi, many of whom had been arrested by the Coup Group resulted in a proportionate lack of electoral success on the part of the Sahacheep, Constitutional Front and Prachachon Parties. The election result showed the Democrat Party securing an absolute majority in the House of Representatives, with 53 seats out of

100, as opposed to the pro-Pibul Thammathipat Party with an ignominious five.¹⁰¹ Thus, taking into consideration the 80 percent backing which Khuang could count upon in the royalist Senate, parliamentary support for him was secure.

After the Khuang government had received a vote of confidence in the joint session of Parliament, the door was opened for its recognition by major foreign powers. This was duly accorded on 6 March 1948 when the governments of the United States, Great Britain, France and China resumed official relations with the Thai government. Despite earlier disapproval of the method by which the Coup Group put the Khuang government in power, the Western powers now considered the administration to be in general composed of honest and capable experienced officials, to be representative of the wishes of the electorate, and to have undertaken to respect Thailand's international obligations. Moreover, they hoped that the recognition would strengthen the position of the Khuang government vis-à-vis Pibul and the Coup Group and would help stabilize the political situation in Thailand.¹⁰² Interestingly, the first Soviet minister to Thailand and his staff of about twenty also arrived in Bangkok on 15 March and he was reported to have stated that there was no question of recognition pending as the Soviet government had never withdrawn recognition during the interim period.¹⁰³

Having secured recognition from the Western powers, the

Khuang government lasted barely a month when the Coup Group stepped in. This time the military intervention was done in such a manner as to preserve an outward appearance of constitutionality. On 6 April, Khuang was “invited” to resign within 24 hours on the ground that his government had been unable to reduce the high cost of living and the prestige of Coup Group suffered as they were responsible for his government.¹⁰⁴ The real reason for the Coup Group’s dissatisfaction was that Khuang was far from subservient to the army and was determined to limit the power of the Coup Group by subordinating them to a Defence Council and proposing to slash military expenditure in the new budget. After receiving the ultimatum, Khuang quickly sought support from the air force and navy commanders only to be advised to give in. After a long discussion, the cabinet decided that they would have to resign for a government that could not rely on their armed forces was, they felt, *ipso facto*, not a government.¹⁰⁵ Any other alternative would simply lead to another coup d’état, which would only cause more trouble for the country.

Following Khuang’s resignation, Pibul was summoned by the Supreme Council of State on 7 April. According to Prince Rangsit, Chairman of the Council, Pibul was accompanied by Kat, now a Lieutenant General, who spoke up and declared emphatically in the Council that the military group would accept no one but Pibul as the Prime Minister.¹⁰⁶ There seemed to be

no alternative for the Council but to accede to Kat's demand. Pibul invited Khuang's cabinet to serve in his government but was declined. The cabinet he eventually formed on 13 April was of lower calibre than his predecessor's. It comprised nine Senators, seven elected MPs, and ten outsiders, some of whom were conservative royalists. The interesting thing about it was the fact that only one member of the military Coup Group, Colonel Nom Ketunut, was given a Cabinet post as Deputy Minister of Agriculture. The US embassy noted that for the first time in years American university alumni were included, namely: Phraya Thonnawanik Montri, Minister of Finance, and Pote Sarasin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁰⁷ Despite the predominantly Democrat Assembly, Pibul's government received a vote of confidence on 21 April. Out of the combined members of the two Houses, 70 voted for him, 26 against, 67 abstained and 37 were absent, therefore giving the government constitutional approval.¹⁰⁸ Some thirty Senators voted in favour of Pibul. The large number of abstentions reflected concern felt over the manner in which Khuang was ousted, while it was also feared that a failure on the government's part to secure the vote of confidence would probably result in the dissolution of Parliament or at least the Senate.

THE QUESTION OF FOREIGN RECOGNITION

One of Pibul's problems was how to secure Western recognition for his government in view of the objection openly expressed against him in the West. The US State Department, for example, had announced after the November coup that he was "the man who declared war on the Allies," and any government headed by him would be "extremely unpopular" with the Western democracies.¹⁰⁹ Pibul realized that it was essential to maintain good relations with the United States and Great Britain for obvious economic and political reasons. He appealed for closer cooperation between Thailand and the Western democracies, stating that his government would support the United Nations and pursue a firm anti-communist policy. He was also eager to show his repentance for his pro-Axis leanings during World War II and anxious to prove to the Western democracies that he was really on their side. The question of recognition of the Pibul government became a subject of intense discussions between the Western Allies.

Although it was reluctant to recognize the government headed by Pibul in view of his past record, the British Foreign Office realized that it had to follow the principle of recognizing the authority actually in power in a country. The British were also disposed to believe that Pibul was a changed man and

ready to cooperate with the Western powers. Moreover, a break of diplomatic relations would only be detrimental to British commercial interests and their efforts to procure rice from Thailand. The Foreign Office had no desire to interrupt the impending conclusion of the arrangement with the Thai government for payment of British war claims against Thailand.¹¹⁰ On 21 April, a statement in the House of Commons indicated a “wait and see” policy premised on the question of whether the new government would adhere to treaty obligations and other commitments. In fact, the British were waiting to act in concert with other Western governments, including the United States. The British ambassador, being in London at the time, recorded his advice to the Foreign Office that:

It really mattered little to us who governed Siam as long as British interests received a square deal, and some measure of political stability was maintained. Pibul's record in the war, I argued, should not be held too much against him. Without help from us, he had had no hope of successfully resisting the Japanese. His policy had retained for Siam the outward semblance of independence and had spared its people much suffering. Moreover, it had enabled the Siamese to remain in charge of our civilian internees, who had been very well treated. The marshal [Field Marshal Pibul] had, I thought, been intelligent enough to learn from the past. As matters stood, he had nothing to gain by offending the Anglo-Saxon powers. Finally, he was certainly anti-Communist, if nothing else.¹¹¹

The Chinese government was also reluctant but decided to tolerate Pibul in order to preserve its national interests. Its principal preoccupations in Thailand were its desperate need for Thai rice, its desire to continue uninterrupted its prosecution with the Thai government of large number of cases for the Chinese residents, and its concern for the increase in Communist activities among the Chinese community in Thailand.¹¹²

Anti-communism was also prominent among the US considerations in the question of recognition. In his telegram of 12 April 1948 to the American ambassador in Bangkok, the Acting Secretary of State, Lovett, questioned the results to be obtained by an indefinite period of non-recognition, pointing out the probable difficulty at a future date of finding a suitable occasion for the resumption of diplomatic relations. He also stated that:

DEPT considers situation is complicated by fact that USSR has opened legation at Bangkok, that USSR did not engage in non-recognition after coup Nov 8 and will probably take no adverse notice present change govt; and that Communism now making such rapid gains Burma and consolidating control in Indochina that it highly undesirable create situation in which Siamese Govt thrown into arms USSR as only nation which recognizes it.¹¹³

It is clear that Washington was worried that the Pibul

government might be forced to look to the Soviet Union for support, if recognition were delayed. This was part of a global US policy of denying to the Soviet Union an economic or political foothold in areas outside immediate Soviet influence.

In response, Ambassador Stanton sent a flurry of telegrams beseeching a postponement of immediate recognition as a form of protest against the tactics of pressure used to overthrow the Khuang government.¹¹⁴ Like many other idealistic Americans in Bangkok at the time, Stanton disapproved of a coup d'état method to seize power. Washington, however, rejected Stanton's plea on the ground that "only in extreme cases should recognition be withheld as political weapon or to express moral censure when US national interests would be served."¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, Stanton's other suggestions of possible protest actions, including stoppage of negotiations regarding possible return of Thai gold impounded in Tokyo and the cessation of the purchase of Thai tin after the expiry of existing contracts appears to have had some effects. The State Department agreed to issue a statement on 23 April 1948 that:

In connection with the resignation of the Aphaiwong Government of Siam of April 8 and the forming of a new Government by Phibun Songgram, the US Government will watch carefully the manner in which Siam's international and other obligations are carried out and how American citizens and their interests in Siam are treated.

In this connection, the US Government is for the time being suspending its consideration of what action, if any, it might take in response to the Siamese Government's desire for favorable consideration of various matters of a financial nature.¹¹⁶

But there was never a question of breaking off diplomatic relations. Technically, the US government held the view that there had been no interruption in diplomatic relations as its ambassador was accredited not to the Khuang government, but to the Supreme Council of State which continued to function on behalf of the King. On 21 April, the State Department instructed Stanton to acknowledge the receipt of the Thai Foreign Minister's note announcing the formation of the Pibul government after such government received a parliamentary vote of confidence.¹¹⁷ This was carried out by the American embassy on 30 April 1948, simultaneously with the British, Chinese and Indian replies.

The French government hastened to be the first to accord recognition to the Pibul government on 22 April 1948. But by then it was already aware of Washington's instruction to Stanton of 21 April.¹¹⁸ Thus, notwithstanding its distaste for Pibul as prime minister, the French believed it futile to take any strong action alone without support from the United States and Great Britain. They hoped that Pibul would return their favour by keeping his promise given to Pierre Gilbert, the French minister in Bangkok,

that he would close the issue on border adjustment and that he would stop the clandestine activities of Indochinese resistance groups in Bangkok.¹¹⁹

CONCILIATION AND RAPPROCHEMENT WITH WESTERN POWERS

Now that his return to power had been consummated by Western recognition, Pibul took several steps to regain their full confidence in his government. In May 1948, he reassured the French that he would honour the return to France of long-disputed Indochina border provinces which had been agreed during the Thamrong administration and that he considered the matter closed.¹²⁰ This allayed French anxiety and sparked an enthusiastic response from them. In September, the Thai government accepted a French invitation to send a military mission to Saigon to discuss problems of border patrol and mutual defence against communism. Two months later, the Thai government issued an official communiqué that they had decided to “deny the use of Siamese territory to partisans of Free Movements in Indo-China for mobilizing troops, arms and provisions in the fight against the French”.¹²¹ Indochinese refugees were now required to conform to immigration regulations which included the payment of fees and they were forbidden the

possession of weapons or to engage in political or military activities related to the resistance being conducted within Indochina. The improved relations between Thailand and France were further strengthened in 1949 by the raising of their respective legations to embassies.

Nonetheless, it seemed that not much more than token enforcement of these edicts against the Indochinese nationalist movements was carried out. The lack of an agreement with the French authorities to operate a joint border police patrol, in contrast with the Anglo-Thai cooperation along Thai-Malayan border which will be discussed below, was also notable. This was due to a number of reasons, other than the inherently difficult nature of the terrain in the areas and the lack of adequate Thai police forces. First, Pibul had to move cautiously since certain Thai groups, especially government officials, still had a deep and latent antagonism and resentment toward France which stemmed from what the Thai considered the historic French encroachment on Thailand's eastern border. Any sudden display of warmth toward the French would subject the government to disapproval and unpopularity. Secondly, Pibul probably believed that the Vietminh might eventually defeat the French unless the United States decided to support the French in the war.¹²² Thus, Pibul preferred to do no more than necessary while acquiring more information regarding American intentions in Indochina.

For these reasons, he allowed the Vietnamese Information Office to continue to operate in Bangkok and did not try to prevent arms from being smuggled across the Mekong river.

By contrast, Pibul showed his willingness to cooperate with the British in all important matters. He promised more efficiency in the procurement of rice and protection of British commercial interests. Soon enough the British press was praising Pibul as “the strong man of Siam” whereas only a short time before he had been labelled as a “Japanese-sponsored quisling”.¹²³ British officials similarly revised their opinions toward Pibul. In his annual report to the Foreign Office, the British ambassador praised Pibul that: “His Excellency [Pibul] has, in short, played very fairly with us since his return in 1948 to political life. This fact should be remembered to his credit, and also the fact that Pibul has had the moral courage to come down pretty solidly on our side of the anti-Communist fence.”¹²⁴

But there was one issue which threatened to create difficulties in Anglo-Thai relations. This was the separatist activities among Moslem Malay population in the four southern Thai provinces of Satul, Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat. These provinces were the remnants of Thailand’s former dominion over a larger part of the peninsula, most of which today forms part of Malaysia. Over 400,000 of some 500,000 estimated total population of these four provinces were ethnic Malays. This

Malay population adhered steadfastly to their Islamic faith, Malay language and separate cultural identity. The wartime government of Pibul had made an effort to assimilate the Malays completely by forcing Thai language, culture, and religion on them. But it had only succeeded in provoking anti-Thai sentiment and strong animosity toward Pibul among the southern Thai Moslems.¹²⁵ Immediately after the war, rumours of British interest in annexing southern Thailand, as well as extended British policing of the area for bandits and smugglers, were accompanied by increased propaganda from Malays in both Thailand and Malaya complaining about local maladministration and pressing for secession. The Thai government under Pridi reacted by making conciliatory gestures to the Malay population. By the end of 1946, two important bills relating to Thai Moslems were passed by Parliament. One reinstated the law of 1925 that allowed Thai Moslems of the four southern provinces to be governed by their own Islamic law in family and inheritance matters. The other brought back the pre-Pibul policy of appointing Islamic advisers to the courts in these provinces. But in 1947, Malay discontent grew in intensity due to inefficiency and consistent corruption among Thai administrative officials. A government attempt to curb rice smuggling into Malaya by prohibiting transport of foodstuffs to southern Thailand brought about a food shortage and inflated prices in these provinces, adding further ground

for grievances against Bangkok. The Thai Moslems felt that they deserved more of a say in local affairs, and they received strong support from their well-known leader, Mahmud Mahyideen, who resided across the border in the British-controlled Kelantan.¹²⁶

After the coup d'état of November 1947, apprehensive Moslem leaders drew attention to their current grievances and expressed their fear of return to Pibul's repressive policies by threatening to appeal to the United Nations and refusing to vote in the parliamentary elections of January 1948. Some of them demanded separation from Thailand and membership of the Federation of Malaya. Incidents between Thai police and the Malay population in the four southern provinces grew in number and in seriousness. On 16 January 1948 four prominent Moslem leaders – Haji Sulong, Haji Valaca Wae Uang, Haji Wae Mamin and Haji Wae Samae – were arrested on charges of sedition because they had allegedly incited a separatist movement in the four provinces. A series of appeals were sent to the United Nations from various political groups in Malaya and Singapore, urging the Security Council to investigate Thai administration in the four provinces and to organize a plebiscite. An appeal was also sent to British Prime Minister Attlee to withhold recognition of the Khuang government pending redress of the Moslem grievances in Pattani.¹²⁷

When Pibul assumed the prime minister's office, the

long-threatened crisis eventually exploded. A major clash between Thai police and the Moslem population broke out in Narathiwat on 26 April 1948, resulting in the reported death of thirty Thai Moslems and five Thai police in two days of fighting.¹²⁸ The uprising was quickly suppressed by Thai troops and some 2,000 – 6,000 Thai Moslems fled southwards to Malaya for refuge.¹²⁹ Following the report of a special inquiry commission sent to the troubled region to investigate the cause of Moslem unrest, Pibul introduced wide reforms in November 1948 to redress the grievances of the Islamic population. The new measures for the Moslems in four southern provinces included the introduction of the Moslem weekend, Islamic law to be followed in all matters of marriage and inheritance, eight hours a week for teaching the Malay language in primary schools, equality of entrance into the Thai armed services, and the appointment of local government officials who had good knowledge of Islamic customs and traditions.¹³⁰

Simultaneously with placatory gestures, the policing of the four southern provinces was stepped up. Early in September 1948, a state of emergency in the four border provinces was declared on the ground of combatting the Communists.¹³¹ On the other side of the Thai-Malayan border, however, a state of emergency had already been declared since June 1948 following the outbreak of the communist rebellion in Malaya.

In their military operations the British troops in Malaya often found themselves chasing Communist guerrillas into Thailand's southern provinces, where there were no adequate Thai forces available to intern or to drive them back, so that the Communists had a chance to regroup and recuperate. Therefore, plans for closer cooperation between the Thai government and the British authorities in operations against the Communists had to be worked out. Pibul was willing to cooperate with the British and thus allowed the Malayan authorities to cross into Thai territory in pursuit of Communist insurgents if granted Thai permission and accompanied by Thai police.¹³²

In November 1948, the British Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia, Malcolm MacDonald, visited Bangkok to urge more effective cooperative actions on the part of the Thai police and military forces. The Thai Government, in turn, asked him to support their request to the British government to provide, on a cash sale basis, arms and equipment to activate five special battalions of troops to patrol both the southern frontier and to prevent Chinese or other Communist irruptions from the Indochina and Burma borders.¹³³ Arrangements were also made for a number of Thai officers to train at the special jungle warfare training school in Johore and for an Anglo-Thai conference on coordination in bandit suppression operations in the frontier districts. MacDonald found the Thai still suspicious of British

intentions toward their southern provinces. He also found suspicion in certain American circles interested in tin mining in those provinces, who believed the British were secretly fostering irredentism so that the provinces and their tin resources would fall under British rule at the next turn of fortune. He gave the Thai the fullest assurances of respect for Thai territorial integrity and disavowed most solemnly any British interest in or inspiration of irredentism in Malaya.¹³⁴ Moreover, MacDonald came away, "fully persuaded that Phibun was the strongest force in Siam today and the best bet against Communism in that country".¹³⁵ Thus by adopting conciliatory policies toward the Moslem minority in the south, avowing himself to be strongly anti-Communist, and cooperating with the British authorities against Communist insurgents along the Thai-Malayan border, Pibul in return won British admiration and support for his regime.

DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS IN PIBUL'S FOREIGN POLICY

If Pibul used the policy of cooperation to court Western powers, he adopted different techniques to increase his popularity at home. Among his first statements on taking office in April was the announcement that Chinese immigration had to be halted. He stated that the population ratio was about 1 to 5 and that

if the Chinese influx continued unabated the ratio would soon be equalized.¹³⁶ By the end of 1948, Pibul put his intention into action and reduced the Chinese immigration quota from 10,000 to 200 which was the same as the quota for all other nationalities.

There was a number of legitimate reasons for Pibul's concern over the problem of Chinese minority. First of all, as already mentioned, the main worry of successive Thai governments had been the Chinese stranglehold over the Thai economy, especially in the commercial sector. Pibul indicated his dissatisfaction at the situation when stating that most Chinese tended to settle in urban districts, forcing poorer Thai into rural areas.¹³⁷

The second reason was the question of loyalty. Many Chinese in Thailand had double nationality. This was due to the fact that under Thai law a child born in the country was treated as a Thai national unless his parents registered his birth at the father's consulate or legation. Since China had no diplomatic or consular representation in Thailand until 1946, no Chinese father could register a child as a Chinese national, and thus all children born of Chinese fathers in Thailand prior to that date were regarded as Thai. On the other hand, the Chinese government adopted the principle of *jus sanguinis* in determining its nationals. This issue had come to a head in August 1947 when the Chinese government instructed its embassy and consulates

to collect votes among the overseas Chinese in Thailand for representatives to the Chinese National Assembly and Legislative Yuan. The Thai government strongly rejected this move as infringing its sovereignty.¹³⁸ In the end, no voting took place in Thailand; instead, four representatives were nominated by the Chinese embassy.

Thirdly, certain sections of the Chinese community in Thailand appeared to be engaged in various political activities. Thailand had long avoided having diplomatic relations with China, only to yield eventually to Chinese pressure after the Second World War, because it feared political intervention by the Chinese government in its internal affairs. When the Chinese embassy was set up in Bangkok, its ambassador and military attachés did not refrain from spreading Kuomintang influence among the Chinese community, particularly through the influential Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The Chinese military attaché, Colonel Cho Hsien-shu, also helped organize a KMT youth movement with an anti-Communist purpose. This movement with its fighting force was responsible for a number of violent acts committed by the Chinese in Bangkok during 1946.¹³⁹ In opposition to the KMT were the Chinese Communist Party and the Democratic League. The League was different from the Communist Party only in name and both were also actively recruiting support among Chinese labour and school teachers

in Thailand.¹⁴⁰ The American embassy estimated that there were about 2,000 Chinese Communist Party members active in Thailand, whose major propaganda outlet was a Chinese newspaper, *Chuan Min Pao*.¹⁴¹ The Chinese Communist Party exercised great influence in the Central Labour Union which controlled a large proportion of labour forces in Thailand. As the internal situation in China changed, a decline of enthusiasm for the Nationalists corresponded with the rise of Communist prestige.

Stricter control of the Chinese and a lower Chinese immigration quota had long been called for by such government supporters as Lieutenant General Kat who considered them as popular justifications for the coup. In May 1948, the government announced a plan to reduce the number of Chinese schools in the country until it reached a set quota; in other word, from a total of 490 down to 148. The number of Chinese schools in Bangkok was planned to be reduced from 100 to 8.¹⁴² On 15 June Thai police raided Chinese schools, and associations. A large number of Chinese Communists, including forty secret society leaders, were arrested. Further arrests of more than a hundred Chinese were made in August and the Thai government maintained that the arrests were aimed against “secret society, gangsterism, extortion, and other crimes”.¹⁴³ The Nationalist Chinese government in Nanking made a strong protest on 17 August

over the arrest of Chinese nationals and demanded their immediate release.¹⁴⁴ But the Thai government maintained that those arrested had been responsible for the organization of secret societies, engaging in extorting money in the manner of taxation from traders which resulted in higher prices and an attendant increase in banditry and crime.¹⁴⁵ It was clear that the Pibul government, by purging both the Communist and the Kuomintang Chinese, wished to be seen as even-handed in order to avoid antagonizing the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁶ Certainly, by not outlawing communism, Pibul appears to have taken care not to offend this major Communist power. At the same time, Pibul was reported to have told the American ambassador that most of the Chinese arrested were Communists.¹⁴⁷

Thus, while doing nothing conspicuously against Communists, Pibul always tried to impress the Americans and the British with his anti-Communist credentials, knowing their antipathy to communism. In his first days in office Pibul made a remark that ninety-nine percent of Thai people were loyal to the King and professed Buddhism and that Communist ideology was unsuitable for Thailand.¹⁴⁸ He also noted that there was always trouble where communism became an important factor, as for instance in Burma and Indochina.¹⁴⁹ The unrest in neighbouring countries was probably one of the factors which spurred him to establish in October 1948 a Central Peace Maintenance

Committee headed by himself and including the commanders of the three armed forces and the Directors General of the Interior and Police Departments. A directive was also issued to various ministries that month to investigate all civil service officials for Communist sympathies.¹⁵⁰ Pibul, in trying to convince the Americans and the British that his government was anti-Communist, was probably motivated by a desire to obtain weapons and military equipment in the form of aid as then received by Greece and Turkey. In November 1948, he made a request to both Great Britain and the United States for arms to combat Communist activities and to maintain order. Although he gave the impression that these arms would be used in the southern provinces, it is clear that success in obtaining military aid would go some way to consolidate his army and police backing.

Thus, Pibul's foreign policy had domestic functions. The acceptance by the Western powers of his government rendered his political position stronger in the sense that the Coup Group would have to rely on him in foreign affairs. Apart from that, by propounding the idea of the "Chinese menace" to win popularity with his compatriots, and of the "Communist menace" to obtain support and aid from Great Britain and the United States, Pibul was able, with the army and police backing, to quash his political opposition. The main adversaries of the Coup Group

were former Free Thais and Pridi supporters. The Coup Group appears from the outset to have felt no qualms about resorting to charges of communism, separatism, or regicide as grounds for their suppression. Pridi himself was denied a chance of a political comeback by the deliberate prolongation of the regicide trial which implicitly implicated him in it. Pridi's friend, Tiang Sirikhan, a leading Free Thai and former Deputy Minister of Interior and President of the Southeast Asia League Executive Committee, having escaped the earlier round of arrests in December 1947, was eventually incarcerated in May 1948 on charges of high treason. He was accused of conspiring to establish a separate state in the Northeast in collaboration with the Vietnamese, Free Lao and Cambodian leaders, with the ultimate objective of forming a Communist Federation of these free states. On 29 October, Tiang's most prominent Free Thai colleagues, nearly all of them Isan politicians, including Thawin Udon, Chamlong Daoruang, Thong-in and his brother Tim Phuriphat, and Thong Kanthatham were likewise arrested for implication in the alleged northeastern separatist plot.¹⁵¹ It seemed that the activities of these northeastern leaders were directed towards the aid of their Lao brethren across the border in French Indochina to secure their independence, and perhaps they had a plan to work eventually towards some kind of Thai Federation which involved measures of regional autonomy.¹⁵²

Nonetheless, the government maintained treason charges against them pending clarification of whether their federation scheme included the establishment of a republic which would have dispensed with the king.

Within the army itself, Coup Group control was not entirely secure and opposition to it was growing. During the month of October 1948, the army was rocked by the virtual purge of its General Staff Department, most of the members of which were alleged to have been engaged in a plot to overthrow the government. Evidence seems to suggest that the plot was an attempt to clean up the army, motivated by resentment and disgust at the profiteering and corruption by the Coup Group, especially by Generals Kat, Phin and Phao.¹⁵³ The coup planned in October was uncovered by the government before it actually started, and there were many arrests. The abortive coup was then utilized as a pretext for the Coup Group to purge dissidents within the army.

The frustration and dissatisfaction of the General Staff officers were not so difficult to understand. Since the coup d'état of November 1947, the Coup Group had succeeded in profiting enormously from its power. In May 1948, Phin replaced Pibul as commander-in-chief of the army with Kat appointed as his deputy. Colonel Phao, already the Deputy Director General of the Police Department since March, was promoted to Police

Major General in the middle of June, and he took charge of all important political investigations. Economic activities by the Coup Group were channeled mainly through the War Veterans Organization which took over the supervision of railway transport, the pork trade, tin mining, and the rice milling business. The War Veterans Organization also took control of the Bank of Asia and Bank of Ayudhya, formerly belonging to the Pridi faction, which reopened in June and October 1948 respectively.

The October Coup attempt did not seem to have any effect on the conscience of the Coup Group leaders. In November 1948, General Kat became involved in the well-publicized “Rupee Scandal”. Apparently, he bypassed the commander of the army and the Minister of Defence in requesting and withdrawing from the Ministry of Finance a considerable sum of money in Indian rupees at the official rate for the purchase of gunny sacks, shirts and other articles for the army. He then disposed of most of the goods through a commercial company, the Thai Niyom Phanit Company. The story was leaked and accusations were levelled at Kat. An investigation committee appointed by the Ministry of Defence found him guilty and turned over the case to the police for further investigation and prosecution. But General Kat flexed his muscle and snarled that he placed Pibul in power and that Pibul could

not survive without his support. Pibul realized that Kat was his Achilles' heel, but every offer he made to Kat of a face-saving assignment including a "post abroad" was turned down.¹⁵⁴ The case was deliberately dragged out for over a year, during which time Kat's military support was gradually undermined by an alliance of Pibul, Phin and Phao. Kat was finally pushed out of the political scene on 27 January 1950 when he was arrested and banished to Hong Kong. Thereafter he never recovered his power. The split between Kat and other Coup Group leaders had much to do with questions of personalities, political influence, and the division of spoils. Pibul probably considered Kat as a disruptive influence internally and an embarrassing liability publicly. But the sudden removal of Kat was probably prompted by a fear that Kat, seeing himself isolated and in danger, might make a desperate attempt to overthrow the government.

One immediate consequence of the "Rupee Scandal" was the resignation of half the cabinet on the ground that Pibul should be given a free hand in reorganizing it. Notable new members included Prince Viwat, former Finance Minister in the Khuang cabinet, and Kukrit Pramoj, Seni's brother and a controversial figure from the Democrat Party. They assumed the post of Finance Minister and Deputy Minister of Commerce respectively. Also, an additional member of the military Coup Group, Major General Sawat Sawatdikiat, joined Colonel Nom

in the Cabinet as Deputy Minister of Communications. By including just two Coup Group officers in the Cabinet, Pibul made a very nominal concession to his military backers, heavily outweighed by the other appointments, most of which were his own cronies, Assemblymen, or technocrats. It is clear that Pibul intended to be the effective leader of the Coup Group and not merely a titular head. He tried to use his position as Prime Minister to build up his own political base and exclude the Coup Group from the government. Pibul also left the legislature intact as another source of support vis-à-vis the Coup Group. He garnered up support from non-Democrat MPs by offering them cabinet posts and worked out a *modus vivendi* with the Democrat Party. On the one hand, the preservation of Parliament was a constitutional trapping of his government to placate both internal and foreign opinions. On the other hand, Pibul realized that the growing influence and experience of the Coup Group would only lead to the lessening of their dependency on him which could result in his downfall. Thus, he did his best to curtail any growth of influence of the Coup Group in other political institutions, such as Parliament and the cabinet, and allowed them to enrich themselves and busy themselves in economic activities. Pibul's relationship with the civilian politicians was of a symbiotic character for the latter also wished to preserve their precarious position in the hope that they would have a chance in the future

to exert some real political influence. Therefore, despite their distaste for the Coup Group, the Democrat majority in Parliament out of concern for their own political survival were very careful to avoid a confrontation with the Pibul government.

Another group which Pibul desired to have friendship with, or at least not to antagonize, was the navy. The navy had been working closely with Pridi during the war through the framework of the Free Thai Movement. It resented the army's political preeminence and was suspicious of the army's plan to subjugate it. Pibul tried to placate the navy by leaving it alone, to the extent of respecting naval territory in Bangkok and in the eastern provinces as though it were under a foreign flag. But tensions continued to rise between the two services as the army viewed with distrust the navy's role in helping Pridi, Thamrong and some other members of the Thamrong government to escape arrest by the Coup Group in November 1947. On 26 February 1949, the pro-Pridi naval faction in collusion with the Free Thais instigated an uprising, known as the "Grand Palace Rebellion". The rebels occupied the Grand Palace and made a radio announcement dismissing the Pibul government and replacing it with a new government headed by Direk Jayanama. The rebellion failed miserably after sporadic fighting between the army and marine units at certain places, particularly near the Naval Signal Corps. The army's tank units and the Bangkok-based

First Infantry Division under the command of Lieutenant General Sarit Thanarat, finally captured the headquarters of the rebels, the Royal Palace Compound, Pridi himself later claimed that he had been smuggled into the country earlier in the month and had personally led the rebellion.¹⁵⁵ But he managed to escape capture and remained in Thailand for six more months hiding at a friend's house without police detection before he made a long and circuitous journey back to China, now rapidly falling under Communist control. There Pridi was to remain in exile for 20 years before he moved to Paris to spend the last 13 years of his life.

The rebellion was apparently anticipated by the government and the Coup Group, which declared a state of national emergency three days before, citing the increasingly tense situation in neighbouring countries as the reason.¹⁵⁶ The rebellion's failure was due largely to the lack of reinforcements to its Free Thai advance units which occupied the Grand Palace, as well as to the strong determination of the government to suppress it.¹⁵⁷ In the end, the naval and marine units agreed to the government's proposal of a cease-fire and withdrew to their bases. Pibul shrewdly chose to deal with the navy as though their part in the affair had been the result mainly of an inter-service misunderstanding and contented himself with the transfer of Admiral Taharn Khamhiran, the marine commander who was

a staunch Pridi supporter. All the blame was placed squarely on the shoulders of the civilians, and against them the Coup Group struck hard.

The suppression of Free Thai leaders was ruthlessly carried out by the police under Phao. Within days Major Phone Intharathat and Police-Colonel Banchongsak Cheeppensuk, former Chief of Security Police, were shot dead during their arrests; others were rounded up and detained. On 4 March 1949, four Free Thai leaders and former ministers, Thong-in Bhuripat, Thongpleo Cholaphum, Chamlong Daoruang and Thawin Udon were shot as a group in the notorious “Kilo 14 Incident” outside Bangkok.¹⁵⁸ The official story was that the four men were being transferred by bus to another prison, when suddenly a rescuing party of their communist friends fired on the bus, killing all the prisoners and miraculously missing all the escorting policemen.¹⁵⁹ By the end of 1949, the police had broken the backbone of the Free Thai Movement. Their leaders were either detained or killed, gone into hiding or exile abroad.

The purge in the army, and the elimination of Pridi and Free Thai activists put the Coup Group in a position of real political dominance in Thailand. Pibul realized that he could be assured of their support, only if he was seen to be the only leader acceptable to all the major Western powers. By 1949, the international situation also looked ominous. In countries

surrounding Thailand, there was an upsurge in anticolonial or antigovernment insurgency. As many Thais saw it, behind the Communist uprising in Southeast Asia loomed the growing threat of China. They believed that China had historically expanded southward and was always a threat to Thailand. There was also an ever-present problem of the large and economically powerful Chinese community within the country whose political loyalties were very much in question. Thus, the prospect of China reunified under Communist leadership caused real anxiety among Thai leaders. Moreover, Pridi, still considered a threat to the regime, appeared to have been given asylum in China. The possibility of a Pridi comeback with Chinese Communist support could not be ruled out. To combat the Chinese threat, Pibul pressed for military assistance from Great Britain and the United States. In April 1949, the British embassy reported several attempts by Thai military leaders to convince its staff of the seriousness of the communist danger to Thailand. Concern was expressed over Thailand's exposed position with communism rampant on all sides, and over a report of some 2000-armed Chinese Communists arriving in Kengtung, the Burmese province adjacent to Thai border. The usual Thai emphasis was on the need for British and American reassurance of military assistance in case of aggression, direct or otherwise.¹⁶⁰ In June 1949, Pibul himself publicly advocated the formation of a "security pact" on the lines

of NATO's Atlantic Pact, which had been concluded in April, to include all nations of Southeast Asia. A mutual defence line, he said, should be held "from the Himalayas to the China Sea". He tried to impress this idea on the British ambassador and added that "we cannot do it alone".¹⁶¹ Pibul's thinly-veiled solicitation for British and American security guarantees at this stage did not yield the desired result due to the lack of British resources on the one hand, and the American reluctance to extend their defence commitment to mainland Southeast Asia on the other. But, as we shall see in the next chapter, the change in United States global strategy was gradually taking shape and Pibul's campaign was not in vain.

CONCLUSION

One of several important factors which motivated the Coup Group to oust the Thamrong government in November 1947 was growing hostility among the Bangkok élite against the direction of Pridi's foreign policy. His anticolonialist stand in an effort to align Thailand with the emergent states of Southeast Asia was by the latter part of 1947 seen by the military and conservative Bangkok élite as unnecessarily provocative to the French and too destabilizing for the country. Apparently, they had serious doubts about Pridi's vision of Thailand as a leader

in the postcolonial regional order and were suspicious of his motives. By creating the Southeast Asian League and associating it with his Isan protégés as well as the nationalist leaders from Indochina, Pridi had inadvertently aroused their hidden fear on two sensitive issues affecting the future of Thailand's national identity, namely Isan separatism and communism. In other words, the vague Federation aim of the League and the prominent presence of the Communist Vietminh representatives alarmed opposition elements and raised an uncomfortable spectre of a divided, Communist-ruled Thailand.

But Pridi's efforts to move Thailand into the mainstream of Asian nationalism were not the only reason for his downfall. The importance of the disruptive legacy of the Second World War, with which his governments had been beset, should not be overlooked. And as though adverse economic circumstances and moral deterioration in Thai society which were direct consequences of the war had not done enough to imperil his governments, Pridi's political fortune was further undermined by the sudden and mysterious death of the King. From then on, the main focus of attack against him turned from corruption and partisanship to regicide. But what served above all else as the ultimate cause for the fall of civilian government was the discontent within the army and the rising militancy among junior officers. It has been a tradition of the Thai army since 1932

that it has the final say in the running of the state affairs. Pridi himself appears to have been fully aware of the political fact that no government in Thailand could ever last very long without army support. Thus, he tried to control the army by putting his own men in commanding positions as well as reducing the power of the army. Such an effort was widely resented among the officers and it only required the right conditions, namely the predictable decline of Allied willingness or ability to intervene directly on the Thai scene, to make possible the restoration of army supremacy in Thai politics.

The coup that took place brought an end to the monopoly of power by a group of leaders who had ruled Thailand since the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932. One last link between the 1932 Coup Promoters and the new breed of army leaders was Field Marshal Pibul Songgram who was brought back to be the head of the Coup Group. Pibul's immediate concern was the hostile Western reaction to his return due to his wartime record. This explained his request for Khuang to form a caretaker civilian government. The apparent reluctance of the Western governments to accept and work with his regime represented a serious political liability for Pibul. He realized that Western trade and economic assistance were of paramount importance for Thailand's rehabilitation. In order to rectify this weakness Pibul went all out to assure them of his good intentions and his

willingness to cooperate with them. Hence Pibul's foreign policy in 1948 was one of reconciliation and cooperation with all major powers with the exception perhaps of weak and civil war-ridden China. Yet despite all the placatory moves towards the Western powers, including his professions of anti-communism and the abandonment of anti-colonial rhetoric, there is enough evidence to suggest that Pibul was steering Thailand toward a careful middle ground. He avoided antagonizing the Soviet Union and retained residual sympathy for Indochinese nationalists. Clearly, it was an attempt to pursue a consensus policy, on which his political position could be consolidated.

On assuming power, Pibul's position was still precarious, as various groups and cliques were manoeuvring for advantage. The supposedly well-armed Free Thai supporters of the fugitive Pridi were driven out of politics and threatened to stage a counter coup. The conservative Democrat Party under Khuang was strongly represented in parliament and this group resented the ouster of their leader by force. Within the military there was no unity. The navy and marine corps were not in sympathy with the Coup Group. Top naval leaders were close friends both of Thamrong, the pre-coup Prime Minister, and of Khuang. Within the army, the officers in the General Staff Department were disgusted at the cupidity and corruption of the Coup Group. More importantly, unlike the first era of his prime ministership

between 1938 and 1944, Pibul did not now have a direct control over troops. He had lost his direct contact with the regimental commanders probably no later than 1944, when he was stripped of his post of supreme commander by Pridi. He realized that the Coup Group leaders might only need him for a limited period of their consolidation. To maintain himself in office, Pibul concluded that he had to mobilize his political resources, build up his own political constituencies, consolidate himself as the indispensable leader of the Coup Group and seek legitimacy for his regime. He tried to restrict the influence of the Coup Group outside the military and to exclude them from membership of the cabinet and the legislature where he had some control. In return, he let them indulge themselves in business matters and accumulate wealth. Pibul also avoided any confrontation with the Legislative Assembly and the navy which might trigger radical political intervention from the Coup Group. Simultaneously, he launched a strenuous effort to build up his own political base in the cabinet, and the police force. The last thing he needed during this still uneasy period was a controversial foreign policy which would provoke widespread opposition to his government.

After the crushing of the Palace Rebellion in February 1949, Pridi and his Free Thai supporters were effectively written off as serious contenders for political power. The fiasco of the Palace Rebellion showed that Pridi lacked not only popular

support but also fire power. On the other hand, the ruthless suppression of the rebellion confirmed the real dominant power of the Coup Group. Pibul believed that his own position would be strengthened if he was accepted and supported by all the major Western powers. This would create a situation where the Coup Group would have to depend on him in foreign affairs. By mid-1949, the possibility that China would be unified and taken over by the Communists became greater and Pibul perceived an imminent threat from that direction. He strove to obtain protection from Great Britain and the United States to create a regional balance of power in Thailand's favour. He tried to convince them of the Communist danger to Thailand and impress upon them Thailand's need for military assistance. In Pibul's view, the United States had become the strongest postwar power with its economic strength, technological advance, and military might. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan for Europe and the firm US response to the Berlin blockade in 1948 gave hope to Pibul that Thailand, by becoming a firm and trusted friend of the mighty United States, would obtain security as well as economic assistance for the development of the country. The United States had an excellent image in Thailand because of past good work by American missionaries and a record of long and almost uninterrupted friendship between the two countries. Pibul knew that a pro-American policy would be popular in the

country if it were accompanied by a large amount of US military and economic aid. Moreover, military aid would be particularly useful for the purpose of retaining military backing, since the military status and prestige would be elevated, the armed forces would become more efficient, better trained, and well equipped with modern weapons and new techniques. As a man who could elicit these benefits from the Western powers for the armed forces, he would endear himself to the military, the main prop of his prime ministership.

From the onset of the Pibul regime, Thai foreign policy had slowly undergone a fundamental change. By 1949, the post-coup leadership had rejected regionalism and anti-colonialism; instead, it turned to the anti-Communist and pro-Western policy. One could draw a conclusion here that one of the factors that caused the shift of Thai foreign policy was the change in Thai domestic leadership, which resulted in a new set of political needs. But other factors such as the external environment, including the advent of Communist China and the transformation of US policy, also had a significant impact. They will be the subject for investigation in the next chapter.

CHAPTER

4

1948-51: SEEKING WESTERN
PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

This chapter first attempts to trace the evolution of United States policy toward Southeast Asia which could be considered as the primary external influence on Thailand's foreign policy in this period. Against that background, it then attempts to examine Thailand's foreign policy in connection with its requests for Western military aid which were shunned by the United States until 1950. An analysis of Pibul's speeches and interviews with the Western press in 1949 reveals a uniform and consistent pattern in the Thai government's campaign to involve the reluctant United States more directly in the region and to solicit an American guarantee of Thailand's security. The final part of the chapter is devoted to an investigation of Thailand's motives for withholding recognition from the new Communist regime in Peking, for recognizing the French-nominated Bao Dai government, and for sending troops and rice to Korea. It is hoped that the investigation of Thailand's controversial decision to recognize Bao Dai will throw light on some aspects of the decision-making pattern of the Pibul government.

THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN POLICY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

At the Potsdam Conference of June 1945, it had

been decided that except for the Philippines and the areas of Vietnam and Laos above the 16th parallel, all of Southeast Asia fell under the responsibility of the South East Asian Command under Admiral Louis Mountbatten. The area north of the 16th parallel in Indochina was accorded to the China theatre. This decision was made with a view to releasing American forces for the invasion and subsequent occupation of Japan and Korea. The British occupation forces in Indonesia and Indochina permitted their respective former colonial masters, the Dutch and the French, to return and reestablish their control in many of the most strategic positions. And the Chinese forces, having squeezed as much economic profit as possible from their occupation of northern Indochina, decided to make a deal with the French before withdrawing to meet their own needs in the Chinese civil war. In the accord of 28 February 1946, France renounced extra-territorial rights in China, in addition to making other concessions to Chiang Kai-shek, in return for the withdrawal of Chinese forces from Vietnam by 31 March 1946. France also negotiated with the Vietminh for the entry of French troops into northern Vietnam to replace the departing Chinese. Faced with a lack of international support and the near catastrophic economic conditions inside the country, the Vietminh, which had established a government in Hanoi the previous September, were pressured to sign the 6 March 1946 agreement with France.¹

By the time the Allied occupation forces withdrew from Indochina by early March, and from Indonesia by 30 November 1946, large and well-armed French and Dutch forces had taken over from them and occupied most of the strategic positions in southern Vietnam and Indonesia respectively. The division of the Allied area of occupation at the Potsdam Conference allowed the US to avoid any responsibility. But in view of the US acquiescence in these developments, the stated American policy of “neutrality” toward the independence struggles there in effect signified tacit support for actions advantageous to the colonial powers. The fact was that as early as April 1945, the State Department had recommended to the new President that the United States “should neither oppose the restoration of Indochina to France ... nor take any action toward French overseas possessions which it is not prepared to take or suggest with regard to the colonial possessions of our other allies”. For the United States to put pressure upon France would “run counter to the established American policy of aiding France to regain her strength in order that she may be better fitted to share responsibility in maintaining the peace of Europe and the world”.² The American decisions to allow European powers to return to their former colonies in Southeast Asia and thus implicitly place the region outside its sphere of responsibilities, despite its anti-colonial sentiment and expressed commitment

to local self-determination, reflected the absence of real American interests in this area as opposed to the Western Pacific area and particularly Japan.

The development of the Cold War in Europe, following the collapse of the wartime collaboration between the United States and the Soviet Union by 1947, had begun to influence United States policy in Asia. President Truman's declaration in March 1947 that the United States would support "free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures," in reference to the Greek civil war, was an important step in American Cold War policy.³ The implication of what became known as the "Truman Doctrine" seemed to be that the Americans were now committed to resisting Communist expansion everywhere. In June that year Secretary of State George Marshall announced a plan of aid to restore the European economy. The Marshall Plan served both the American policy of containing communism in Europe and the interests of the American economy because a prosperous Europe would provide a market for American exports and an area for American investment.

The Czech coup in February 1948 convinced broad segments of the American public that Soviet policies presented a serious threat to the Western world. Truman felt increasing pressure to honour his pledge to "help free peoples everywhere

remain free". The need to mobilize public support for the European recovery plan and the impending presidential election led Truman to emphasize the menace of Communist totalitarianism and to encourage a quasi-war atmosphere. The prolonged Berlin blockade begun in April 1948 also sped the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty, which identified the Communist bloc as the principal adversary.

However firmly and forcefully the anti-Communist principle had become the cornerstone of American domestic policy and its policy in Europe, the United States still limited its involvement in Asia. The prevailing rationale among State Department officials was that given the scarcity of American resources, any aid given to continental Asia would be inimical to its commitments to the more vital area of Europe and the Pacific. Yet while refraining from any commitment in mainland Southeast Asia, many State Department officials were increasingly obsessed by the concept of a global Cold War struggle.

By mid-1948, Communists had launched armed uprisings against the national governments of Burma, the Philippines, India and Indonesia, as well as against the British in Malaya and the French in Indochina. It was widely believed at the time that local Communists had been specifically instructed at a Communist-sponsored Calcutta Conference held in February

1948.⁴ Although it is true that Zhdanov's "two camp" doctrine, espoused in September 1947, was vigorously expressed at the Calcutta meeting, there is little evidence to suggest that actual instructions were issued. The Calcutta Conference, initiated almost a year before, was attended by many non-Communist delegates; some of the Burmese, Indian and Philippine delegates even turned out to be anti-Communist. The Conference served more as a forum for the propagation of Soviet policy, rather than as a place where a "directive for revolution" was issued. The fundamental cause of armed uprisings in Burma, Indonesia, Malaya and the Philippines was internal, and the trend toward Communist rebellion in these countries already existed before the Calcutta meeting.⁵ Yet in the view of many contemporary observers, including most American officials, the Calcutta Conference and subsequent Communist uprisings in Southeast Asia were linked together as part of a Moscow-directed Communist conspiracy. American ambassador to Thailand, Edwin Stanton, was one example of those people who subscribed to such an interpretation. He writes in his book: "It seemed more than mere coincidence that Serge Niemchina, first Soviet minister to be appointed to Thailand, should have arrived just a few weeks after an important Communist party meeting in Calcutta during February 1948, at which orders were issued to launch armed attacks in Burma, Malaya and Indonesia in a bid to seize power."⁶

On 21-26 June 1948, a meeting was held in Bangkok at which American diplomats and military attachés in the Far East discussed political and security situations in Southeast Asia and exchanged views and information on the problems in Indonesia and Indochina. According to a report by Stanton, who was Chairman of the Conference, the problem of communism aroused the Conference's deepest concern.

The Communist movement in Southeast Asia is well organized, is militantly aggressive, is seeking to spread unrest and dissension among the peoples of Southeast Asia and to form a solid bloc against the Western Democracies. It was also clear that this activity has been expanded, intensified and coordinated in recent months to a degree indicating that Moscow is definitely concentrating on this area. It was further felt to be not without significance that the intensification of Soviet activities in Southeast Asia corresponded roughly with the arrival of Soviet diplomatic personnel in Bangkok.⁷

To counter the Communist menace, the Conference recommended to Washington the establishment and augmentation of US information programs, to be used more directly to counter communist propaganda.⁸

In October 1948, it would seem from a State Department guidance to American diplomats in Asia that official American

views of Soviet activities in Southeast Asia were heavily accented with the theme of Soviet expansion. The Soviet Union was seen as capitalizing on the local discontent caused by long periods of “colonial oppression”, encouraging the disruption of the economy of the areas under colonial control by armed action or by labour disorders, and seeking to debilitate the metropolitan powers. Soviet policy in Southeast Asia was regarded as a pursuit of a single goal, that is to substitute the influence of the USSR for that of the Western powers in such a manner and degree as to ensure Soviet control being as surely installed and predominate [sic] as in the satellite countries behind the Iron Curtain... Hitherto, implementation has been chiefly by indirection and Moscow appears to have relied almost exclusively upon Chinese Communist guidance of Southeast Asian Communist movements. In this Moscow was assisted by the fact that large Chinese communities exist in every country in Southeast Asia and that a substantial number of these Chinese are Communists and, more fortuitously for Moscow, in control of influential labour unions.⁹

The same despatch also referred to the newly-established Soviet legation in Bangkok, inferring that the Soviet Union was “undoubtedly taking an increasingly greater part of the direction of Soviet policy implementation into its own capable hands”.¹⁰

Thus, Cold War consideration increasingly became a major US concern and by 1948 the containment policy was stretching into Asia. A stereotyped preoccupation with the “Kremlin-directed conspiracy” apparently dominated American analysis. Yet American policy still excluded the possibility of committing direct military resources to mainland Southeast Asia. By the end of 1949, that policy began to change. The Communist victory in China and the subsequent conclusion of a Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance in February 1950 between Stalin and Mao alarmed the US administration. The military setback suffered by the French at the hand of the Vietminh also increased American concern. The Soviet and Chinese recognition of the Ho Chi Minh regime in Vietnam in January 1950 seemed to confirm the American belief that the Communist movements in Southeast Asia were simply the tools of the Soviet Union.

In addition, the political repercussions of the Communist triumph in China were more serious than anticipated. State Department analysts feared that any additional Communist victories in the Far East would enhance the Communists’ appeal in the underdeveloped areas of the world where the ideological battle between Communism and Democracy was being fought. Any additional Communist conquests also threatened to erode further the credibility of the administration’s determination to

resist communism in the eyes of its allies in the Western Pacific. The vociferous barrage of public and Congressional criticism of the administration's "failure" in China became more and more intertwined with accusations of Communist conspiracy in the executive branch. It was increasingly argued that, without a more active US role, the rest of Asia would be "lost" as well. Already, the dissatisfaction aroused by the palpable deterioration of the Chinese Nationalists' position in August 1949 had pressured Acheson to order Philip C. Jessup, who had earlier been assigned to edit the White Paper on China, to draw up a possible program of action to stem the Communist threat in Asia. "You will please take as your assumption," he wrote to Jessup, "that it is a fundamental decision of American policy that the United States does not intend to permit further extension of Communist domination on the continent of Asia or in the Southeast Asia area." Acheson's instruction was motivated by his desire to "make absolutely certain that we are neglecting no opportunity that would be within our capabilities to achieve the purpose of halting the spread of totalitarian communism in Asia".¹¹

In the China White Paper of August 1949, Dean Acheson was resigned to the fact that "nothing that this country did or could have done within the reasonable limits of its capabilities could have changed" the result of the civil war in China.¹²

The administration, however, agreed to earmark a fund of \$75 million to be used by the President at his discretion in the area of “China and the Far East” in order to get the Mutual Defense Assistance Bill enacted in Congress.

On 14 November 1949 Philip C. Jessup, as head of the consultative committee set up by Acheson, produced a paper outlining the US position with respect to Asia and the Far East. On specific policies for Southeast Asia, he recommended “such limited support as may be necessary, supplementary to that provided by the Western nations primarily interested in the area, to develop political, economic and military stability. Chief instruments would be the Point IV Program, expanded information and education programs and, when necessary, arms for internal security forces.”¹³ Although Jessup’s recommendations sought to stress political and economic support, military aid was not ruled out.

The end of the year 1949 thus witnessed a major change in US policy in the region to one allowing for military cooperation with non-Communist indigenous leaders to stem the Communist tide. On 28 December 1949, the US National Security Council discussed a major document, the National Security Council Paper 48/1, which formed the basis of the US position with respect to Asia in subsequent years. Something very similar to the domino theory appeared in this document which reads in part:

The extension of communist authority in China represents a grievous political defeat for us; if southeast Asia also is swept by communism we shall have suffered a major political rout the repercussions of which will be felt throughout the rest of the world, especially in the Middle East and in a then critically exposed Australia.¹⁴

The amended conclusions of NSC 48/1, issued as NSC 48/2, were endorsed by the President on 30 December 1949.¹⁵ Truman directed that these conclusions be implemented by all appropriate executive departments and agencies of the US government. These conclusions called for more active American involvement in Asia in the form of political, economic and military assistance to friendly governments in the area. Non-Communist regional associations were to be encouraged, but the United States was not to take an obvious lead. The document also spelled out the basic security objectives of the United States in Asia which included a “development of sufficient military power in selected non-Communist nations of Asia to maintain internal security and to prevent further encroachment by communism”. The salient feature in all its objectives was the containment of the Soviet Union’s power and influence in Asia.¹⁶

In early 1950 the Jessup mission was sent to tour the Far East and Southeast Asia to assure the people of the region that

the United States would support their nationalist aspirations and extend economic aid to their countries. In Bangkok, Jessup chaired a conference of American diplomats in the Far East, held during 13-15 February 1950, to discuss steps which could best be taken by the United States to implement its declared policy toward Southeast Asia.¹⁷

The new policy, announced on 16 February 1950 by the Secretary of State, was that the United States must be prepared to “meet wherever possible all threats of the Soviet Union and at the same time to create those economic, political, social, and psychological conditions that strengthen and create confidence in the democratic way of life”.¹⁸ This announcement was quickly followed by the establishment of a special economic mission, under Robert Allen Griffin, to be sent to Southeast Asia to “prepare the way for the most expeditious and efficient use of whatever technical assistance funds may be available for the area”.¹⁹

In another major foreign policy speech before the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco on 15 March 1950, Acheson called upon the peoples of Southeast Asia to face the fact that the major threat to their freedom and their social and economic progress was the attempted penetration into Southeast Asia by Soviet Communist imperialism and by the colonialism which it contained. He went on to declare

that “it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subversion by armed minorities or by outside pressures”.²⁰ This speech by Acheson must be seen as the official declaration of the extension of the Truman Doctrine to Southeast Asia. On 10 March 1950, President Truman authorized the use of parts of funds, placed at his disposal by Congress under Section 303 of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949 for the “general area of China”. Out of a 75 million dollars fund earmarked for the China area, Thailand and Indochina would receive US military assistance amounting to 10 million and 15 million dollars respectively.

In his top-secret memorandum to the President requesting this military assistance for Thailand, Secretary Acheson listed the consequences of the “loss” of Thailand to the Communists as follows:

If Thailand should be lost to the communists, then it would be unlikely that Malaya could be held. This would mean that from Korea to India, there would be no place on the Asian mainland where the United States would have an open friend and ally. Furthermore, there would be no place on the Asian mainland in that area where US policy could be freely expressed as at present. In addition, the United States would lose its last independent listening post in the area. Aside from these political considerations, it is probable that the United

States would be unable to secure such strategic materials as tungsten, tin, and rubber in their present quantities. It is clear, therefore, that it is of considerable political and economic importance to the United States to support Thailand with military aid in opposition to the forces of communism.²¹

The prevention of such a sombre outcome was the administration's justification for furnishing American military aid to Thailand, and the Presidential approval was immediately forthcoming.

It does seem that early American postwar anti-colonial sentiment and confidence in the principle of self-determination gave way first to passivity and indifference to the colonial return to Southeast Asia. This attitude was in turn superseded by a mechanistic, bipolar interpretation amidst the rapid escalation of the Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union in Europe. Southeast Asian affairs were soon reduced to Cold War generalities; individual countries were viewed as “dominoes” to be “lost” after the fashion of China. But if American decision makers did not possess the ability to see the local peoples in their own respective contexts, it should not be imagined that local Southeast Asian interests played no part of their own in the United States' entanglement in the region. It is suggested below that the Thai government under Pibulsonggram played a part in pushing or pulling the

Americans along this path, and away from their traditional path of non-involvement in the mainland of Southeast Asia.

THAILAND'S REQUESTS FOR MILITARY AID

The Thai government's interest in securing military aid from the West dated back in fact to the Thamrong government. The then Thai Foreign Minister, Arthakit Banomyong, on his visit to Washington at the end of September 1947, had called on the Acting Secretary of State, Robert A. Lovett, to indicate Thailand's interest in acquiring American military assistance. Arthakit described the thinking of the Thai government as favouring the standardization of Thai military practices and equipment with those current in the United States. He said his government "was prepared to cooperate fully with the United States Government in any future conflict and accordingly desired the Siamese military to be trained and equipped by the United States". The United States' reaction was somewhat negative. The State Department advised the Thai government that such a matter was still under consideration, and that special enabling legislation had yet to be passed to legalize this kind of aid. It was pointed out to Arthakit that Thailand could secure military expertise in communication and transportation techniques from private firms.²²

Following the November coup d'état, Pibul, though not yet Prime Minister, was reported to have related to the American military attaché through his American contact, a businessman named William D. Davis, his interest in re-equipping the Thai army with American weapons and equipment, and also in reorganizing the army along American lines.²³ Davis inquired concerning the possibility of purchasing arms, munitions and military equipment from the United States as well as employing former American air force pilots for training purposes. He gave it to be understood that while Pibul would prefer American arms, in the event such equipment could not be obtained, he was prepared to buy arms and equipment from British and other sources.

Pibul's interest in strengthening the Thai armed forces was consistent with his past policies vis-à-vis the army during his previous tenure of office. It was also a simple fact that Pibul's prestige in military circles was predicated on building up the strength of the armed forces and seeing to it that the wants and needs of the rank and file, as well as the officers, were taken care of. In April 1948, a three-man military mission headed by Major General Luang Suranarong went to the United States to present yet again a Thai request for an American mission with military equipment to train and equip the Thai armed forces, and also to make arrangements for Thai

students to attend American military institutions. Again the mission was told without any commitment that the matter would be considered.²⁴

The State Department's position on military aid for Thailand throughout 1948 was consistently negative. Its policy statement on Thailand, dated 21 July 1948, made no reference to military aid, and merely mentioned the need to retain Thailand's friendly attitude towards the United States in political and economic matters. On the economic front, it favoured the "continuation of the efforts of the Siamese government to reduce Siam's dependence on the sterling area and to attain ultimately a position of reasonable independence of action in all its international financial relations". One section of this statement also reflected some lingering suspicions of Pibul's sincerity in the conduct of his foreign policy. It reads as follows:

We are observing closely the activities of the Soviet Legation at Bangkok in order to counteract Soviet propaganda and activities in Siam and adjacent areas. We are also observing closely Siam-USSR relations to discover whether Siam is being tempted to play off the USSR against the US for its own advantage. This has been a traditional procedure in previous decades when Siam sought to play off the UK against France, or the UK against Japan, or the UK against the US.²⁵

On 10 September 1948, Secretary of State Marshall affirmed in a telegram to the American embassy in Bangkok that the United States government was not planning a military mission or other military aid to Thailand or even an Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) program. The telegram reiterated a general support for the Thai government as a friendly, anti-Communist government, and a desire to see Thailand's attainment of political stability and sound economy.²⁶

In November 1948, the Thai government presented a formal request to the United States government for the loan of arms and equipment for five battalions of Thai troops stationed along the Thai – Malayan border. This request, embodied in the Thai embassy's formal note of 18 November 1948, contained two suggested lists of equipment: list A was of arms and equipment urgently needed by five battalions, and list B was of arms and equipment that would put the same five battalions on a war footing.²⁷ A similar request was simultaneously placed before the British government. Perhaps, to generate a sense of rivalry, the Thai memorandum to the US government noted that "the British government fully realized this urgent need and offered to provide some [arms for the southern battalions]; but since it is the policy of the Siamese government to reorganize the Siamese army on the pattern of the United States army, it naturally follows that from the point of view of

better preparedness, it would be more advantageous to have uniformity in the arms and equipment to be used by the Siamese army."²⁸

On 5 November, in anticipation of a formal Thai request for arms, State Department officials and General Staff officers held a conference to discuss overall US policy with respect to Thailand, and to formulate a US attitude to such an official request. It was noted at this meeting that the United States' strategic interest in Thailand was of low priority and only of a defensive character. However, a categorical rejection or refusal might be prejudicial to American political interests in Thailand which currently outweighed any strategic interest. Therefore, it was decided that any request for US aid would be channelled through the State Department and would be answered without rejection, but at the same time without commitment, in order that the program might be considered for incorporation in any future military aid program developed for Southeast Asia.²⁹

This somewhat negative view was not shared by the American embassy in Bangkok. Ambassador Stanton fully backed Thailand's request for military aid, and possibly had even encouraged it. In his November 1948 political report to Washington, he wrote:

While we may not regard the present government as particularly competent or stable, nevertheless it appears to be basically anti-Communist. Because of this fact and our past and continuing friendly interest in the political solidarity and economic development of Siam it appears that we should render what assistance we can in the problems of rehabilitation facing the country, and also that we should supply a small quantity of weapons, transport and other military equipment for the specific purpose of controlling unrest created by Communist groups whose activities are likely to increase in view of their growing strength in China.³⁰

This contrasted sharply with his anti-Pibul attitude a year earlier when he had written to the State Department in the aftermath of the November 1947 coup d'état that:

The building up of the strength of the Army by the purchase of new equipment and weapons will inevitably make the Army an even more potent force in political developments in Siam, which seems to be highly undesirable. Furthermore, if Field Marshal Phibun [Pibul] is successful in actually obtaining new weapons and equipment for the Army, his prestige in Army eyes will naturally be enhanced and his grip over the military appreciably strengthened. The result of this would likely be that it would be virtually impossible for the Khuang Government or its successor to get rid of the Field Marshal.³¹

Another reason why the United States should not sell arms to Thailand, as given by Stanton in December 1947, was that Thailand's slender dollar reserves would give more lasting benefits to the people if used judiciously for rehabilitation purposes rather than in the purchase of arms and military equipment.³²

The subsequent transformation of Stanton's attitude in this context was probably due to a new assessment of Pibul's power and policy, and his own growing anti-Communist sentiment. Yet, despite Stanton's favourable recommendation, Washington decided against any provision of economic or military aid. It was disinclined to assume any military responsibilities in Thailand, but looked to Britain to shoulder such burdens.³³ Moreover, the United States military establishment took the position that the Thai request had to await Congressional action because there was neither suitable enabling legislation, nor requisite funds for acceding to the request, and the "crisis" in Thailand had no direct bearing upon US national security that would warrant special military assistance.³⁴

The British government, on the other hand, was prepared to sell to Thailand all the arms and equipment needed for the five infantry battalions in southern Thailand, with the exception of motor transport, on condition that the

Thai government continue the policy of co-operating with the Malayan authorities in combatting insurgency in border areas.³⁵ The Thai government responded positively; in January 1949 a conference at Songkhla, attended by the Thai chief of police and his Malayan counterpart, resulted in a series of combined border operations against the Communist insurgents. In June 1949 an Anglo-Thai border agreement was signed in Bangkok providing for the reciprocal crossing of the border by police of each country under certain conditions. But the British arms, purchased for the Thai army in the south, were slow in coming; the first deliveries only arrived in the latter half of 1949.

At the same time the prospect of acquiring US arms, possibly gratis, looked brighter than earlier in the year, as the American Congress now began its deliberations on the Mutual Defense Assistance Program. Up to now, State Department policy had been to discourage any Thai hopes of obtaining any military aid from the United States. Pibul's anxiety to please the Americans and impress them with his firm anti-Communist stand in order to obtain what he needed became manifest. Close examination of Pibul's public statements during this period reveals a rather coordinated pattern in his campaign in quest of British and American financial and military assistance.

PIBUL'S CAMPAIGN FOR ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN 1949

The year 1949 was the inaugural year of the second Truman administration, and Ambassador Stanton took this opportunity to draft his policy recommendations regarding Thailand in February. Among various proposals designed to make a good impression in Thailand, Stanton strongly advocated the favourable resolution of the question of Thai gold impounded in American-occupied Japan.³⁶ During and just before the Second World War Japan had acquired large baht loans from Thailand; in return it agreed to earmark to the credit of the Thai government the gold in Tokyo. Of some 43 million dollars worth of gold earmarked for Thailand in Tokyo, about 20 million were repayments of prewar debts and 23 million had been acquired by the Thai government during the war. Thailand's claims for this earmarked gold had been a subject of lengthy negotiations between Thailand and the United States since the end of war. Over the bitter protests of Australia and the Philippines, who were unable to get the money Japan owed them, President Truman finally decided in September 1949 to return the gold to Thailand. Representatives of the Far Eastern nations of the Far Eastern Commission (FEC) which had been constituted in Manila to

settle reparation matters such as the gold issue voted against the Thai claims, but the United States exercised its veto power in the Commission. The release of 43,078,030.80 dollars worth of gold bullion to Thailand was eventually effected on 3 October 1949. The Thai government then placed the gold in the Federal Reserve Bank of New York as national currency reserves.³⁷ The official American explanation was that a legal transfer of title had been completed when the earmarkings had been stamped on the gold ingots.³⁸ But the real reason was to strengthen the financial position of Thailand and facilitate commercial relations between Thailand and the United States. More importantly, it was hoped that the Thai would take this favourable settlement as evidence of American friendship and support.³⁹

The gold release was just one of many signals which indicated a change in the direction of United States policy toward Thailand and Southeast Asia. After a stream of despatches and policy suggestions encouraging Washington to take more positive steps to show greater concern and interest in the fate of Thailand, Ambassador Stanton's efforts appeared in the end to bear fruit. On 18 August 1949 the State Department was asked by Philip Jessup, the ambassador at large responsible for formulating US policy toward Southeast Asia, for an outline of specific steps or actions which, if taken by the United

States in relation to Thailand, would seem to be advantageous. The State Department put forward Stanton's suggestions for such actions as an extension of free military aid, the release of about 10 million dollars in Japanese assets held in Thailand, the granting of World Bank or Export-Import Bank loans, a program of technical aid, and a Fulbright cultural and educational exchange program.⁴⁰

The extension of American military aid in the form of arms supply, gratis, to Thailand was particularly emphasized in Stanton's policy recommendations during August and September. In a letter to the Secretary of State on 1 September 1949, for instance, Stanton wrote: "Frankly we have found it impossible to explain to them [the Thai] why military aid is provided gratis, say, to the Philippines and Korea, while such aid to Thailand must be on a reimbursable basis."⁴¹ He argued that a modest supply of arms in the region of 10 or 12 million dollars could not fail to have a beneficial psychological effect and make Thailand feel that it could count on United States assistance. In early August, Stanton reported a growing sense of fatalism and futility in Thailand in attempting to oppose communism, and that the Thai army might reorient its position towards communism if military aid were not forthcoming.⁴² Stanton's view was given the strongest support by Walton Butterworth, Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs,

in his 5 August 1949 memorandum to the Secretary of State. He urged that Bangkok's recommendation be given serious consideration, and that arms and equipment necessary for five battalions be granted gratis to Thailand rather than on a reimbursable basis as was being contemplated.⁴³ Butterworth argued that to get Congress to appropriate funds for military aid, it would be necessary to present Thailand's needs as part of a regionwide security policy for Southeast Asia.⁴⁴

In the same period, the Thai government was watching intensely the revision of United States policy toward the Far East. In this respect, the Thai ambassador in Washington, Prince Wan Waithayakon, was instrumental in keeping the Thai government abreast of all the latest developments in Washington. During July, August and September 1949, he diligently sent several reports on the publication of the White Paper on China, and the setting up of a consultative committee comprising Philip Jessup, Raymond Fosdick and Everett Case to formulate a specific policy toward individual countries in the Far East. In his report on the impending Congressional legislation which would authorize the President to send military assistance to the general area of China and the Far East, Prince Wan noted that the American administration also had Thailand in mind as one of the beneficiaries of this program.⁴⁵ In regard to the Pacific Union proposal of the

Philippines, the Thai ambassador surmised that the United States would neither take the lead nor object to local efforts. It would provide assistance to each country in the Far East on an individual basis rather than support a proposed Union, for which it thought the time was not yet ripe. But Prince Wan believed that the need to counter the Communist threat would in the end impel the United States to take a lead in uniting together the Far Eastern countries in that endeavour.⁴⁶

The Pacific Union idea had been proposed on 12 July 1949 after a meeting between President Quirino of the Philippines and Chiang Kai-shek of Nationalist China in Manila. But the initial objective of setting up an anti-Communist military alliance on the model of NATO was soon modified into an association to promote economic, social and cultural cooperation. This was due to a cool reception from other countries except South Korea. Even these reduced objectives aroused little enthusiasm. The Thai government, while accepting in principle the Philippines' invitation to attend a proposed conference at Baguio, did not respond enthusiastically on the ground that the United States' backing for such a venture was imperative.⁴⁷ In the Thai view, US participation was crucial. The Thai Foreign Ministry instructed Prince Wan on 27 July to ascertain the attitude of the United States government toward the idea of an anti-Communist bloc in

Southeast Asia, and “what assistance can be expected from USA”.⁴⁸ Thailand’s reserved response may also have been due to its reluctance to associate itself with Chiang Kai-shek and restrict its future freedom of action. Kenneth S. Patton, the last in the long line of American advisers in the service of the Thai Foreign Ministry, advised the Thai Foreign Minister in a memorandum on 21 July:

Thailand must accept her responsibilities as one of the independent nations of the East and should not only be represented there but should actively participate in the drafting of the agenda in order to prevent the inclusion of embarrassing or controversial items. The representative selected to go to the Conference should be a distinguished diplomat of outstanding ability and great experience. He should insist upon a policy of co-operation with the United Nations and be careful to avoid Thailand being drawn into any regional pact which would limit future liberty of action. The constitution of a united front against the Chinese Communist Government . . . if accepted by this country, could in my opinion, create undesirable responsibilities without affording any military, financial or other effective aid to the anti-communist front in the Far East.⁴⁹

Pibul seems to have agreed with his adviser. On 18 August, he was reported to have stated that, in his opinion, the establishment of a Pacific Union would depend on a question

of funds and on who would supply the necessary armaments.⁵⁰

The United States was certainly in Pibul's view the best sponsor of such a Southeast Asian Pact. Prince Wan's various reports indicated that the US government was in the process of formulating a more positive policy toward the Far East. It seems therefore more than a coincidence that, as the Thai Finance Minister departed on 28 August 1949 for London and Washington to seek foreign loans for major development projects, the Thai government released a number of public statements to stress its firm stand on the side of Western democracies. It is clear from the timing and the texts of these statements that this was a rhetorical campaign orchestrated by Pibul himself to persuade Britain and the United States that Thailand was a good risk, worthy of military and financial support against Communist aggression.

The campaign was launched on 27 August 1949 with the Prime Minister's press conference in which he warned of the approaching danger of communism in China, Indochina and Burma. He spoke of the large number of Communist troops close to the northern border of Thailand and the infiltration of Communists into the country to foment trouble. He stated that although Pridi's attempted coup d'état - the Grand Palace Rebellion of February 1949 - had failed, there existed a possibility that Pridi might still join forces with the Com-

munists. Pibul also threw out a suggestion of a conference in Bangkok between Southeast Asian nations to discuss the growing threat of communism. He concluded the press interview with a warning to the people against communism, saying that he wanted the people to realize that the communist doctrine deprived them of the right to own property and since this was an inalienable right under a democratic monarchy people should guard that right.⁵¹

On 6 September, another step in this campaign appeared in the form of a statement by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pote Sarasin, that the governments of India, Burma and the Philippines were being approached for their reaction to a conference in Bangkok to discuss economic, political and cultural matters. Vietnam and China were not invited because of the difficulty in deciding who actually ruled these countries. The importance of India was emphasized by the statement that the conference would not take place until after Prime Minister Nehru had returned from his projected trip to the United States in October.⁵² Pote's statement seems to have been designed to show that Thailand was really serious about the proposed Bangkok conference; to avoid the association with the Chiang Kai-shek regime; and simultaneously to acknowledge that India was the major non-Communist power in Asia. Thus, while the Thai

government wished to be seen in favour of an anti-Communist alliance in Southeast Asia, it tried to dissociate itself from the problem in China.

The immediate cause for these statements could be found in the “urgent-secret” instructions from the Prime Minister’s office to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 30 August 1949, drawing the attention of the latter to a report in the 21 August issue of the *Hongkong Standard*. According to this newspaper’s report, a *Manila Times* editorial had commented upon a statement, alleged to have been made by Pibul, that the Thai government was not interested in any proposal for a Southeast Asian Union or a Pacific Pact involving financial or military obligations unless it was sponsored by the United Nations. The *Manila Times* editorial suggested that Pibul would not join in any alliance that might be committed actively to fight communism. It reminded the reader that Pibul had surrendered to the Japanese in 1942 because “he figured the United States and Britain were washed up.” “Pibul hated communism,” the editorial commented, “but recent achievements of the Chinese Communists have impressed him in about the same way the success of the Japs impressed him.” This scathing remark seems to have upset Pibul and provoked him to instruct the Foreign Ministry to deny such allegations and to make clear that the Thai government would fight communism;

that it had hitherto received no definite proposal of any kind in connection with the Pacific Pact; and that it would be prepared to provide leadership for such an undertaking. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was ordered to urgently sound out interested countries with a view to convening a consultative conference in Bangkok.⁵³

Indeed, in his communications on this subject to Thai ambassadors in Washington, London and Paris, Deputy Foreign Minister Pote Sarasin stated quite categorically that in view of the Communist menace and press reports in many foreign newspapers that Thailand was uninterested in co-operating with other Asian nations which wished to ward off the Communist threat, the Prime Minister “wishes to demonstrate to the world that Thailand does not only have a genuine interest in international cooperation against the Communist threat but is also ready to take an active role in such matter”.⁵⁴ The fact that the idea of a Bangkok consultative conference did not materialize and faded away as fast as it emerged seems to suggest that it had no more than a propaganda motive.

Evidence also suggests that the Thai government came under some pressure from the American ambassador to show its hand. During a conversation between Stanton and Pote Sarasin on 2 June 1949, the American ambassador drew Pote’s

attention to an article which appeared in the Thai newspaper *Naew Na* under the pen name of Phraya Sarapai, a former Minister of Education. This article urged the Thai government to adopt an independent policy on the question of Thailand's future relations with the Chinese Communists and not to follow the British and American governments. Stanton asserted that this was the first article he had noted in the Thai press written by a prominent Thai which was pro-Communist in tone. He then asked Pote whether other Thais were thinking along the same lines and pointed out that articles of this nature, promptly reprinted by the local Chinese Communist press, might well give the Thai and Chinese reading public the impression that influential Thais were already thinking in terms of close collaboration with the Chinese Communists.

Pote's reaction under Stanton's pressure shed some light on his style of diplomacy. But it probably reflected the Thai government's policy towards the United States at the time. Pote expressed his dismay and stated that he would call in Phraya Sarapai to query him about the article and his views. He went on to say that the number of Thai Communists was small and that the government, particularly the Police Special Branch, was constantly on the alert to check Communist activities, and these efforts had thus far been fairly successful.

Stanton then applied further pressure on Pote and

impressed upon him the kind of action by the Thai government that the US government would like to see. He appears to have driven home to the Thai Deputy Foreign Minister three essential points: that there existed some doubts about the Thai will to resist communism; that the Communist threat was imminent and connected with the deteriorating situation in China; and that there was an urgent need to educate the people regarding the dangers of communism.⁵⁵ Pote seems to have lent his sympathetic ear to the American “advice” and undoubtedly reported its essence to his superior, Pibul, who was concurrently both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

Significantly, the timing of Pibul’s campaign coincided with the visit of Prince Viwatthanachai Chaiyan, the Minister of Finance, to London on his way to the International Monetary Fund meetings in Washington. The purpose of his visit to London was to seek facilities for raising a loan for major development projects in Thailand; part of the projects, it was hoped, would be funded by the World Bank. Prince Viwat was reported by Reuter on 8 September to have stated in London that while under normal conditions Thailand could progress economically without outside help, it was now necessary to expedite the development of the country by means of a foreign loan. He estimated that £5,000,000 would take care of these needs for about three years. He then went on to discuss the problem of

communism in Thailand, saying that Thailand was able to cope with subversive activity but that great danger came from possible outside aggression. His comment to the press was summarized in an American embassy report thus:

Our army is very small. It is not well-equipped. We have no modern arms. We have certainly not the force with which to resist an invasion. If there was an aggression, we should have to ask for help. There is no written agreement with Britain and the United States that they would come to our aid, but I hope they would. Our interests are exactly the same. If the communists overran Thailand, they would get Malaya too.

The present government has every intention of keeping out communism. How imminent is the communist threat is anybody's guess, but they have still got to swallow China and China is a big chunk of land. I don't think Britain could afford to let communism travel beyond the borders of China.

The potential danger in Thailand is some of our Chinese population. China-born Chinese and Thai-born Chinese total 3 million out of 18 million people – one to every six. A good many of these Chinese would never become communists but there are bound to be some who would.

We look to our old friend Britain for help where necessary. She has already sold us arms for five battalions of our army policing the Thai-Malaya frontier. Until these arms came, the Communists in Malaya were better armed than we were.⁵⁶

Prince Viwat's statement seems to have had the purpose of linking the previous statements of the Prime Minister to his efforts to obtain a sterling loan and to emphasize to the British people, on the spot, the theme that Thailand had every intention to fight communism. He also wanted to show appreciation for British military aid. But the main purpose was undeniably to assure the West of the political loyalties of Thailand to the anti-Communist cause. The implication of his statement was that economic aid for Thailand would not be in vain inasmuch as the interest of Thailand was identical with that of the West.

The next step in Pibul's campaign for Western aid was his well-publicized interview on 12 September 1949 with M.R. Applegate, the United Press correspondent. Pibul reiterated that Thailand was determined to stop any possible Communist aggression, and that the country had the spirit and the manpower to resist such an attack, but at the present time lacked sufficient equipment. This being the case, in the event of war, Thailand would welcome armed assistance from the United States and Britain, whose armies would be welcomed as friends. He also spoke of British-Thai cooperation on the Malayan border and suggested that if necessary this cooperation should be extended to naval operations in the seas surrounding Malaya and Thailand. He stated that the navy was in dire need

of new and better ships. In connection with the proposed Bangkok Conference, Pibul confirmed that it was intended to resist Communist aggression. He added that while a regional security pact should include independent Asian countries which were anti-Communist, those having a stake in this part of the world should be consulted. Specifically, those countries included Britain, France, the United States and the Netherlands. Finally, Pibul made a point that the Communist movement in Thailand was almost entirely composed of Chinese.⁵⁷

Apparently Pibul intended to show that Thailand had the spirit to fight and that the only thing it needed was equipment, which, by implication, could only be supplied by the West. He also wanted to signal to the West that Thailand differed from its neighbours in that it was not averse to throwing in its lot with the Western powers who were being accused of imperialism; that it recognized the legitimate interests of Western powers in the region; and that in the event of invasion, it would allow the United States and Great Britain to put troops on Thai soil if necessary. In addition, Pibul may have wished to dispel any suspicions in the West that he was merely using the communist question as a means of getting arms to build up the army and police for political purposes, hence the reference to the need for strengthening the navy as well as the

other services. He may also have desired to placate the disaffected navy by assuring it publicly that it would not be left out of any aid programs.

However, Pibul's statement regarding British and American troops on Thai soil gave rise to much criticism in the local press. Many saw it as a bartering away of Thailand's sovereign rights in return for British and American aid.⁵⁸ To quieten the press uproar, Pibul decided to make a further statement on 17 September by way of explanation and rebuttal. The gist of his statement was that Thailand must cooperate with other advanced nations such as the US and the UK, which respected each other's independence and worked for peace and prosperity. He also attacked the press for criticizing his policy of welcoming British and American troops in time of emergency. The criticism came thick and fast from both Communist and non-Communist sources. For example, the 15 September edition of *Mahachon*, a Thai communist publication, emphasized the Prime Minister's dependence "upon foreign support to maintain his position". On 20 September, a *Phim Thai* newspaper editorial attacked the Prime Minister's interview by stating that most critics were unanimous in their opinion that the statement, "if not inappropriate, is at least untimely," and added that some "regard the statement as willing submission of Thailand's

independence to a foreign nation's care, . . . against the will of the people of the nation". According to the *Chungyuan Pao*, a Chinese language newspaper on 14 September, Khuang, the opposition leader, was reported to have said: "If the motive of Premier Pibul in welcoming British and American troops into Thailand is intended to please them and obtain military and economic aid, it may be considered as the case of a child trying to take candy from a man."⁵⁹

Such criticisms achieved significant enough proportions to cause Pibul to give another interview "to clear up certain misinterpretations of his earlier statements on the circumstances in which Thailand would throw open her gates to the armies of Britain and the United States". The interview was granted to Michael Erskine-Wyse of the "Near and Far East News Agency". Concurrently Pibul broadcast a reminder to the Chinese community against being led into displaying an antagonistic attitude towards the Thai people in the wake of the advent of the Communist regime in China. He was at pains to point out in the interview that the stage at which foreign armed assistance would be sought or accepted would naturally be determined by the Thai government in consultation with other governments whose territory or interests might be menaced by Communist aggression. He stressed that all measures taken or proposed by Thailand were purely

defensive. He also placed some emphasis on self-help, irrespective of outside aid. "It is really a matter of doing all we can with our own resources and looking abroad for specialists and finance only where these are not locally available."⁶⁰ He mentioned the Congressional legislation appropriating \$75 million for aid in the "general area of China" and revealed that Thailand probably would receive some financial assistance from this fund. To a final question as to whether Thailand, against the day when the need for foreign armed aid might arise, contemplated allowing British and American military aircraft to use Thai bases in the same way that the American air force then had access to bases in Britain and Saudi Arabia, Pibul replied that this matter had not so far been raised in any quarter. "However, in the event that Thailand should request aid from Britain and America, then our bases would be available to the forces of those two countries."⁶¹

In summary, the Thai government's public campaign to obtain aid seems to have been oriented toward demonstrating that Thailand would fight; that they were not Communist; that the principal threat was external, or at least based on a minority whose political attitudes were governed by external events; that international cooperation was necessary; that Thailand needed aid which would not be wasted as in China; that it was not anti-foreign; that it was able and willing to cooperate with Western powers; and that if and when Thailand

were invaded, it would allow the British and American troops to enter in order to help. The Bangkok Conference that was proposed by Pibul never took place, though the Thai government accepted on 24 February 1950 the Philippines' invitation to attend the Baguio Conference. The subject was raised only for the purpose of demonstrating that Thailand was willing to take upon itself the responsibility of organizing an anti-Communist front.

Although Pibul's publicity campaign was motivated to some extent by internal political considerations, it appears to have been directed largely at Britain and the United States. Britain already supplied some arms and equipment for the police and five army battalions in the south. But its influence in Thailand was on the wane. In spite of the worldwide applause for British decolonization of India and Burma, some Thais suspected that the contraction of the British empire stemmed from its weakness, and wondered whether Britain could ever resume its protector role. The devaluation of the pound sterling on 18 September 1949 was a blow to British prestige because it was seen as a sign of British economic debility. Moreover, it reduced overnight by some 30% the value of Thai deposits in London, hitherto relied upon as partial backing for the baht.⁶² Pibul, standing in for Prince Viwat, half-heartedly revalued the official exchange rate from 40 to 35 baht to the pound

sterling, allegedly on American advice. These changes in the rate caused government profits on rice sales for sterling to be cut. But the attempt by the Minister of Commerce to raise rice export prices met a firm British refusal, and failed.⁶³ The Minister of Finance, Prince Viwat, resigned his post on his return from London and Washington in protest against the government decision to revalue. Pibul had to take over the finance portfolio himself and gave up the portfolio of foreign affairs, which was assumed by Deputy Foreign Minister, Pote Sarasin.

In contrast, the transfer of \$43 million worth of gold in Japan to Thailand in September 1949 was a fillip to American prestige and popularity. The Thai also appreciated favourable American attitudes towards Thailand in United Nations organizations, in which the latter played a major part, so much so that these organizations were increasingly regarded as instruments of United States policy. In January 1949 Bangkok became the site for the regional office of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) also decided to move its headquarters from Shanghai to Bangkok. Bangkok was preferred to other possible sites such as Manila or Singapore because of its better housing situation, and because these international bodies, largely staffed by Americans, had no

desire to be located in any British territory. In March 1949 Thailand joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Toward the end of the year there was a good prospect of American aid to Thailand as part of the 75 million dollars fund for the general area of China under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act. A memorandum by the Director General of the Western Political Department of the Foreign Ministry in November 1949 put the Thai position thus:

It would be beneficial to declare ourselves openly to be on the same side of the Western democracies in the hope of getting their assistance now, if we could be assured that they will give us every form of prompt assistance. But I am afraid that neither the United States nor Great Britain would commit itself to such an extent. In my opinion, we should wait a little longer until after the Conference of American diplomats in Bangkok in January because the government should have learned by that time what the US attitude really is.⁶⁴

In the face of the instability generated by decolonization in Southeast Asia, the emergence of Communist China, and the retrenchment of Great Britain, the Thai government was looking increasingly to the United States for assistance and protection. Thailand was prepared to declare itself openly on the side of the West in the new bipolar world and take action

accordingly whenever the United States demonstrated its willingness to assume responsibility in Southeast Asia.

THE REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN CHINA

The advent of a Communist regime in Peking in October 1949 created a problem of recognition for Thailand. Immediately the Thai government adopted a policy of wait and see. The impact of the Communist victory on local Chinese was a particular concern, as the prestige and influence of Communist elements rose rapidly in the Chinese community. In a radio message to the Chinese in Thailand on 2 October, Pibul warned them not to create disturbances. He asked the Chinese to remember that violation of Thai laws would not be tolerated, and reminded them, with regard to flying the new Communist flag, that Thailand had not recognized the new Peking regime.⁶⁵ Pote Sarasin, the Thai Foreign Minister, stated in November that because the government in Taiwan still retained the seat in the United Nations, Thailand recognized it as the legal government of China. "The Thai Government will wait and see. If and when most major powers in the United Nations recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC), Thailand will do likewise."⁶⁶ Thus, when the Thai government

received reports in December that Britain, and Commonwealth countries would recognize the PRC government, Pote admitted to the American ambassador that Commonwealth recognition would increase pressure on Thailand; but he reaffirmed Thailand's position of postponing recognition as long as possible.⁶⁷ As the United States showed every sign of continuing its relations with Taiwan and vehemently opposing the PRC's entry into the United Nations, Thailand eventually formulated a policy guideline that it would recognize the Peking government if the latter was admitted to the United Nations. This reflected the Thai desire to avoid diplomatic relations with China. Such avoidance was hardly new: it had been practised since 1853 up to the end of the Second World War. The Thai government wanted to avoid direct contact with the powerful Chinese government, which could exert undue influence on the local Chinese, or intervene in its affairs.

Already, in January 1950 the new Peking government began to demonstrate its interests in the well-being of the Chinese minority in Thailand. On 23 January and for two or three days thereafter, Peking radio accused the Pibul government of oppressing local Chinese, protested against police cruelties and unjust deportations, and demanded assurances that such treatment would not be allowed to

recur.⁶⁸ These broadcasts followed the receipt of complaints from the Chinese held in Bangkok prison that there were more than a thousand Chinese under detention, more than ten of whom had been beaten to death. The Thai government issued a communiqué on 28 January, denying Peking's allegations, and on 4 April sent a Note to the Secretary General of the United Nations, giving a full account of the status of Chinese detainees in Thailand.⁶⁹

Alarmed by this manifestation of hostility from Peking, the government began to adopt a more vigorous anti-Communist posture. This position was also in keeping with its main policy of close partnership with the United States. But clearly, ideology was not the main consideration that led Thailand to defer recognition of the new government in Peking. The primary reason for such a decision was the traditional fear of a powerful Chinese diplomatic representation in Bangkok. A statement, made as late as August 1957, by Prince Wan, the most prominent Thai diplomat during this period, epitomized the government thinking on the recognition issue:

[The policy of withholding the recognition to the Chinese Communist government] is not based merely on the principle of adherence to the United Nations ideals, but also on the ground of national interests. The main problem is the 3 million Chinese nationals who hold economic power

in Thailand at nearly every level, capital and labour. It is necessary for the Thai people to control their own economy. Therefore, this government decides to continue its recognition of the Taiwan government which is weaker than the Communist government. If Thailand recognizes Communist China, it would be forced to accommodate Chinese interests even more. The longer Thailand withholds its recognition from Communist China, the more advantageous it is for Thailand. But this explanation could not be given to the public. Nonetheless, we cannot deny that the Communist regime on the mainland is stable. For this reason, our guideline is to consider the recognition of Communist China only when that government has been admitted to the United Nations. Moreover, if Thailand recognizes Communist China now, its substantial interests in the Free World would be lost.⁷⁰

THE BAO DAI DECISION

If Thailand deferred indefinitely the recognition of the new Communist government in China on account of the anti-Chinese tradition, why did it rush into recognizing the French-sponsored governments in Indochina in February 1950 against the general feeling of opposition to French colonialism? Up until then, the Thai government had consistently eschewed the recognition of the three Indochinese states, in spite of persistent pressure from the governments of Britain, the

United States and France, on the ground that France had not yet granted them full independence. In addition to occasional *démarches*, British diplomatic pressure was exemplified by a three-day Bangkok visit of Malcolm MacDonald, the Commission-General for the United Kingdom in Southeast Asia, from Singapore in December 1949. He strongly reassured Pibul that communism must and could be contained and gave him an optimistic estimate of Bao Dai to encourage early Thai recognition of Vietnam.⁷¹ But Pibul's response was negative and consistent with the view that until full power was vested in Bao Dai by France, and he was supported by the Vietnamese people, there was no question of Thailand's recognition of his regime.

In the meantime, Ambassador Stanton received instructions on 23 December from the State Department to estimate the kind of action the Thai government was likely to take in view of the impending ratification by the French Assembly of the Elysée Agreements of 8 March 1949. The State Department also instructed Stanton to make a discreet and informal approach to appropriate government officials to emphasize that there was no alternative to the Bao Dai regime; that Bao Dai was stronger than anticipated six months before; that widespread recognition of Bao Dai, particularly by Southern Asian nations, would help impel the French to take further steps toward the fulfillment of Vietnamese nationalist

aspirations and would attract to Bao Dai those Vietnamese nationalists who were either neutral or following Ho Chi Minh; and that ratification of the Elysée Agreements was the first of many steps in the transfer of power to indigenous Vietnamese leaders.⁷²

Stanton duly went to see Pibul as instructed and he reported back to Washington that Pibul indicated no change in his long-standing attitude on the subject. The Thai Prime Minister continued to reiterate that while the Thai government opposed the formation of a Communist government under Ho Chi Minh, it was reluctant to recognize Bao Dai on the ground that his regime was not independent and was not supported by the majority of the Vietnamese people. The Thai position, according to Stanton, was based firstly on the belief that Bao Dai was essentially a French puppet, and secondly, on apprehension that the Vietnamese in Thailand, numbering approximately 40,000, the majority of whom supported Ho Chi Minh, might cause trouble.⁷³

Stanton's assumptions were not very far off the mark. The Thai Foreign Ministry had adopted such a position regarding the Bao Dai regime as early as July 1949. The consideration of this question was then under the responsibility of Kenneth S. Patton, the American adviser to the Foreign Ministry, whose recommendation reads:

The Bao Dai regime in Indochina has been created by France in an attempt to safeguard her material interests and to enhance her diminished prestige as well as in the hope of creating a barrier against Chinese Communists. There is every reason to believe that Bao Dai is only a puppet of France and that his regime, apparently lacking in any real support by the mass of the indigenous population, will not be able to maintain itself in power. Certainly, there is no positive action which Thailand can take to support the Bao Dai regime, the failure or success of which will not, in the slightest degree, depend upon the attitude of this Kingdom which may, however, by unwise measures incur the displeasure of the racially kindred people of Indochina. Any sign of approval of the Bao Dai Government would be a deviation from the principle of the right of self-determination which has been traditional with Thailand.⁷⁴

These basic principles had been adhered to by the Thai government right up until 8 February 1950, when the Prime Minister was quoted as having stated during his interview with George Herman, a correspondent of Columbia Broadcasting System, that before his government could recognize Bao Dai, they would need to be satisfied that the latter's regime had the backing of the majority of the Vietnamese people and the majority of the members of the United Nations.⁷⁵

However, at this juncture the Thai government

came under a three-pronged diplomatic offensive from the ambassadors of the United States, France and Great Britain to change its attitude in favour of Bao Dai. Stanton, for example, having received instructions from Washington on 6 February to put pressure on the Thai government, had more than one conversation with Pibul in the ensuing two days. Nevertheless, he found Pibul unwilling to comply with the American wish.⁷⁶ The French ambassador was also reported to be putting a lot of pressure on the Thai government at the same time. The British ambassador, upon receiving instructions from the Foreign Office on 9 February, also sought an interview with the Thai Foreign Minister the following day.

On 9 February 1950, Pibul appears to have made up his mind and, without clearing with his Foreign Minister, he told a reporter of the *Bangkok Post* newspaper that he favoured recognition of Bao Dai, that he considered it urgent that action be taken at once, and that he would propose it at the next meeting of the Cabinet on Monday, 13 February. Apparently Pote Sarasin, the then Foreign Minister, was not aware of this sudden change of heart by the Prime Minister for he told the British ambassador when they met on 10 February that he could not believe Pibul had been correctly reported since, apart from anything else, the statement attributed to him conflicted violently with his interview with

the correspondent of Columbia Broadcasting System only a day before.⁷⁷

Although Pibul repeated the same statement on 10 February, Pote informed the press that the Prime Minister was voicing only his personal opinion and that the Foreign Minister preferred to wait and watch further developments. As it happened, this public disagreement between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister on this major foreign policy issue caused a great deal of interest and press speculation.

Consideration of the Prime Minister's proposal was carried on by combined meetings of the Cabinet, the National Defence Council, and the Central Security Committee. The latter two bodies were strongly represented by military leaders.⁷⁸ Their joint deliberations went on in almost continuous session for two weeks during which there was a serious split in the Cabinet. The Prime Minister, supported by military members who regarded recognition as an urgent necessity on which might depend the size and speed of US military aid to Thailand, desired an immediate recognition. The Foreign Minister and some independent civilian members of the Cabinet, on the other hand, preferred to wait and see and advised against action.⁷⁹ According to American embassy sources, the second group led by Pote Sarasin, the Foreign Minister, comprised Phraya Thep Hasadin, the Minister

of Communications; Phra Manupan Wimolasat, the Minister of Justice; Sukit Nimmanhemmin, the Minister of Industry; and Liang Chaiyakan, the Deputy Minister of Interior.⁸⁰ It was believed that some other members of the Cabinet were originally opposed to Pibul's idea but later switched either because they were convinced by the Prime Minister or for political reasons.

The disagreement between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Minister on this issue constituted a Cabinet crisis where the resignation of four ministers was only narrowly avoided after a heated debate at one of their several long Cabinet meetings. Pibul was reluctant to decide against the Foreign Minister, and partly for that reason acceded to a compromise suggestion that the Thai government should send an official "fact finding" mission to Indochina which would bring back a report on the actual degree of independence and popular support enjoyed by Bao Dai. On 23 February, Pibul informed the Press that the "fact finding" mission to leave shortly for Saigon would consist of a Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Defense, the Secretary General to the Prime Minister's Office and the Secretary of the Central Security Committee.⁸¹ But when the Thai government approached the French ambassador to make the appropriate arrangements, the latter advised delay until the return of High

Commissioner Pignon to Indochina.⁸² So three days later the Cabinet voted to leave the decision to the Prime Minister. On 28 February, Pibul decided to accord recognition to the French-sponsored governments of Bao Dai, Laos and Cambodia.

Pibul's decision was a major Cabinet defeat for the Foreign Minister and caused his resignation. Pote, nevertheless, stated privately to Stanton that he would attempt to dissuade other dissident Ministers from resigning in order to avoid a serious Cabinet crisis.⁸³ Pote's resignation was an embarrassment but not a political setback for the government because he was not a politician but a technocrat, drafted into the government by Pibul in 1948 on the basis of personal friendship rather than political standing.⁸⁴ His replacement was Nai Worakan Bancha, the Deputy Minister of Finance, who was a leading civilian member of the November 1947 Coup Group but had no previous experience in foreign affairs. His appointment indicated Pibul's intention to resume control of foreign policy.

Pibul's initial statement to the *Bangkok Post* newspaper reporter coincided with the arrival of Philip C. Jessup to preside over the conference of American chiefs of mission in South and East Asia which was convened in Bangkok during 13-15 February 1950. The United States had just announced on 7 February that it had granted formal recognition to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and Jessup himself, speaking in Singapore

on his way to Rangoon and Bangkok, stated in effect that something more might be needed for Southeast Asia than the long-term aid implied in President Truman's Point Four Program. He mentioned the possibility of financial, economic and military aid, and added that should there be actual armed aggression by the forces of one country against another, the United States would consider that a very grave matter which would call for "more serious consideration in the circumstances which might present themselves at the time".⁸⁵

The circumstances tended to suggest that the Thai Prime Minister's initial purpose was to impress Jessup and other American conferees with his willingness to cooperate. Despite his earlier anti-colonial stand, he apparently felt under American pressure that Thailand had to align itself with the United States in opposition to Ho Chi Minh. He was evidently supported, or rather pressed, by the Coup Group military leaders who believed that the recognition would hasten American military aid. There had been some indications of expected American aid to Thailand. In fact, the Thai government, in anticipation of a possible share for Thailand in the Congressional appropriation for the general area of China, had instructed the Thai ambassador in Washington to present the State Department with a formal request for a comprehensive plan of armament for the Thai armed forces at the

beginning of 1950. Prince Wan duly did so on 5 January 1950. He submitted to the United States government a very large list of military material for the purpose of equipping and expanding the Thai army to roughly seven infantry divisions as well as a considerable amount of naval and air force equipment. This list was sent to the Pentagon for costing, with the result that the army portion of the list totalled a massive \$580 million, the navy portion approximately \$67 million, and the air force portion \$7 million for a total of over \$660 million.⁸⁶ This contrasted sharply with the earlier much more modest request of 18 November 1948 for arms for five southern army battalions, estimated at \$3 million, which was now withdrawn. It could only be deduced from the submission of a new comprehensive list that the Thai government wanted to make sure that its arms request would not fall short of any amount of money it might be eligible to get out of the pending China area funds.

By early February 1950, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff made the recommendation that \$10 million be allotted for Thailand. The American embassy at Bangkok was notified and instructed to arrive at some sort of order of priority from within the comprehensive Thai list, and to draw up a revised list not exceeding \$10 million.⁸⁷ The efforts on the part of American military attachés in preparing a priority list of the

weapons and military equipment needed by the Thai armed forces probably gave Thai military leaders some inkling of the prospective United States military aid program. This ostensibly led Thai military leaders to link the Bao Dai recognition issue with the military aid question, despite Stanton's efforts to separate the two issues.⁸⁸ Pote himself admitted that strong pressure exerted by defence forces in favour of immediate recognition had been due mainly to their belief that such action would facilitate their getting material aid in arms and equipment from the United States.⁸⁹ The British ambassador, Sir Geoffrey Thompson, obviously agreed when he wrote:

... there can be no doubt that Marshal Pibul and his banker colleagues and supporters have been greatly influenced by their desire to acquire merit in American eyes and thereby to qualify for material aid in arms and equipment and also in the economic sphere. By obtaining such aid, the extension of which under both headings now becomes increasingly probable, the Marshal and his generals strengthen their position in the country and settle themselves more firmly in the saddle, with all the personal benefits that this entails.⁹⁰

When Ambassador Stanton confidentially communicated to Pibul on 10 April President Truman's approval in principle of the allocation of 10 million dollars for military

aid to Thailand, Pibul, in Stanton's words, was "exceedingly pleased, he expressed thanks and appreciation on behalf of his government".⁹¹ The news was immediately leaked to the Thai press by Pibul, causing a minor jolt in Washington whose response to press queries was limited to "no comment".⁹² Although Stanton put the Thai Prime Minister's apparent breach of confidence down to his elation over the US decision and strongly recommended Washington against any protest to the Thai government,⁹³ it was almost certain that Pibul's haste to make public forthcoming US military aid was partly motivated by his desire to claim some political credit for having produced substantial aid commitment for Thailand. He may have felt impelled to vindicate his judgement since his personal decision in favour of recognition had in fact not been received with public enthusiasm, to say the least. Many people, still harbouring anti-French feeling, believed that the action was precipitate and put Thailand unnecessarily in a vulnerable position without knowing how much support it could get from great powers. As Ambassador Stanton observed, "the evidence available at the time was that not only was the majority of the thinking populace and the bulk of the press against recognition, but even a majority of middle to high-level officials".⁹⁴

THE KOREAN DECISION

Although Pibul did little to conceal his delight with his success in obtaining military aid, this should be seen merely as a first big step toward his foreign policy goal, namely a guarantee of Thailand's security. On 27 May 1950 Pibul, in a press interview, reiterated yet again that he desired to conclude a military alliance with the United States, United Kingdom, and France. Reaffirming Thailand's intention to fight "even if China is behind the aggressors," he stated that Thailand could not accept Communist domination.⁹⁵

When the Korean War broke out, all of the Southeast Asian countries, except Indonesia, supported the Security Council resolutions of 25 June and 27 June, respectively demanding a cease-fire and North Korean withdrawal, and calling upon UN members to assist the Republic of Korea in repelling the attack and restoring international peace. Thailand promptly responded to the call from the United Nations for support. First it made an offer of rice on 1 July 1950. Then on 23 July, it offered a combat team of 4000 troops to aid UN forces in Korea. Pibul told Parliament that the decision had been made by the National Defence Council and unanimously approved by the Cabinet on 20 July, on the ground that it was Thailand's duty to observe and carry out its UN obligation. Another, even

more important reason was also given that Thailand, as a small country, should offer military assistance in the interest of its own future defence.⁹⁶ In other words, the Thai government felt that this action would at least insure a strong moral obligation for the United Nations, particularly the United States, to defend Thailand's independence in the event it was invaded by the Communists. Ambassador Stanton observed that the basis of Pibul's foreign policy was a gamble or calculated risk based on the assumptions that the democratic camp would ultimately win the contest, and that his commitment to the cause of the West would get Thailand a security guarantee. It may be worthwhile to quote a passage from his despatch to the State Department which succinctly illustrated his assessment of Pibul's foreign policy:

In acting on these calculated risks, Phibun is enough of a gambler (or realist) to understand that it is futile to try to temper the anticipated Communist reaction by "going slow" or trying to pursue an overt policy of restraint while covertly working against the Communists. Whatever his other faults may be, Phibun probably has realized that this is an "all-or-nothing" international conflict and he probably realizes that the Communists regard a "neutral" as as much of an enemy as an outright opponent. Therefore, Phibun has probably decided that having made his choice, the only sensible thing to do is to put everything behind

it. If he loses, he will be no worse off than if he tried to play the part of neutrality, and if he wins, he will be all the more endeared to the hearts of the victors, i.e., the West. Furthermore, if he wins, his internal political position will be well-nigh impregnable. Furthermore, if he is temporarily driven out of Thailand by the Communists, he probably believes he can obtain sanctuary in the United States and return as the victor when Communism is defeated finally.

With this kind of a viewpoint in mind, such things as non-recognition of Communist China, recognition of Bao Dai, sending troops to fight Communist aggression in Korea, and voting to condemn Communist China an aggressor, fall into some kind of understandable pattern. They are the bets of Phibun, who in his position as official spokesman for Thailand, successively adds chips to a stack which he has placed on the United States.⁹⁷

Stanton's gambler analogy represents a Western interpretation of Pibul's international posture. Looking at it in the Thai cultural context, one would find that Pibul's initiative in granting the favour in expectation of future reciprocity is an everyday phenomenon in Thai society. Furthermore, Pibul "the gambler" was perhaps left with little more than Hobson's choice. Turning to the Communists would be asking too much for his military backers to swallow, and tantamount to a political suicide for him. Already in January 1950, Communist

China had indicated its hostility to his regime, in the form of a series of sharp radio attacks on the treatment of the Chinese in Thailand. Going neutral or a half-hearted commitment reminded him of the bitter experience of being abandoned in 1941 to the Japanese invaders. He already perceived a new threat from Communist China – at least as serious as the earlier one from Japan. Thus, Pibul opted for the only expedient alternative of backing the United States whole-heartedly in order to derive protection as well as full political dividends from the alliance.

Pibul's policy of supporting the United States was carried out most rigorously in the United Nations. His expeditionary force of 1182 troops left for Korea on 22 October 1950.⁹⁸ The Thai troops added little military value to the United States' war effort, and in fact constituted a financial burden since the US government had to provide equipment, supplies, training and logistic support to them upon their arrival in Korea. But the psychological and propaganda value of an Asian country's participation in the war was greatly appreciated by the Americans. In addition to the despatch of troops the Thai government sent two corvettes and one transport vessel to Korea. It also offered to supply 40,000 tons of rice free of charge to Korea at a cost of over 84 million baht

to itself.⁹⁹ By offering assistance to Korea, the Thai government was clearly trying to impress Washington and to expedite the US-promised military aid program. It also pinned its hope on United States protection under the guise of the UN if Thailand were ever to be in a similar position to Korea.

Participation in the Korean War not only gave the Thai government the opportunity of military adventure but also, because of the United Nations' auspices, prestige. The United Nations became a subject of enthusiasm amongst the Thai people. The United Nations day of 24 October was declared a public holiday and a day of celebration; a number of songs with such themes as "When the United Nations call came, we Thais were the first to answer, etc." became popular.¹⁰⁰

Communist China's entry into the hostilities in November introduced a new issue. While the United States was determined that the UN should condemn Peking for aggression, opposing forces, of which India was a spokesman, urged conciliation. On 6 December 1950, Prince Wan, head of Thai Permanent Delegation to the UN, cabled home for instructions regarding an Indian initiative to send an appeal on behalf of 13 Asian countries to the governments of North Korea and the People's Republic of China for the latter two countries to announce that it was not their intention to cross to the

south of the 38th parallel. He added his own opinion that “we do not extend our collaboration to any measure which might not be agreeable to the US”.¹⁰¹ His view was wholly accepted in Bangkok.

Again, on another proposal from 12 Asian and Middle East countries to set up a 7-nation UN committee to consider Far East problems, Nai Worakan Bancha, the Thai Foreign Minister, sent brief but revealing instructions: “Our attitude should be in line with that of USA.”¹⁰² In January 1951, the Prime Minister issued a directive for the Foreign Minister to pass on to the Thai Delegation in New York: “Our policy is to support the United States, and in the specific resolution condemning China as the aggressor we give full support to the US.”¹⁰³ Thus, unlike Burma, which voted with India against the US resolution that condemned Peking, and Indonesia, which abstained, Thailand voted affirmatively. In May 1951, Thailand supported another UN resolution which required UN members to embargo the sale of strategic goods to China. As an indication of his philosophy, Pibul was reported to have referred to a Thai proverb “Follow the big man [the elder] and the dog will not bite you” in a conversation over the Vietnam situation.¹⁰⁴ It implied that Thailand had selected the Western camp, perhaps specifically the United States, as the “big man” to protect it.

Despite the UN military reverses after the Chinese intervention in Korea, the Thai government continued to express its confidence in the United States. On 17 January 1951, in a radio statement, Pibul cautioned against “war hysteria” and its attendant hoarding and forced price rises. He gave his opinion that a World War was still far off, and even if it came, Thailand was in a much better position than it had been in 1941. He explained that Thailand’s principal commercial contacts were with Britain and the United States where there was no alarming increase in prices. He also advised that since Thailand’s principal supply routes were by sea, and since the Communists did not control the seas, there was no reason to fear being cut off in the event of war.¹⁰⁵ This reference to 1941 indicated that the Japanese invasion experience still figured largely in his thinking.

Even though Thailand received every conceivable kind of aid from the United States from 1950, it still fell far short of a “NATO-style” regional security arrangement, or an explicit guarantee of Thailand’s sovereignty, that Pibul had been seeking. In June 1949, two months after the North Atlantic Treaty Organization had been set up, Pibul had called in vain for a Pacific Pact against aggression, similar to the North Atlantic security treaty.¹⁰⁶ Thereafter, he took every opportunity

to pursue this goal. One such opportunity came in 1951, when the Korean War and Truman's decision to intervene led to a major reassessment of Japan's position in American strategic thinking. The Japanese archipelago had become the United States' most crucial forward base of operations in the Far East. It was now even more urgent to ensure, not only Japan's economic viability and friendship for the West, but also its ability to defend itself.

In the winter of 1950-1951, John Foster Dulles was sent to tour the Far East as Special Representative of the President to negotiate a Japanese Peace Treaty, and also to organize a Pacific system of collective defence embracing the offshore island chains of Asia, including Japan. In the event, the United States abandoned the proposed plan of a collective defence arrangement and settled for three separate defence treaties, one with Japan, one with the Philippines, and one with Australia and New Zealand. Such security arrangements were necessary to reassure Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines, which had expressed their opposition to a Japanese Peace Treaty that might allow Japan's economic and military recovery. At the time Japan, rather than the Soviet Union, was the principal concern of Australia and New Zealand in their defence planning.¹⁰⁷ The concept of an exclusive multilateral treaty

encountered opposition from people like Stanton on the ground that other countries in Southern Asia might consider themselves outside the ultimate orbit of American protection, were they not included in the proposed Pact.¹⁰⁸ This was also the view of the British, who were concerned that “to identify in this way the island chain would increase the mainland danger, particularly to the UK positions in Hongkong and Malaya”.¹⁰⁹ In the end, the US government decided to adopt the piecemeal approach which would afford it greater flexibility in choosing additional countries if it so wished.¹¹⁰

When the Japanese Peace and Security Treaties were signed in San Francisco in September 1951, the United States had already signed the Philippine-American Mutual Defence Treaty and the ANZUS Pact with Australia and New Zealand. In this connection, Prince Wan, the Thai ambassador in Washington, was reported to have been instructed to discuss with the State Department the possible conclusion of a Pacific Pact around July – August 1951. Since the multilateral principle had then been abandoned by the US administration in favour of a bilateral one, Prince Wan wrote to the Thai government that it would be better advised to request the US to enter into a bilateral defence agreement. On that basis the Foreign Minister asked the National Defence Council to examine the need for such an agreement.

The information about these discussions was leaked to the American embassy and caused a stir. William Turner, the American chargé d'affaires, called on the Thai Foreign Minister on 21 September, and made clear to the Thai government in no uncertain terms: "The fact that the US Government had not approached the Thai Government in this connection was itself evidence that the US Government was not interested at this time in the conclusion of such a pact."¹¹¹ Turner's démarche was based on his full awareness that the United States government was not yet willing to extend its defence commitment to mainland Southeast Asia. He reasoned that should the Thai government request treaty negotiations, and the United States was unable to agree to a treaty with Thailand, Pibul and his government would suffer a serious loss of prestige. As Pibul's position depended in good measure upon the conviction among his supporters that he had the complete backing of the United States, his authority would be immensely impaired once it became clear that Washington was not prepared to make an unequivocal stand.¹¹² In other words, Pibul's foreign policy would be seen as a complete failure. Indeed, as will be shown in the next chapter, by this time domestic opposition to Pibul's foreign policy was increasing. Thus, the American chargé d'affaires decided to stop the Thai plan before it gained its own momentum and became public knowledge.

Turner's reaction was not impetuous. In fact, he had been given a directive by the State Department as early as April that year to point out to the Thai government that firstly the military and economic assistance was concrete enough evidence of the United States' real interest in Thailand's position. Secondly, in the event of Communist aggression, Thailand could always appeal to the UN for protection as Korea had done in June 1950. And thirdly, negotiation of a formal agreement between Thailand and the United States would unnecessarily provoke Communist elements in neighbouring countries, especially Communist China.¹³ While this episode proved the Thai desire to enter into a military alliance with the United States, it also demonstrated that the US government was not yet ready in 1951 to give an explicit security guarantee to Thailand.

CONCLUSION

One of the factors that shaped Pibul's foreign policy in 1949-1950 was his pre-war experience. The relatively idealistic, nationalistic governments that followed the 1932 coup had tried not simply to create a "new" Siam, but a fully sovereign, independent state, according to the principles of the

League of Nations of which it was a member. Yet, when the balance between the Great Powers in the region had broken down in 1941, Thailand had found itself “at the mercy of an overpowering enemy, defenceless, and without allies”.¹¹⁴ It had then suffered the indignity of being incorporated by *force majeure* into the Japanese “New Order”. Pibul himself only narrowly escaped severe punishment as a war criminal. That experience was not forgotten and may have had a strong psychological impact on his foreign policy thinking. To Pibul it seemed imperative that Thailand must not again stand alone but have allies committed to its support, allies strong enough to fall back on in the confident knowledge that it would prevent any other power-complex from engulfing the country. The underlying concept of this “strongest power” policy is that since Thailand’s strength is small, it would have to include the strength of its allies in calculating its own position in the regional balance of power.

For a brief spell, Pibul had to cope with the fact that thanks to his wartime association with the Japanese, he was himself *persona non grata* in the eyes of all the contending forces in Southeast Asia. Having won back the acceptance of the Western Powers, Pibul strove to draw Great Britain and the United States into overt commitments to Thailand’s

defence by adopting a strong posture against communism. The United States was initially reluctant to extend its commitment to mainland Southeast Asia, confining its interest instead to China, Japan, Korea and the Pacific islands. This left Great Britain as the only remaining Power in 1948-49, but it was far from strong enough to assume the protector role. In fact, its withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent in 1947 had clearly signalled a retrenchment rather than an extension of its commitments in Asia. The sterling devaluation in September 1949 further undermined British credibility in Thai perceptions. With its resources stretched in coping with the Communist insurgency in Malaya, Britain could not possibly make any military commitment which would guarantee Thailand's security against a full-scale attack in war. On the other hand, the protector role could not be entrusted to China in view of the existing difficulties in controlling large Chinese population in Thailand and the attendant prospect of overt Chinese government pressure and intervention in Thai internal affairs. In fact, China was perceived to be the main threat.

In the Cold War environment, Pibul set himself to work for a more direct US involvement in the region. This is evident from a whole series of speeches and interviews with the Western press; his public invitation to the United States and Great

Britain to send troops to Thailand in the event of Communist invasion; and his efforts to demonstrate publicly a determination to resist communism. The concrete manifestation of the extent of his commitment on the anti-Communist side was the recognition of the overtly anti-Communist Bao Dai regime in Vietnam and the newly-established and similarly French-supported governments in Laos and Cambodia, the sending of troops to Korea, and the condemnation of the PRC in the United Nations as the aggressor. The Bao Dai decision was of great historical significance because it was the first time that Thailand came out so openly against the Vietminh, and the start of many such hostile policies in the decades that followed. In justification for his decision to recognize Bao Dai, Pibul stated that “Thailand has purchased a seat at the democratic theatre [rather than the Communist one] but is still standing outside in a queue. Recognition of Bao Dai will get Thailand wholly into the democratic theatre.”¹¹⁵ But he omitted to mention “the admission cost” which his advisers had foreseen, namely the Vietminh resentment it caused, which, when added to by subsequent policies in support of the United States in the Vietnam War, has to some extent infected Thai-Vietnamese relations for many years to come.

The United States, on the other hand, was in the process

of reevaluation of its policy toward Southeast Asia in response to the Communist victory in China and its own domestic pressure. Its decision to grant military aid to Thailand stemmed from the fear that if the Western protestations of sympathy and support were not backed up by aid, the Thai might attempt to come to terms with the Communists rather than fight alone. It was felt that substantial American aid would probably forestall such a possibility. But that was the furthest that the United States would get involved. A written American security guarantee to Thailand was still avoided.

Despite the American refusal to offer a formal defence commitment to Thailand beyond the granting of aid, Pibul, in his single-minded pursuit of a reliable protector, must have been impressed by prompt UN response to the Korean crisis. Knowing that the United States was the lynchpin of the UN effort, Pibul committed Thailand to the despatch of troops in the expectation that Thailand's strong backing of the UN would guarantee reciprocal UN support of Thailand in case of dire need. But as the Soviet Union abandoned the boycott and returned to its seat in the Security Council, Pibul began to realize that the United Nations might not respond to the next crisis in the same urgent manner that they did to the Korean crisis. The reliability and effectiveness of the United Nations as Thailand's protector

were seriously in doubt. Hence, in 1951 the Thai government again requested formal US protection, but to no avail.

The anticipated benefit which accrued from the “admission into the democratic theatre” was not limited just to national security. The prospect of obtaining American military aid could not but be contemplated by the Thai military with pleasure. Even if they had genuinely intended to use the military aid (as they had tried to convince the Americans) only to maintain Thailand’s independence from Communist control and not to achieve domestic political ends, it is easy to see that a greatly strengthened military machine would only serve to discourage possible attempts to overthrow the government, or to determine the outcome of any such contest in their favour. As will be discussed in the next chapter, it was soon to emerge that Pibul himself was given the opportunity by the Coup Group to pursue his pro-American policy precisely because it largely served their interest. In addition, American military aid did indeed serve to increase Thailand’s national security from external threat. Not that it would strengthen Thailand to the extent that it could resist the imaginary onslaught from China, but it considerably enhanced Thai defence capabilities vis-à-vis its neighbours such as Burma or Vietnam, Thailand’s ancient foes, who were emerging as independent states.

Another benefit which Pibul and his military supporters hoped the strong overt stand against communism would bring was Western economic aid for the country. The Coup Group may have had a genuine desire to improve the welfare of Thai people and to strengthen the country's economy (which one doubts considering the extent of corruption at high level). Yet the Pibul regime was under some political pressure to do something rapid and obvious to better economic conditions in Thailand. One of the most frequent and valid criticisms levelled against the regime at the time was that "it spent too much time checking up on its political opponents, feathering its own nest, and harping on communism, and entirely too little time on sound planning to reduce the cost of living, improve provincial transportation, and care for the physical and social welfare of the people."¹¹⁶ Moreover, a justification given for the November 1947 coup d'état was the failure of the previous government to control inflation and to improve the economy. The receipt of economic aid would provide the Pibul government with a practical achievement on this score and would thereby strengthen its internal political position.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Thai government's anti-Communist stance afforded the ruling clique a pretext to discredit and/or eliminate its principal

political adversaries. Indeed, the idea had been widely fostered by the Coup Group that Pridi was a Communist and that he was working with the Chinese Communists for his return to the Thai political scene. Pridi was probably the only serious rival with a national standing comparable to that of Pibul. Rumours that Pridi sought asylum in Communist China no doubt heightened Pibul's fear of a possible Pridi-Chinese Communists coalition which might threaten his own power. This fear may have compelled Pibul to intensify his efforts, first, to deny Pridi Western support and secondly, to secure Western shield for himself against Pridi-Chinese threat.

The direction of Thai foreign policy during Pibul's second term in office was thus based as much on domestic political considerations as security and economic concerns. Such policy had been conceived and continuously conducted almost from Pibul's first day in office. But perhaps the final impetus that pushed the Pibul government to take a more open, direct and concrete step toward the alignment with the United States was the unmistakable sign that the United States was beginning to take a real interest in the region as evident from its decision to grant military aid to Thailand and Indochina. The shift in American policy made it possible for Pibul to pursue with a greater chance of success his "strongest power" foreign

policy. On the other side of the coin, the first official indication of Communist China's hostility to his regime, in the form of radio attacks in January 1950 on the Thai government's persecution of the Chinese minority, only served to hasten, rather than hold back (as Peking may have intended), Pibul's continuing effort to align Thailand with the United States.

CHAPTER

5

THE IMPACT OF AMERICAN AID

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Pibul regime had sought to align Thailand with the United States in 1949-51. Although Pibul had not attained an American security guarantee, his unequivocal stand had at least obliged the United States to extend all types of aid to Thailand. His cooperative moves had also helped to erase any lingering doubts in the minds of many American officials regarding the sincerity of his pro-Western sympathies. The Bao Dai recognition and the offer of troops and rice to the UN effort in Korea were much appreciated in Washington and often cited in support of recommendations for American aid to strengthen Thailand's defence.¹ But the direct impact of American aid was the strengthening of the ruling military clique vis-à-vis other political groups. As Frank C. Darling maintains,

The influence of the United States gave additional material and moral support to the Phibun regime and discouraged its political opposition. It strengthened the executive and administrative structures and further weakened the legislature and the courts. It likewise encouraged the military leaders to take even stronger measures in suppressing local opposition using the excuse that all anti-government activity was Communist-inspired. Within a short time the stress on nationalism, the fear of Communism, and the presence of American arms discouraged all but a few people from opposing the policies of the military-dominated government.²

This chapter attempts to examine the effects of American military aid on Thailand domestic politics and foreign policy. An investigation is made into the contention that American arms were used not so much to defend the country as to resolve domestic political conflicts. These included the crushing of the naval “Manhattan Rebellion” in June 1951 by the government forces, the subsequent emasculation of the navy, the elimination of parliamentary opposition, and the establishment of complete military rule in November 1951. Rivalry also existed between different cliques within the Coup Group itself. The police’s desire for American arms in competition with the army is shown to be one of the causes of Thailand’s involvement in assistance to Kuomintang (KMT) troops in Burma.

THE EXTENT AND EFFECTS OF AMERICAN AID TO THAILAND

The year 1950 witnessed the arrival of a number of American technical missions and the signing of three important US-Thai agreements. The first, the Fulbright Agreement, was signed on 1 July, providing for the expenditure of \$1 million on research and cultural exchanges between American and Thai scholars.³ Under this agreement,

Thai students were selected for scholarships to American universities and in return American scholars could come to teach and study in Thailand. By the end of the first year, forty-eight Thai students were attending graduate and professional schools in the United States under the Fulbright program, while nine Americans were teaching and studying in Thailand.⁴

In September, following recommendations made by the Griffin survey mission which visited Southeast Asia in March and April 1950, the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement was concluded between Thailand and the United States.⁵ The economic assistance program envisaged spending \$11.4 million (subsequently cut to around 9 million) provided by the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) on four major development areas: agriculture; public health; education; and industry, transport and communications.⁶ A Special Technical and Economic Mission (STEM) was established in Bangkok staffed by experts to provide technical advice. By the end of 1951, the Mutual Security Agency (MSA) replaced the ECA and it provided a further sum of \$7 million in grant aid for a new economic and technical program with a security aim to deter Communist aggression.⁷

American economic aid did not end there. On 27 October 1950, the World Bank approved a Thai application for

loans totalling 25.4 million dollars for a major hydroelectric power and irrigation scheme, the development of the railways and of the port of Bangkok, including the dredging of the river bar to permit larger vessels to come upstream.⁸ In addition to this substantial loan, the United Nations sponsored several educational, agricultural and public health projects through the UNICEF, FAO, WHO, and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), whose regional offices were in Bangkok.

The United States government could be reckoned ultimately responsible for these arrangements. Its primary objective in providing, both directly and indirectly through the United Nations, economic assistance for Thailand was political, rather than economic. Such consideration was overtly spelled out in the Griffin report. "There is hardly any important economic urgency in Thailand. There is a political urgency."⁹ R. Allen Griffin, head of the survey mission to Thailand and Southeast Asia in April 1950, argued that in order to sustain and reinforce the alignment of the Thai government with the West, it was necessary to produce prompt concrete evidence of US appreciation of its partnership.¹⁰ Another US objective in granting economic aid, as stated by Under Secretary of State James E. Webb, was to strengthen the Pibul regime by presenting "immediate benefits to the rural areas that will reinforce the

peoples' confidence in their government, and place the United States in a position to influence the [Thai] Government in adoption of reform and utilization of its own resources for developments required for internal strength".¹¹

The last but not the least of US-Thai agreements in 1950 was the Military Assistance Agreement signed on 17 October to formalize President Truman's approval since 10 March of military aid for Thailand. In the intervening 7 months, a balanced military assistance program for the training and equipment of the three armed services under the operational guidance of a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) had been jointly prepared by the American embassy in Bangkok and the Melby-Erskine Mission, which had been touring military installations in Thailand in August and September.

At the signing ceremony of the Military Assistance Agreement in Bangkok, Ambassador Stanton made the following statement:

It is my sincere hope that the assistance being extended by the Government of the United States will give the armed forces and people of Thailand a feeling of greater security and engender unity of purpose between the army, the navy, and the air force for the greater good of Thailand. By preserving peace, Thailand's armed forces will not only

insure progress and prosperity for the people of Thailand but will also be making a definite contribution to world peace.¹²

He also felt it necessary to state categorically at the ceremony that the Agreement did not constitute a military alliance, nor had the United States sought military bases from the Thai government. While this statement was intended to counter Communist propaganda, it also served as a reminder to the Thai government that American military aid did not entail a security guarantee.

The primary American objectives in furnishing military assistance to Thailand, as stated in a State Department memorandum, were: "(1) to encourage Thailand to continue on its present political course of alignment with the free world and to remain a stabilizing force in Southeast Asia; (2) to assist the Thai armed forces in improving internal security and, by increased defensive strength, deterring external aggression; (3) to bolster internal political stability and help check Communism by strengthening the Thai Government."¹³ Apart from such diplomatic, military and political aims, the psychological effect such aid would have on the morale of the armed forces and the confidence of the people in general also figured prominently in US thinking. The weak and inefficient state of the Thai armed forces in 1950 could hardly have inspired much confidence among the populace in their ability

to defend the country against outside aggressors. Their weapons were also somewhat obsolete and so heterogeneous, consisting of old Japanese, French, British, American, Czechoslovak, and Swedish equipment, that it became increasingly difficult to obtain ammunition or spare parts. The promise of modern American equipment could not fail to increase American popularity among the Thai military and raise their morale.

Given the above objectives, the United States attempted to control the use of American arms by including a provision in the Agreement that the Thai government would not “without prior consent of the Government of the United States of America devote assistance so furnished to purposes other than those for which it is furnished”.¹⁴ In fact, in the initial stage of drafting of the Agreement it had been proposed by the State Department that a secret unilateral note should also be presented by the American ambassador to the Thai government imposing certain stipulations as regards the correct use of military aid.¹⁵ Reading through the draft of the proposed unilateral note, one has little doubt that the State Department was anxious to prevent three possible undesirable developments: the misuse of American arms and equipment in resolving internal political struggles, the scaling down of Thailand’s defence budget, and the smuggling or export of American military equipment to third countries. To force Thai compliance with these conditions, the United States

was contemplating holding out the threat of stopping military supply.

Although the note in question had never been presented to the Thai Foreign Ministry, it was made abundantly clear to the Thai government through informal channels that American arms were neither to be smuggled to a third country, nor to be used in internal disputes. On 16 June 1950, for example, Stanton requested Pibul to put an end to arms smuggling across the border to the Communist Vietminh. Pibul replied that he was prepared to cooperate and suggested setting up a sub-committee in Thailand's National Defence Council for liaison purposes and the exchange of information with military attachés from American, French and British embassies.¹⁶ In fact, since the recognition of the Bao Dai regime, the Thai government had closed down the Vietminh mission in Bangkok.¹⁷ Now under American pressure, it began to exercise even stricter control over the smuggling of arms and other supplies to the Vietminh.

Particular care was also taken by the United States in formulating a balanced aid program for the army, navy and air force to avoid disturbing the delicate power equilibrium between them. The principle of equal division of military aid was insisted on by Stanton from the outset, and was largely adhered to in Washington until June 1951.¹⁸ Stanton apparently hoped that US military aid would, in conjunction with the Communist

threat, unite the armed forces. But, as we shall see below, the Manhattan Rebellion of 29 June 1951 exposed the fallacy of such a hope and demonstrated that the military leaders were not reluctant to resort to violence in their power struggle. Moreover, notwithstanding Pibul's claim to the contrary, evidence suggests that American arms were used by both sides in the fighting and were a vital factor in deciding the outcome.¹⁹

Under both the Economic and the Military Agreements the Thai government was required to make available a counterpart fund in local currency for US administrative and operating expenditure in connection with the furnishing of American assistance. The local currency which the Thai government undertook to deposit in the "special account" under the Economic Agreement must be equivalent to the dollar value of the furnished commodities and services. Although the Thai government might draw upon this fund for approved development projects, it could only do so from any remaining balance after the administrative and internal transportation expenditure incidental to the furnishing of assistance had been reimbursed. As for the size of this fund relating to military aid, the Agreement did not make a definite stipulation but left the subject open for further negotiation, taking into account the ability of the Thai government to provide such currency. Other provisions in both Agreements included Thai obligations to accord duty

free treatment for US aid materials, diplomatic status for American missions (STEM and MAAG), and a most favoured nation status to the United States regarding Thai exports of materials required by the US.

The signing of these bilateral agreements ushered in a new era of Thai-US relations. The impact of American aid on Thailand was varied and quite far-reaching. First, American influence in Thailand increased considerably. By March 1951, the Special Technical Economic Mission numbered thirty-one, and the Military Aid Advisory Group twenty-four American officials. They spread themselves as advisers, technicians and instructors throughout Thai government departments and the armed services. By means of supervising aid programs, these advisers were able to influence many policies of the Thai government, particularly those on development. Personal friendships were established as were intimate relations between American instructors and Thai military officers. In addition, the staff of the United States embassy grew in strength, numbering in May 1951 thirty-four executive officers including the United States Information Service and Service Attaches.²⁰

Secondly, the Thai government's commitment to expand its defence forces and its contribution to the counterpart fund imposed a heavy strain on its budget. By May 1951, for example, it was reported that 5 million baht had already been spent from

the counterpart fund to meet the administrative and operating expenses of STEM.²¹ Thailand's defence expenditures almost doubled from 360.6 million baht in 1950 to 696.3 million in 1951, and again to 1,199.7 million baht in the following year. It then rose steadily to 1,418.6 million in 1953 and 1,632.6 million baht in 1954.²² American military aid did not encourage a transfer of internal resources from the military to the economic or social sector. On the contrary, it was implicitly understood that Thailand must not scale down its own defence efforts if it was to be qualified for US military aid. This meant that defence spending took a larger and larger proportion of the budget at the expense of other items such as education or economic services. It was fortunate that Thailand enjoyed a period of economic boom with highly inflated prices for its exports, namely rice, tin, and rubber, during the Korean War. But after 1953 the strain of high defence expenditure on the country's economy began to appear.

But perhaps the most far-reaching impact of all was a political one. By and large, US military aid enhanced the political position and capacity of the Thai armed forces to the point that it became an independent source of political strength. The Coup Group was able to consolidate its political supremacy, using modern arms and equipment to suppress and threaten its opponents. By the end of 1951, owing to the political dominance of the military, the passing of a huge defence budget was easy.

The first shipment of American military aid arrived in November 1950. During the following year, shipments of military hardware followed steadily with arms to equip nine army infantry battalions, machine guns to be fitted to training aircraft already in Thai possession, and new coastguard vessels for the navy. Thirty new AT-6 aircraft and six SB2C planes arrived in April 1951 for the air force and the navy's air arm.²³ The amount of arms and equipment given to the Thai armed forces in the US financial years of 1950 and 1951 was worth 9.7 and 44.9 million dollars respectively.²⁴ In addition to vast supplies of arms, the United States established a Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG), headed initially by Colonel W.H. McNaught, to train and reorganize the Thai armed forces. A large school for battalion training cadres was opened in Lopburi in September 1951 to be conducted by US-trained Thai personnel under the supervision of the MAAG Army Training Section.²⁵

The other legally armed group aided by the United States was the police, even though they were not a direct recipient of MAAG equipment. Since his return to power, Pibul had made a conscious effort to build up the police force. Under General Phao, Pibul's trusted aide, the force was welded into a loyal and efficient service. In a British embassy report, the British ambassador noted that much equipment including armoured cars and modern wireless apparatus were bought, some from Britain, for

the police force during 1949. The self-confidence as well as public prestige of the police were raised in a number of ways, such as increased pay, smarter uniforms and an impressive Police Day Parade.²⁶ In late 1950 the government passed a Supplementary Budget Bill to authorize the expenditure of funds from the 1951 budget in advance of the availability of that budget. The bill authorized 48 million baht, 26 million of which were to go to the Police Department. The government also approved a four-year program involving the expenditure of 274 million baht for the expansion of the Police Department.²⁷ As the army was able to obtain modern MAAG military supplies, a certain amount of more obsolete army equipment was released to the police.²⁸ General Phin, the army chief, was also the father-in-law of General Phao, the powerful Deputy Director General of the Police Department, and he apparently did not foresee any harm in the expansion of the police force. Phao's most important source of modern weapons, however, was the Overseas Southeast Asia Supply Company, more familiarly known as Sea Supply. This American company was secretly created by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as a front organization to provide training and equipment for new police paramilitary units.²⁹ As Frank C. Darling observed,

The United States provided the police with their own tanks, artillery, armored cars, air force, naval patrol vessels, and the only training school for paratroopers in the country. By 1954 American assistance enabled Phao to increase the police force to 42,835 men or one policeman for every 407 people. This was one of the highest ratios between policemen and citizens of any country in the world.³⁰

Without doubt between 1950 and 1956 Phao's formidable police force had developed into the strongest rival to the army. In return for CIA assistance, Phao connived at a secret American operation in supplying arms and materials to KMT forces in Yunnan and the Shan State of Burma.³¹

THE KMT, OPIUM AND THE CIA

The role of the Thai government and some of its officials in the supply of arms and materials to the remnant Chinese Nationalist (KMT) troops in Burma is perhaps one of the most controversial issues in the period under study. The affair has been shrouded in much secrecy whilst press reports often contradicted official statements. This section attempts to analyse Thai motivation in this involvement, based partly on some hitherto unused, albeit incomplete, Thai and Western archival sources.

When the Communists came to power in China in

October 1949, they did not immediately establish effective control in the area along the Burmese frontier. Thus, some of the defeated KMT armies in Yunnan retreated to this area to conduct guerrilla warfare. The border was, however, poorly defined and the Burmese government also lacked control in this remote and difficult terrain. By early 1950, large numbers of KMT troops had entered the Kengtung State in Burma and encamped at Tachilek opposite the Thai border district of Mae Sai.³² There, KMT troops were attacked by the Burmese army in July 1950, and were forced to move their headquarters away from the Thai border to Monghsat.³³ In the same month, the Thai government sent a battalion of police to the north ostensibly to be in readiness for any trouble that might be caused by Chinese Nationalist troops,³⁴ and on 30 July, officially closed the border.³⁵ Despite the Thai Foreign Ministry's refusal of permission, the Taiwan embassy in Bangkok also sent its assistant military attaché, Major Wi Sung Yoh, to Mae Sai to organize assistance to wounded KMT soldiers. In November the Taiwan military attaché, Lieutenant Colonel Chen Tsen Hsi, set up a "Chinese Information Office" in Mae Sai, reportedly equipped with a radio transmitter.³⁶ The establishment of this office and its activities which included the smuggling of arms, clothing, medicine, and other materials to KMT troops in Kengtung evoked a formal protest by the Burmese embassy to the Thai government on 9 January 1951. The Burmese

urged action from the Thai government to close down this KMT Information Bureau which they regarded as an unauthorized and illegal military establishment hostile to Burma.³⁷

In reply to the Thai Foreign Ministry's inquiry on the subject, the Taiwan embassy explained that in the light of military developments in south Yunnan, Mae Sai was regarded, from the viewpoint of expediency and the interests of both the Thais and the Chinese Nationalists, as an admirably suitable spot for reconnoitring activities and movements of the Chinese Communist army in the area along the frontiers of China, Burma and Indo-China.³⁸ For this purpose, the Chinese Nationalist military attaché thought it advisable to set up a temporary branch office at Mae Sai District, about which the local authorities had been notified. The Chinese Nationalist chargé d'affaires ended his note by adding that information collected by this office had been regularly forwarded to the Police Department who had also been informed of the Office's activities.³⁹ This reference to the Thai police apparently had more to it than just cooperation on intelligence gathering. A high-level Thai military intelligence source had given information to the American embassy that General Phao's police units, as distinguished from the local police who were not directly under Phao, had connections with the Chinese Nationalists in Kengtung and he implied that Phao's police was conniving with the Chinese Nationalist military

attaché "Office" in handling the shipment of ammunition and supplies to the KMT. He also mentioned that KMT troops were guarding shipments of opium across the border into Thailand.⁴⁰

It is clear at this point that the Thai Foreign Ministry considered the existence of this KMT office on the border a needless provocation of the Chinese People's Government.⁴¹ It asked the Chinese Nationalist embassy to close down its Mae Sai office and recall all personnel to Bangkok as soon as possible.⁴² It was recorded that the Foreign Ministry's action in this matter met the total approval of the Prime Minister. Pibul himself wrote in his capacity as the Defence Minister to the Foreign Minister on 5 February 1951 that

It is now known that some Chinese [Nationalist] military attachés had been engaging in clandestine operations in Chiangrai and had established communication with the Chinese Nationalists in Yunnan and on the Burmese border. In view of the well-known character of the Chinese people that they had the habit of throwing themselves on the side of the victor, it is worthy of note that these Chinese military attachés could well become an important body which will induce Chinese Communist troops into Thailand.⁴³

Pibul's remarks betrayed his basic distrust of the Chinese, Nationalists and Communists alike. It also showed his main concern with national security, particularly in the area along the northern border. In the same Note he also referred to

intelligence reports of major movements of Communist troops in Yunnan, and expressed his dismay at the laxity of Thailand's border patrol, citing a report that some 300 armed Chinese [Nationalist] soldiers had recently crossed the border and come right into Chiangmai without the Thai authorities concerned knowing.⁴⁴

But around the end of that month Pibul seems to have had a second thought about the usefulness of KMT troops. He reportedly suggested in the meeting of the National Defence Council that these Chinese Nationalist troops were Thailand's front line of defence and that he thought they should be supported clandestinely. He stated that if it was intended to assist them with troops, of which the Commanding General Li Mi was running short, or other supplies Thailand should contribute its share in whatever way possible. He also wanted to know what British and American intentions were.⁴⁵ On 14 March, the Cabinet approved the Defence Council's recommendations that the Foreign Ministry confirm to the Taiwan embassy that its Mae Sai office had to be closed down because its activity was a violation of Thailand's sovereignty and inimical to Thai relations with Burma. Significantly, the Foreign Ministry was also authorized to ascertain United States views and policies towards the Chinese Nationalists in Thailand and what Thailand should do in this particular matter.⁴⁶ Records could not be found,

however, what exactly Ambassador Stanton told the Thai Foreign Minister who then reported verbally to Pibul.

Nevertheless, from a record of Stanton's conversation on 4 April 1951 with Richard Whittington, the British chargé d'affaires, it appears that he had told the Prime Minister a week previously that American concern all along had been to do whatever might be possible to expedite the departure of the Chinese Nationalist troops who had settled in the Shan State of Kengtung. Stanton had stressed to Pibul the danger of supporting these troops in any way, and emphasized that he had repeatedly urged the Taiwan chargé d'affaires to impress upon his government and General Li Mi, the KMT troop Commander, the serious consequences which would almost inevitably arise from the continued presence of KMT troops on Burmese soil. But Stanton also told Whittington that as regards the support of Chinese Nationalist guerrilla forces operating within China, he personally did not see eye to eye with the British government on this point.⁴⁷ One is not sure whether Stanton had by this time been apprised of the CIA's secret collusion with the government in Taiwan. But it could be deduced from his final remark that the American ambassador had drawn a distinction between the presence of KMT troops in Burma and their presence in Yunnan, and that he may have harboured some hope that the KMT guerrillas could serve a useful purpose as an effective anti-Communist force inside China.

This he may also have discreetly let the Thai government know. Given Stanton's attitude, it is thus possible that Pibul's idea of using the Chinese Nationalist guerrilla forces located between Thailand's northern frontier and the Chinese Communist forces as a buffer was not strongly opposed, and perhaps even mildly encouraged, by the US embassy. The buffer concept was and has always been an important element in Thailand's security policy. In view of the removal of the British military presence from Burma after it regained independence, and the relative weakness of the Burmese government in controlling its territory and defending its border against possible Chinese Communist invasion, Pibul and the Thai military clearly believed that it was in Thailand's security interest to promote KMT troops as a buffer force. This policy was conceived apparently after Pibul had been informed of American clandestine assistance given to the KMT, which meant that the KMT would have a greater chance of success in performing this function. In addition, assistance to the KMT would give Thailand a further opportunity to prove its usefulness as an American anti-Communist partner.

As it transpired, according to the government of Burma, the KMT launched their offensives against the Chinese Communists in Yunnan in early May and again in July 1951. However, both times they were driven back by the Communist army.⁴⁸ In these operations, the KMT had been given active

assistance and fresh supplies by the CIA.⁴⁹ Apparently the United States government, motivated by its desire to “block further Communist expansion in Asia”, hoped to use the remnant Nationalist forces to destabilize Communist China and to set up in Yunnan a defensive line along the Burma-China border.⁵⁰ Robert H. Taylor argued that officials in different organs of the United States government perceived the utility of the KMT from different perspectives. While President Truman and perhaps the State Department appear to have seen the KMT as a useful force to “block Chinese Communist aggression”, the CIA seems to have wanted to use the KMT primarily as a force to harass the Peking government into invading Burma so as to force Burma to turn to the United States for protection.⁵¹

If that was indeed the case, the CIA-State Department split seems to have had its parallel in Thailand. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs seems to have stuck faithfully to the official policy as initiated in the National Defence Council and approved by the Cabinet. General Phao and his police, however, seem to have had other motives in assisting the KMT. As noted above, Phao had a personal interest in securing from the CIA a constant supply of modern arms for his police force. In addition, he appears to have had financial interests derived from the profitable opium business he had secretly entered into with KMT General Li Mi. By building up a monopoly on opium exports from Shan States,

Phao was able to expand his clique funds and tip the balance of political power in his favour. In turn, his enormous power allowed him to carry out his illegal trade almost regardless of changes in government policy.

On 7 May 1951, John M. Farrior, American vice-consul in Chiangmai reported to the embassy in Bangkok his conversation at the end of March with Dr. Richard Buker, an American missionary in Chiangmai who had formerly been in Burma. According to Buker, two American army observers had been seen by his informants, one at Mong Pawk and the other at Monghsat, the KMT headquarters. Buker stated that the principal avenue of Nationalist supplies was from Bangkok, through Chiangmai, Muang Fang, and across the border to Monghsat. This information was corroborated by information from Farrior's other contacts. Buker further elaborated that supplies which the Nationalists obtained through Thailand included weapons, ammunition, medicines and petroleum products which were paid for with opium.⁵² The Burmese ambassador to Thailand, U Hla Maung, also believed that General Phao had facilitated the transportation of these supplies from Thailand and that he had been paid off in opium which the KMT had acquired in Kengtung.⁵³

Other evidence consistently reported by American embassy intelligence at the time confirmed this view. For example, according to a usually reliable and well-informed Chinese source

as reported by Robert Anderson, assistant attaché of American embassy in Bangkok, the opium, once it reached the Thai border near Muang Fang, was escorted by the Thai police to Chiangmai. Up until September 1951, the opium was then brought directly to Bangkok by train and/or plane. But as it was rapidly becoming public knowledge that illicit opium had entered Bangkok in large quantities under the auspices of the police, a different system was adopted. The opium was flown in one or two ton lots direct from Chiangmai to Prachuab, Songkhla and other places on the southern Thai coast where it was dropped into the sea and then picked up by the Thai police or their agents. In return for opium, Phao facilitated the supply of arms and ammunition which were air dropped near Monghsat and Mong Hang by two Thai police-controlled aircraft based at Lopburi and flown by Americans.⁵⁴

Police involvement with illicit opium trafficking dovetailed with their plan to assume control of the navy's coastguard functions. In taking over coastal patrol duties from the navy, the police would be able to close the last link in a completely controlled channel for opium smuggling from the Burmese Shan States through Thailand and out to the open sea.⁵⁵ This plan had first been proposed in November 1950, and had been much resented by the navy. The quarrel between the police and the navy had then threatened to escalate into a major

crisis and upset the government's stability until Pibul found a compromise solution. He decided that the navy would continue its responsibility for anti-smuggling out at sea while the police were to be equipped to patrol the shallow coastal waters. This seems to have momentarily averted the crisis but the seeds of naval discontent had unmistakably been sown.

Pibul's problem was not limited to rivalries within the armed services. By the end of 1950, he seems to have had some difficulty in asserting his control over the Assembly. Although he successfully outmanoeuvred the opposition Democrat Party's attempt to demand a general Parliamentary debate on the government's record in November, he encountered a very hostile and critical Senate. It voted down the government's proposed Supplementary Budget Bill, which authorized advance funds for the police, as well as four other bills during November and December. According to the Constitution, a financial bill could be passed over the Senate veto by an absolute majority of the House, but other non-financial bills such as the Rent Control Bill had to be held in abeyance for a year. This evidently annoyed some members of the government who called in vain for an amendment in the Constitution.⁵⁶

Closely connected with the Senate's repeated rebuffs of the Government-controlled House, was the reconstitution of the Senate. On 17 November 1950, one half of the membership of the

Senate was retired in accordance with the Constitution which provided that the Senate would be composed of 100 members appointed for six-year terms, so staggered that half would retire every three years. Following the retirement of 50 Senators by lot, the Regent, Prince Dhani Nivat, reappointed 35 of the retired Senators, including a number of the most vocal of the government's opponents. According to the Constitution, appointments to the Senate were made by the King or Regent and were countersigned by the Chairman of the Privy Council, not the Prime Minister. It is clear that Pibul was not consulted by the Regent. On the other hand, because of their better relations with the Regent and Privy Council, and because of the general similarity in their ideas, the conservative Democrats, through the Regent and the Chairman of the Privy Council, could control the composition of the Senate and use it as a tool to embarrass and impede the government in its chosen policies.⁵⁷

OPPOSITION TO PIBUL'S FOREIGN POLICY

Though they were in bitter opposition on many issues, the government and its parliamentary opponents appeared to have almost identical views on foreign policy in 1950. There was no substantive criticism of the government's decision to send troops to Korea, although some opposition party leaders

voiced reservations on timing. Seni Pramoj, the deputy leader of the Democrat Party, expressed his private concern that the government had acted too soon and should have waited until the situation was clearer before committing itself.⁵⁸ But he and his party leader, Khuang, fully agreed with the policy of supporting the United Nations and close cooperation with the United States and other Western nations.⁵⁹

When the government presented the Thai-US military aid agreement to Parliament for its information, both Houses voiced little objection. The main criticism was centred on the government's method of handling it rather than on the issue. Some Senators claimed that the agreement should have been presented prior to the signing on the ground that it required future financial actions by Parliament.⁶⁰

A critic of Pibul's policy appeared to exist within his own Cabinet. Thep Chotinuchit, an Isan MP and the Deputy Minister of Commerce, was reported in January 1951 to have criticized the government's foreign policy in the full cabinet meeting and advocated a policy of non-alliance.⁶¹ He was strongly reprimanded by Pibul and, in order to head off a sacking, moved to strengthen his political base in Parliament by organizing a new party, called the People's Party.

Public criticism of Pibul's foreign policy came from other sources. On 30 October 1950, the *Mahachon* newspaper published a

manifesto of the Thai Communist Party, denouncing vitriolically the newly-signed Thai-US military aid agreement, and calling for a “Common National Democratic Front” of labourers, farmers, students, soldiers, officials, businessmen and other patriots. The manifesto also made reference to the success of the Stockholm Peace petition campaign, giving the number of people who had already “signed for peace” throughout the world as over 500 million!⁶² The 4 November issue of the magazine *Politics Weekly* inaugurated this campaign in Thailand, and enclosed in all copies a detachable petition with space for thirty signatures. By early December, it claimed that 34,315 signatures had been received.⁶³

The US-Thai Military Assistance Agreement also provoked hostile reactions in Peking. While previous infrequent Peking broadcasts had criticized the Thai government somewhat indirectly for its alleged oppression of overseas Chinese, on 21 November a Peking Radio broadcast opened a vigorous and direct attack on the Thai government, charging that “America is turning Thailand into an advanced base for aggression against Vietnam and China” and that “the Fascist Luang Pibul Songgram regime has become the lackey of Wall Street in order to get cash and arms from the US”.⁶⁴ It also referred to the contents of the Thai Communist Party manifesto of 30 October. To this attack Pibul retorted sharply that the Chinese Communists, blinded and embittered by their own sad experience with Russian

aggression in China, could not conceive of aid as anything but an instrument of aggression.⁶⁵

In response to the Peace campaign, the Thai government intensified its counter-Communist propaganda. An anti-Communist, “Democratic Peace Movement” under the auspices of Phra Thepwethi the Buddhist Abbot of Wat Sam Phya in Bangkok, was launched on New Year’s day 1951.⁶⁶ Copies of the anti-Communist peace petition form were circulated by several hundred samlor (pedicab) drivers. This campaign was managed and masterminded by the Allied Freedom League under the leadership of Pibul’s long-time special propaganda agent, Sang Pathanothai, who also held the official post of Secretary General of the Thai Labour Union. Sang worked closely with the US Information Service (USIS) in producing anti-Communist posters and pamphlets of all kinds. His Allied Freedom League was an independent organization and drew its funds from extra-official sources, such as outright gifts from Pibul and Coup Group members.⁶⁷ The government also set up an official committee to engage in counter-Communist propaganda under the chairmanship of General Phin. This committee was also assisted by USIS in producing pamphlets and preparing anti-Communist motion pictures.⁶⁸

The government also took strong measures against the left-wing press. The editor and managing editor of the Chinese

Communist paper *Chuan Min Pao* were arrested on 30 January 1951, and almost immediately served with a deportation warrant. As for Thai journalists, the government had to resort to a different strategy. The Constitution gave every Thai the right to demand a trial. It also prohibited the government from conducting censorship before publication. One government tactic was to authorize the police to confiscate from newsstands literature said to be violating the Press Act. Other methods were to bully or to offer financial or other inducements as a means to discourage editors from publishing pro-Communist material. These methods were applied in different cases during December and January to *Mahachon*, *Siang Thai*, *Politics Weekly* (Kan Muang), and *Puer Santiphap*.⁶⁹

But in late 1950 and early 1951 opposition to Pibul appeared to be growing. Pibul himself fully acknowledged his political difficulties. During a private conversation with Ambassador Stanton, he categorized his political opponents in four major groups.⁷⁰ The first he described as the royalist group which he said was headed by Prince Phanuphan Yukol, who used his paper *Prachatipathai* to attack and ridicule the government. He listed Khuang, the opposition leader and the Democrat-dominated Senate in this group. The second group was said to be composed of former Free Thai members, in conjunction with certain elements in the navy. The third group he described as

Thai “pink” intellectuals who were trying to stir up students, particularly the students at Thammasat University. The final group, according to Pibul, was the Chinese Communists. He emphasized that these four anti-government groups were sources of real danger to his government. In reply, Stanton tried to encourage Pibul to reach an understanding with such political groups as the Democrats and conservative elements of the Free Thai in order to have their support rather than their active opposition.⁷¹ These groups appeared to Stanton to have the same pro-American foreign policy outlook as the government. From the US viewpoint, their cooperation would be a logical and desirable development. However, American hopes that anti-Communist groups in Thailand could unite and form an effective democratic government were cruelly dashed by successive events which transpired between June 1951 and the end of that year.

THE MANHATTAN REBELLION

On 29 June 1951, a group of less than a dozen naval officers, the most senior being a Captain, kidnapped the Prime Minister from a ceremony in the Chaophraya river held to mark the official transfer of a dredger, the “Manhattan”, by the American ECA to the Thai government. The kidnappers then held Pibul as

a hostage on board the navy's flagship "Sri Ayudhya", moored in the heart of Bangkok, in an attempt to force negotiations leading to a reorganization of the government.

Evidently the kidnappers hoped that with the capture of Pibul the government would fall to pieces, that the army and police would not strike back for fear of harming him, and that other opposition elements would join them in the rebellion. They thought that without Pibul at the helm, Generals Phin, Phao, and Sarit would be powerless and forced to negotiate. This turned out to be a disastrous miscalculation. It soon emerged that the government would go ahead with or without Pibul. The air force chief, Air Marshal Fuen Ronapakat Rithakani, even boldly suggested the government had taken into consideration the possibility that Pibul might be killed and had found the consequences not unnerving. He issued a radio communique asking the Prime Minister to sacrifice himself for the nation.⁷² The government knew that Pibul was aboard the "Sri Ayudhya", but nonetheless the ship was shelled by artillery and bombed by planes. Pibul himself only escaped with his life by swimming ashore when the ship caught fire. Many people used this fact as evidence of Pibul's expendability. Perhaps the Coup Group leaders had no compunction in seeing Pibul killed. But Pibul survived and thereby dimmed their chance of succession.

Although Pibul emerged from the fighting unscathed

and was put back in office, his position was considerably weakened. Before the coup, Pibul's strength had been based on his ability to maintain a balance between rival military factions, and between the military on the one hand and civilian political factions in Parliament on the other. He had also relied heavily on his personal control over foreign affairs and his great personal prestige throughout the country. The navy-army rivalry dated back to 1933, when the navy adopted an ambivalent neutral position during the Bovoradet Rebellion. But the army's resentment of the navy was severely aggravated in 1944, when the navy cooperated with Pridi and the Free Thai in ousting Pibul and the army from power. After the November 1947 coup d'état, the navy was jealous of the army's revived dominance and played an ambiguous role during the Grand Palace Rebellion in February 1949. However, Pibul managed to establish a *modus vivendi* with the naval commander, Admiral Sindhu, and thus maintained the navy as an additional counterpoise against the growing power of the 1947 Coup Group. After the suppression of the Manhattan Rebellion, Pibul reportedly recommended a policy of leniency toward the navy.⁷³ But such a suggestion was brushed aside by Generals Phin, Phao, and Sarit. General Phao, for example, thought that a big mistake had been made in February 1949 in not seizing the opportunity to liquidate the marines and reduce the navy to impotence.⁷⁴

Having quelled the rebellion, the Phin-Phao clique set about destroying the navy both as a fighting force and as a political power. The Police Department brought charges of treason against 112 persons, 78 of whom were navy personnel, including 8 Admirals who constituted the core of the naval high command. By the end of September, 39 of them were released for lack of evidence, but among 73 indicted by the Prosecution Department were 5 Admirals, including the now-retired naval chief, Admiral Sindhu.⁷⁵ Ironically, the junior naval officers who set in motion the whole crisis managed to escape to neighbouring countries, leaving their superiors to face the consequences of their actions. With its commanders in jail or cashiered, the navy's air arm in the hands of the air force, the marines reduced from five battalions to one, with coast guard duties rapidly being appropriated by the police, and the control of eastern provinces taken over by the army, the navy's power and influence were drastically reduced. Henceforth, the navy was to be strictly confined to genuine maritime activity, and to remain distinctly limited even in that sphere.⁷⁶

Another shift in the balance was a result of the active participation of the air force in the suppression of the rebellion. Hitherto, the air force had generally maintained neutrality in internal political quarrels. While various persons in the air force had adopted a special political posture from time to time, never

before had flying units taken part in the violent stage of a political coup. Partly because of this, and partly because the air force in the past had not been a military force of much significance, and partly because the seat of air force power was at Don Muang, some 15 miles from Bangkok, contenders in previous coups had been able to rely on the non-participation if not the benevolent neutrality of the air force. The Manhattan affair provided a striking departure from this practice.

For one thing, the receipt of US training and modern combat planes had considerably increased the capability of the air force. In the words of a US State Department official, commenting on the role of the Royal Thai Air Force in the coup, "United States military aid has been responsible for turning that fluttering pigeon covey into an effective border patrol unit".⁷⁷ In addition, the air force chief, Marshal Fuen, was spurred into action by being named by the rebels in their radio broadcast as one of the five persons they intended to dispose of.⁷⁸ The rebels may have hoped to split the air force by naming Fuen's rival, Air Marshal Luang Thewarit Panluk, as the new commander-in-chief, but it had a disastrous effect. Angered and perhaps frightened by his inclusion in the black list, Marshal Fuen's reaction was instinctively belligerent. Accordingly, the air force displayed its power by bombing ships in the river, the naval dockyard and the Naval Signal Department.⁷⁹

Another consequence of the failed coup was the rise of the commander of the powerful, Bangkok-based First Army, Lieutenant General Sarit Thanarat, who was later to become the successor of Pibul as Prime Minister. During the coup, his troops played a more important part in the suppression than the police, and he managed to obtain most of the credit for the performance of the army. The event also offered Sarit an opportunity to mobilize behind him the support of the majority of the army. As a result, he emerged as a potential challenger to the incumbent army chief, General Phin, and his clique.

But the Phin-Phao clique quickly moved to strengthen their extensive power. General Phao simply promoted himself to the powerful post of Director General of the Police Department. Both he and Phin were in a really strong position to replace Pibul, if they wished to do so. But Pibul was allowed to resume the prime ministership. This was due as much to Pibul's great national standing as to American support. The Phin-Phao clique feared that the deposition of Pibul would lead to the cessation of American aid. In a sense, Pibul's position depended partly on the fact that he appeared to the military as being a US favourite and the United States his backer.⁸⁰ Pibul himself, in an effort to maintain the flow of American aid, tried to prove to his Western friends that the coup was in fact communist-inspired.⁸¹ It is in such a domestic context that Pibul's foreign policy can be correctly understood.

The American embassy in Bangkok also considered the retention of Pibul as head of the Thai government essential to US interests in Thailand. It was ill disposed toward the Phin-Phao clique because it considered the latter's unpopularity to be a political liability to the pro-American Pibul government. In one embassy report, it was suggested that the United States would be well advised to exert some influence to shore up Pibul's position vis-à-vis the Phin-Phao clique such as the channelling of all business through the Prime Minister, rather than bypassing him to deal directly with the 1947 Coup Group leaders such as General Phao.⁸² It was even suggested that the US could indirectly let it be known that any step taken by the Coup Group which would reduce Pibul's influence would be received with disfavour.⁸³ But it should also be stressed that American diplomats and intelligence officers did not necessarily see eye to eye in all matters.

Apparently, General Phao and his police force were not particularly worried about such attitudes of the US embassy in Bangkok. Phao, as distinct from other Coup Group leaders, seems to have had external sources of support elsewhere in the United States. On 7 September 1951, for example, he cut short his European tour and flew to the United States for an unplanned ten-day visit. Phao was reported to have spent only 10 hours in Washington during which he met J. Edgar Hoover and General

Collins, US Army Chief of Staff. The remaining nine days were spent in New York. The American embassy staff in Bangkok were kept in the dark about the purpose of Phao's visit to New York. In fact, they had no prior knowledge of any arrangements for Phao's visit to the United States. Even Phao's American visa was obtained in Paris. They could only speculate that "probably the General had to contact persons in New York relative to matters bearing on his political and financial fortunes in Thailand".⁸⁴

THE KMT PROBLEM IN THAI-BURMESE RELATIONS

Meanwhile Thailand's relations with Burma continued to deteriorate. Since independence, Burma had been preoccupied with suppression of no less than four groups of armed rebels inside the country. The introduction of well-armed and growing KMT forces posed a real danger to its stability. In April 1951, the Burmese ambassador in Bangkok was instructed to inform the Thai government that the Chinese Nationalist troops in Kengtung had been receiving arms, ammunition, medical stores and new recruitment through Thailand.⁸⁵ On 7 May, the Burmese Foreign Minister, Sao Hkun Hkio, arranged a meeting with the Thai chargé d'affaires in Rangoon, M.L. Peekthip Malakul, and requested Thai government cooperation in preventing arms smuggling to Kengtung.⁸⁶ Peekthip himself returned to

Bangkok to report the situation personally to Nai Worakan Bancha, the Thai Foreign Minister. As a gesture of cooperation, the Thai government closed the Thai-Burma border to all alien nationals on 14 June 1951, but the Burmese government felt that the gun-running across the border did not decrease.

By September 1951, the government of Burma was planning to bring the matter before the UN General Assembly. It was dissuaded from doing so by the American ambassador in Rangoon, David McK. Key, who proposed using US good offices first. The Burmese government presented two major requests for US assistance. First, it wished the American and the British to appeal jointly to the Thai government to refuse airport facilities in Thailand to any planes that smuggled arms and supplies to KMT troops in Burma. Secondly, it requested US assistance in persuading Taipei to instruct Li Mi to return to Taiwan, and order KMT troops to leave Burma or surrender to the Burmese authorities.⁸⁷

On 1 October 1951, the British ambassador and American chargé d'affaires in Bangkok made a joint representation to the Thai government, referring to reports of arms traffic through and from Thailand to KMT troops, and possible action by Burma in the United Nations. They made no protest but requested the Thai government to investigate and take steps to prevent the further flow of arms to KMT troops in Burma.⁸⁸ Their joint démarche

was purely pro-forma and intended to mollify Burma and India, and to keep the subject away from the United Nations.⁸⁹

After the joint Anglo-American representation, there was a major inter-departmental conflict within the Thai government. The Foreign Ministry seemed to be genuinely concerned over possible international repercussions as the Burmese government threatened to bring the matter before the UN. It was particularly concerned that there might be embarrassing revelations which would damage the reputation of Thailand and the Western camp in the eyes of other Asian nations. Thus, the Foreign Minister sent a strong letter on 9 October to the Prime Minister protesting over the lack of cooperation from the Ministry of Interior, particularly the police, who seemed to have held back all information. He emphasized that the Foreign Ministry needed to know all the facts to defend Thailand's case successfully in the United Nations, should need arise.⁹⁰

In his note of acknowledgement, Pibul suggested the inquiry be put directly to the police chief, General Phao, who he said was best informed on the subject, and that the urgent termination of these activities be raised verbally at a meeting of the Central Security Committee.⁹¹ Clearly only few people in the Cabinet, apart from Pibul and Phao, knew the full extent of Phao's secret involvement in arms smuggling and the opium trade with KMT troops. On 18 October, Phao sent a rather

curt reply to the enquiry from the Foreign Ministry. He stated that according to police investigations there had been no arms assistance from Thai territory, and the police authorities had already been vigorously suppressing any illegal arms smuggling in every area.⁹² This reply was deemed totally unsatisfactory by the Foreign Ministry which still demanded through the Prime Minister all the facts on the ground that the Foreign Ministry had the responsibility to provide answers to any queries from foreign governments. In addition, the Foreign Ministry pointed out, the British and United States governments seemed to have already given up hope of General Li Mi's military success in Yunnan.⁹³

To solve this problem, a compromise solution was found. On 13 November 1951, the National Defence Council recommended to the Cabinet that the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs jointly investigate and collect all the facts in the subject. It was to be classified top secret, and to be known only to the Prime Minister, the Interior Minister, the Foreign Minister, and Prince Wan Waithayakon, who was then the Thai ambassador to the United States.⁹⁴ The Council also passed an important decision stringently prohibiting any supplies of arms to KMT troops in Burma.⁹⁵ Evidently referring to this decision, Pibul told the British ambassador in February 1952 that no supplies had gone through or over Thailand to the KMT "for three months".⁹⁶ But by now it was estimated that the total number of

the KMT in Burma had increased from the original 2000 to 12,000, and supplies could be flown directly by planes from Taiwan to an airfield at Monghsat.⁹⁷ Moreover, General Phao by no means ceased his elaborate opium trade with the KMT.

It is clear that the Thai Foreign Ministry had some misgivings all along regarding the KMT questions. It also came under strong Burmese diplomatic pressure to terminate such arms traffic. Pibul too may have eventually realized that it was no longer to Thailand's advantage to permit clandestine arms supply through Thailand to KMT forces. But the person with real responsibility and power to enforce the top policy decision was General Phao, in capacity of Chief of Police and Deputy Minister of Interior. The case illustrated that in matters concerning Thailand's neighbours, the execution of a foreign policy decision was not in the hands of the Foreign Ministry but the Ministry of Interior. Given Phao's position in the ruling clique and his police backing, he was powerful enough to act independently of such a government decision in favour of his own personal benefit in the opium business and in regard to CIA-supplied arms.

COMPLETE MILITARY RULE

The subject of opium-smuggling was one of the issues raised by the Senators in their stinging attacks on the government

in November 1951. The Senate severely criticized the military leadership for its severity in the suppression of the Manhattan Rebellion and the subsequent emasculation of the navy. Several Senators spoke of opium-smuggling by persons in high office, of large-scale corruption, and of interference in affairs of state by “armed men”; and some came to naming names.⁹⁸ Although allegations of criminality in the government were common, they had not hitherto been made in such outspoken terms by public figures. Such fulmination was, to the government, all the more disconcerting because of the imminent permanent return from Europe of the young King Bhumibol Adulyadej, and of new Parliamentary elections scheduled in February 1952, which offered the royalist opposition an effective rallying point and an electoral campaign in which to express itself. The royalist challenge to military control in fact had already come to light in October, when the Senate had made an unsuccessful attempt to amend electoral rules to prohibit serving soldiers from voting en bloc in the districts where they were garrisoned rather than individually in their home districts. This attempt was to prevent certain military districts in Bangkok and other provinces, such as Lopburi, becoming safe seats for government candidates because army garrisons had been used in the past by the Coup Group to fill the ballot boxes as instructed.

On 29 November just two days before the King’s arrival

(in fact, by then the “M.V. Meonia” which carried him back had already entered the Gulf of Thailand and come under the escort of the Thai navy), a series of radio broadcast announced a coup de main by a junta of nine top serving officers of the three Thai armed forces forming a Provisional Executive Committee.⁹⁹ General Phao was not in the Committee but was appointed as “the preserver of the peace”. It was claimed that the former government had been unable to cope with the problem of communism, which had infiltrated even into the Cabinet and Parliament, and that it was impossible under the 1949 Constitution to pass an anti-Communist law. The real objectives of the coup were the replacement of the 1949 Constitution by that of 1932 with its half-appointed single chamber, and the elimination not only of the voice of opposition but of those political personalities who supported the previous government but were not “Coup Group” men. Its timing was to present the King on his arrival on the morning of 2 December with a fait accompli, and to prevent the royalists from using the King and the 1949 Constitution to form a strong opposition. The outcome of this “Radio Coup” was simply the political entrenchment of the Coup Group. Although many observers viewed the coup as a setback to the development of democracy in Thailand, all foreign missions in Bangkok accepted the fait accompli and resumed formal relations with the Thai government by the end of

December. There were three bases on which the decision of the State Department rested: the continuation of the King as the chief of state, the authoritarian nature of every Thai government whether under absolute monarchy or since 1932, and the anti-Communist stand of the ruling group. In fact, it was expected that the new government would soon enact an anti-Communist legislation.¹⁰⁰

Pibul's role in the coup is a subject of considerable debate. Although he soon returned to office, his name did not figure in the list of nine officers in the Provisional Executive Committee headed by General Phin. There are two opposing theories regarding Pibul's role. One sees the coup as an attempt, despite Pibul's opposition, by the 1947 Coup Group to impose its political control. The other argues that it was a devious plot by Pibul to abolish the Senate and to appear innocent in the execution.¹⁰¹ Pibul's close confidante, Sang Pathanothai, gave a long and elaborate account of the 29 November coup to N.B. Hannah, second secretary of the American embassy, and fostered the impression that Pibul initially opposed the coup, only to accept the prime ministership after long and emotional entreaties by the members of the Provisional Executive Committee.¹⁰² One is tempted to view Sang's motives with scepticism. Yet it is very likely that Pibul at first opposed the dissolution of Parliament because he was reluctant to become entirely dependent

on the Coup Group and be reduced to a mere figurehead. As he was powerless to stop the coup and was presented with a fait accompli, he then decided to make the most of the fact that he was still considered the indispensable leader to the Coup Group. For one thing, the junta saw in him the one man who could negotiate with Washington for the arms and financial assistance which brought them strength and benefits. For another thing, despite the outward and ostensible friendship and cooperation in usurping power and eliminating their common political opponents, neither Phao nor Sarit was prepared to serve under the other as prime minister. Thanks to this rivalry, Pibul remained the obvious compromise choice for the post. These were the reasons for his being named a few hours after the coup as prime minister of the provisional cabinet.

That Cabinet was composed predominantly of Pibul's old wartime cronies and lasted just a few days. It was replaced by another much larger Cabinet on 8 December, when the King's delayed approval of the 1932 Constitution and the appointment of the Prime Minister had been secured.¹⁰³ The Constitution no longer forbade government officials, including armed forces officers, from holding Cabinet posts or parliamentary seats. Indeed, military rank now seemed to be almost an essential qualification. The new Cabinet epitomized the extent of military dominance. Nineteen of the twenty-five Cabinet

members were either retired or active military officers while civilians were allowed to occupy the remaining six posts. The Phin-Phao faction was particularly conspicuous in this Cabinet with Phin becoming Deputy Prime Minister, and four members of his clique entering the Cabinet, as Deputy Ministers of Interior, Communications, Economic Affairs, and Agriculture.¹⁰⁴ Sarit was also given a Cabinet portfolio for the first time as Deputy Minister of Defence while Pibul himself retained the Defence portfolio in addition to the prime ministership. The appointment of Sarit as his deputy at the Ministry of Defence indicated Pibul's intention to use Sarit as a counterbalance to the growing power of the Phin-Phao clique.

Phao and Sarit were men of the same generation, younger than that of Pibul, Phin, and Fuen. In contrast to Phin and Fuen, both Phao and Sarit were of the ambitious type and thus emerged as main rival contenders to succeed Pibul. Their intense rivalry extended to all fields, military, political as well as economic. Press reports and public speculation about the imminent clash between the Director General of Police and the Commander of the First Army had been so widespread in September before the Radio Coup that Sarit had been impelled to vigorously deny the stories of dissension between him and the Police Chief.¹⁰⁵ Apparently they had managed to put aside temporarily their differences and strike up a *modus vivendi* in cooperating to eliminate existing

constitutional limitations to their power and the “obstructive” legislature.

The elimination of opposition in Parliament was indeed the main objective of the Radio Coup. Following the dissolution of the Assembly, the Coup Group promptly appointed its supporters as the 123 members of the new parliament. The 123 appointed members were empowered to act as a full legislative assembly until new elections could be held in three months. From 29 November 1951 to 26 February 1952, therefore, the Coup Group not only controlled the government and the armed forces, but almost was itself the legislative body. After the general election, the Coup Group would be able to rely on this appointed half of Parliament plus some government-sponsored elected members to ensure a virtually permanent majority in the Assembly.

The manner and speed at which the Constitution and a series of bills were pushed through the pre-election Assembly confirmed the intention of the leaders of the Radio Coup to tighten their hold. On 25 February 1952, the day before the elections, the Assembly passed the slightly-amended Constitution in its third and final reading. Then the King was reportedly forced to sign and promulgate the Constitution before the opening session of the reconstituted Assembly on 8 March.¹⁰⁶ The newly-elected members had been allowed no opportunity to take part in considering or passing judgement on

the Constitution. Of those bills which had been passed before the reconstitution of the Assembly, the Emergency Powers Bill was the most important. This bill was introduced and rushed through its three readings in the two final days of the appointed Assembly. It authorized the government in times of emergency to carry out such measures as censorship, curfew, unrestricted right of search, banning all public and private meetings, restricting areas where aliens might reside and so on.¹⁰⁷ These measures could be put into force after a state of emergency had been declared by the Council of Ministers. Even then, the military leaders inserted an insurance clause stipulating that at such time as the military decided to declare martial law, all powers granted to the government under this bill were automatically suspended.¹⁰⁸

The elections which took place on 26 February 1952 were characterized by little public interest. The leaders of the Democrats, Khuang Aphaiwong and Seni Pramoj, had withdrawn their candidacies and advised their friends and supporters to do the same. They even went to the extent of publicly advising the people not to vote in this election which they regarded as a travesty on democracy. Only 22 percent of the electorate turned out to vote in Bangkok, the traditional stronghold of the Democrat Party. A substantial proportion of this turnout was accounted for by Dusit and Bangkheng districts, where the army garrison and air force barracks were located. Platoons of soldiers were

transported in trucks to polling stations to vote en bloc for government candidates. As a result, the government bloc won all 6 seats in Bangkok.¹⁰⁹ As for the overall result, the government claimed to have won about 85 of the 123 seats.¹¹⁰ There was no question about the Coup Group's absolute control of the legislature. Pibul once again emerged to head a new government on 24 March, when he was unanimously chosen by the Assembly as Prime Minister.

There appears, however, to have been considerable behind-the-scene manoeuvring, and Pibul played his hand like a master politician. He apparently decided to use the threat of resignation to obtain as many concessions as possible from the Coup Group leaders when they asked him to resume office. His mouthpiece, the English language newspaper, *Bangkok Tribune*, continually voiced the threat of resignation and indirectly stated his propositions to the Coup Group. On 7 March, it published an exclusive interview with Pibul who stated that he was seriously considering resigning the prime ministership, but might accept the presidency of the Assembly. On 11 March, his Foreign Minister, Warakan Bancha, was quoted in the *Bangkok Tribune* as saying that it would be most suitable for Pibul to accept the prime ministership as he enjoyed the confidence of foreign countries. The *Bangkok Tribune* editorial of 14 March reiterated this point by stating that "Anyone can be Premier. But not everyone can

possibly possess confidence from foreign governments. Therefore, recognition by foreign governments of Thailand's government is the main factor in choosing Thailand's next Premier."¹¹¹ It is clear that Pibul attempted to use external support to bolster his position vis-à-vis the internal power balance and the public. But the decisive factor must have been the inability within the Coup Group itself to find an acceptable replacement of Pibul as head of the government.¹¹²

The new Cabinet that was announced on 28 March 1952 contained few changes. The notable change was the appointment of Prince Wan Waithayakon, who had served as the Thai ambassador to the United States since 1947, as the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. Prince Wan had been Pibul's foreign affairs adviser since pre-war years and had, during his tour of duty in Washington, been instrumental in fostering the Thai-American alignment. There was perhaps no better way to reaffirm to the United States the new government's foreign policy commitment than his appointment to the post of Foreign Minister.¹¹³

Phao now became active in organizing a pro-government parliamentary group in the form of the "Legislative Study Commission" although political parties *per se* were still illegal. He made numerous overtures to former Pridi-ites such as Tiang Sirikhan, prominent Chinese businessmen, and even some left-wing elements whom he thought he could use for political

and economic purposes. According to Tiang, Phao even supported Tiang's candidates in the election in the northeast where they had an excellent chance of winning against candidates supported by his opponents within the Coup Group.¹¹⁴ As a result of this political deal, Tiang claimed to have increased the size of his group in the Assembly from about 12 to nearly 25, and they cast their vote of confidence for the government on 4 April. Economically, Phao continued to expand his control over banking, construction, gold trading, rice export, liquor manufacturing and other fields.¹¹⁵

But Sarit was not to be outdone by Phao. His principal sources of power lay in the powerful First Army located in and around Bangkok, and in his lucrative business enterprises.¹¹⁶ In September Sarit, whose mother was a northeasterner, assumed prime responsibility for coping with the economically depressed northeastern region, where late rains had accentuated the difficulties of an area long suffering from a lack of capital and from governmental neglect. The American embassy reported in October 1952 a definite change in his attitude toward the diplomatic corps. The Americans believed that Sarit's desire for closer contact with them came about largely through his realization that the embassy was directly concerned with the military and economic aid programs, and partly through his wish to keep abreast of both General Phao and Air Marshal Fuen, both of whom had been actively cultivating the American embassy.¹¹⁷

The growing rivalry between Phao and Sarit was graphically demonstrated by the army alert called by Sarit during the period of 10-14 October 1952, when some 2000 provincial police units were brought into Bangkok for the Police Day celebrations.¹¹⁸ Although the official explanation labelled it a routine manoeuvre, the obvious purpose of Sarit's alert was to be prepared for any move by Phao to seize power, and at the same time by a show of force to discourage any such attempt. Despite persistent political rumbling of this kind, Pibul was still able to maintain his hand on the affairs of state uninterrupted while balancing the contending forces within the regime. In fact, after November 1951 no coup was staged in Thailand until September 1957 when forces loyal to General Sarit overthrew the Pibul government, forcing Pibul and Phao into exile and Phin into retirement. Clearly the doubling of the army strength as a result of massive MAAG aid in 1954-55 was a decisive factor in that last internal power struggle. But long before that, the Coup Group had demonstrated to outsiders, by way of the November 1951 coup, its undisputed supremacy in Thai politics. Although American aid was not solely responsible for the abortion of democracy and the perpetuation of military rule in Thailand, it certainly was a major prop for Field Marshal Pibul and members of the ruling clique, such as Generals Phin, Sarit, and Phao, to remain firmly in power. Even Ambassador Stanton admitted in

January 1952 that some criticism “that our policies, particularly the MSA and MAAG programs, are strengthening undemocratic processes in this country by helping to consolidate the position of the military clique . . . is to some extent true”.¹¹⁹

CONCLUSION

It is beyond doubt that the Pibul government reaped both political and economic benefits by aligning itself with the United States. On the one hand, Western approval conferred both legitimacy and prestige to the regime. On the other hand, the government could point to major development aid projects and economic expansion in the country during 1950-51 as the positive results of its pro-Western foreign policy. From the outset, there was almost a consensus among Thailand's political leaders in favour of an alliance with the “Free World”. Apart from a relatively small group of intellectuals and journalists who carried out a peace campaign and expressed their opposition to the alliance policy, there was no real advocacy of an alternative foreign policy by other politically influential groups in the country. Their reservations as regards foreign policy were restricted mainly to the timing rather than the content, and the main opposition to the government focused chiefly on the corruption and political control of the Coup Group.

However, American military aid did not create greater unity within the Thai armed forces as hoped for by the US government. In fact, the navy was encouraged by the receipt of modern arms to try to resolve internal quarrels in their favour but they failed because of poor planning and indecision on the part of their leaders. The Manhattan Rebellion and its suppression altered the balance of political forces in Thailand. It resulted immediately in the elimination of the navy as a political force which Pibul could use as a balance against the army and the police. As the opponents of the Coup Group, namely the pro-Pridi group, the navy, and the conservative royalists were eliminated from the political scene one by one, the ruling military clique became the dominant group in Thai politics. Despite their power, in four years since 1947 the Coup Group had received few Cabinet or administrative positions, and Pibul had been able to broaden the base of government by bringing in army, navy, civilian elements of the 1932 group and other parties including the conservative technocrats. In November 1951, the Coup Group seized direct control of civil administration, which up to then they could only influence through military strength and money. The consolidation of their power was to a considerable extent facilitated by American economic and military aid. In this context, it was difficult for the Thai government to take a different foreign policy course, for any move that might have led

to the withdrawal of American aid would almost automatically bring about its immediate downfall.

Indeed, it looks as though Pibul managed to maintain his own position because he was thought to be popular with the Americans. Although politically weakened since November 1951, he was also able to create and rely on a new balance of power between the police and the army, whose political rivalry led them to compete for American arms to strengthen their respective position. The police, unqualified for the MAAG program, had to rely on supplies from the CIA-SEA Supply which, aside from the opium profit motive, led to their connivance at the latter's collusion with the Taiwan government to supply KMT forces in Burma. Pibul appears initially to have looked upon these clandestine activities first, as a promotion of a useful buffer force between Thai border and Communist China and secondly, as an extension to the general policy of cooperating with the United States.

The buffer idea was and has always been an underlying element in Thailand's security policy. The preservation of peace with its neighbours in the last hundred years had been ascribed primarily to the presence of colonial powers, the British and the French, across its borders. The effect of decolonisation and the removal of the British from Burma left Thailand's northern border somewhat exposed in the eyes of Thai military leaders,

preoccupied as ever with external security. In their perception, the Chinese Communists were the principal threat while the Burmese, despite their crippling internal unrest, were not forgotten as a historic foe. Such a perception of external threat was also extended to the Indochinese border where Laos and Cambodia had traditionally been buffer states between Thailand and another historic enemy, Vietnam. Together with increasing sign of impending defeat of the French in Indochina, Thailand watched the ominous Vietminh incursion into Laos in 1953 with grave anxiety. The next chapter will attempt to consider among other things the impact of development in Indochina which constituted an immediate and crucial reason for Thailand's entry into a formal military alliance with the United States.

CHAPTER

6

EXTERNAL THREAT AND
THE COLLECTIVE DEFENCE
TREATY OF 1954

The aim of this chapter is to search for immediate reasons why Thailand signed the South East Asia Collective Defence Treaty, popularly known as the SEATO treaty, at Manila in September 1954. The main contention is that during 1953-54 the perceived Chinese threat was no longer restricted to Communist incitement of the large Chinese community in Thailand. Three events occurred during this period which had a significant impact on Thai perceptions: the mass arrests of “Communists” in Thailand and the passing of an anti-Communist law in November 1952; the establishment of the Thai Nationality Autonomous Area in southern Yunnan by the Chinese Communist government in January 1953; and successive incursions after April 1953 by Viet-minh troops in Laos and Cambodia, the traditional buffer zones between Thailand and Vietnam. This chapter sets out to examine these events in detail to determine their causes, and their effects on Thai foreign policy. The heightened fear of external threat was clearly responsible for Thailand’s moving closer to the United States. The change in United States’ policy in consequence of the Korean War and the advent of the Eisenhower Administration already contributed to an expansion of the military aid program to Thailand. The deterioration of the French military position in Indochina in spring 1954 which culminated in the fall of Dien Bien Phu finally led to a major US policy shift regarding its defence commitment in mainland Southeast Asia, thereby removing the

barrier that had thus far prevented a US-Thai formal military alliance. The revival of the Vietminh threat to Thailand and the way both Thailand and the United States reacted to it led to the signing of the multilateral Manila Treaty in September 1954. It is argued that the decision by Pibul's government to join the alliance was the product of its long-held desire to acquire American military protection, its perception of immediate external threat, and its expectation of increased American aid.

THE ANTI-COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN

There is no real evidence of Communist activities in Thailand before 1928, although many Chinese Communists are believed to have entered Thailand from China as a result of Chiang Kai-shek's attack on the Chinese Communist Party in 1927. Their activities in Siam were then confined to propaganda campaigns and an attempt to organize a Communist party. Owing to the existence of the large and economically powerful Chinese community, Communist agitation among them was seen by Thai leaders as an undesirable danger. From the outset the ideas of communism were identified in the indigenous mind with the Chinese menace itself.¹ Communists in Siam faced problems in expanding their influence among the indigenous population because, unlike other Asian nations, the Thai lacked strong

anti-colonial sentiment, which the Communists could exploit to rally support. In addition, Thai nationalism professed a strong anti-Chinese prejudice. Communist activists and sympathizers in Siam were thus limited at the beginning almost exclusively to non-Thai ethnic groups, the Chinese and the Vietnamese. With all of Southeast Asia except Siam under colonial rule, Siam in the late 1920s also became a convenient base of operations for many Southeast Asian nationalist movements, which were under varying degrees of communist influence. For example, Nguyen Ai-Quoc, alias Ho Chi Minh, is known to have spent several months in Siam in 1928, during which time he organized a Vietnamese Communist Youth Organization. But the primary areas of interest of these nationalist movements were often focused abroad, on their homelands rather than on Siam itself.

After the introduction of an anti-Communist law in 1933 by the Phraya Mano government, Communists in Thailand were driven underground, but they continued to issue propaganda pamphlets and statements. The Pibul government, which took office in 1938, initiated a policy of intense nationalism directed chiefly against the Chinese as well as Western economic interests. Violent anti-Chinese measures before and during the war years, including mass deportations, rendered that community, which had been the real source of support for Communist activities,

more circumspect. It was almost impossible for the Communists to unite with a nationalist movement against colonialism, as that movement was represented by the Thai government, which firmly identified communism with what it regarded as the Chinese danger.²

After the Second World War, the anti-Communist law of 1933 was abrogated in order to placate the Soviet Union. The discriminatory legislation which had been introduced in the late 1930s against the Chinese and Malay minorities was also relaxed. The liberalization of Thailand in the period under civilian rule was accompanied by an outburst of left-wing activity, chiefly on the part of the Chinese community. A branch of the pro-Mao China Democratic League flourished in Bangkok, and in 1946 a Central Labour Union, embracing some forty labour unions, almost entirely Chinese, was set up under the Communist Party's leadership.³ But their activities were soon stifled on Pibul's return to power in 1948. The Pibul Government renewed a campaign against the Chinese community and the left-wing organizations dominated by them, though it insisted that there was no Thai Communist Party of consequence. The Thai National Trade Union Congress was organized to rival the Communist-dominated Central Labour Union. Chinese schools and associations were raided and closed down, and the Chinese press was similarly reduced.

In November 1952, at the time an anti-Communist law was reintroduced, there was no serious danger of a Communist revolution; indeed, there had been no massive strikes, no sabotage, no violence of any kind that could have toppled the government. The Thai government had retained a firm grip on the Chinese community, and the Communists had not been able to organize a strong or substantial indigenous Thai Communist group.⁴ Nor did the Vietminh in Thailand constitute any real internal threat to the government. The Vietminh concentrated their efforts on propaganda and on the control of most of the 46,700 Vietnamese refugees, who had entered Thailand in great number in 1946. Thailand was seen mainly as a convenient supply base for recruits, arms, medicine, and other necessities for their struggle against the French in Indochina.

On the other hand, there had existed since 1950 a small but vociferous group of dissatisfied left-wing Thai intellectuals and journalists, whose views were anti-government and were often regarded by the Thai government and Western diplomats as pro-communist. In their newspapers and journals, they often attacked government corruption, the high cost of living, and the participation of Thai troops in the UN forces in Korea. They also advocated the nationalist fight of the Vietminh in Indochina, world peace, and the recognition of Communist China.⁵ In November 1950, they actively campaigned for the Stockholm Peace Petition.

In August 1952, this active group of Thai liberals and left-wingers got together and organized the National Peace Committee of Thailand to prepare a delegation for the Peace Conference to be held in Peking in October. The President of the Committee was Charoen Subsaeng, a Pridi supporter and former Pattani MP. The stated aims of the Peace Committee were to end the Korean War by peaceful means; to campaign against war and war preparation; to protest against political, economic, cultural, and military interference by imperialists; to abolish trade sanctions and promote international exchange of culture; to protest against Japanese rearmament; and to fight for peaceful settlements in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Malaya.⁶ The Committee appointed six Thai delegates for the Peking Peace Conference comprising Charoen Subsaeng; Phethai Chotinuchit, MP from Thonburi and former editor of *Politics Weekly*; Suri Thongwanit, editor of *Siang Thai* newspaper; Uthorn Pholakun, proprietor of *Seripharb Weekly*; Kularp Saipradit, a well-known writer and senior newspaperman; and Fak Na-Songkhla, a prominent lawyer and counsel for the defence in most postwar coup cases and in the regicide case. However, on applying for passports, they were refused permission by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Police on the pretext that no one would stand security for their travel abroad and that their trip “might affect international relations and might be a detriment to the country.”⁷

Despite this setback, on 30 September the Peace Committee of Thailand made a dramatic announcement to the local press that a different group of six delegates had just left for Peking to join five of their colleagues, who were already absent from Thailand.⁸ One of the delegates already in Peking was Sanguan Tularak, a staunch Pridi supporter and former Thai ambassador to China in 1946-47. Pridi of course was in Peking at the time and was possibly in contact behind the scenes with the Peace Conference delegates. On 8 October, Suri Thongwanit, head of the Thai delegation, delivered a speech to the Peking Peace Conference attacking the Thai government for its alignment with the United States, which he claimed was attempting to transform Thailand into a base for “imperialist aggression”. The Thai government reacted by issuing a statement labelling the Thai delegation “traitors”, saying that they would be detained for investigation upon return.⁹

In addition to their activities through the Peace Committee, these left-wing Thai journalists and writers were active in the Press Association of Thailand, which during August-October 1952 organized a series of protest meetings against the government’s press censorship policies. They voiced their concern for the plight of the Isan people who suffered from severe local drought and flood conditions in August and September. They were also quick to set up a Relief Fund and an

Aid Committee, appealing for money and clothing to assist the people of the Northeast.

On 10 November 1952, the police began a sudden round-up of the members of the Peace Committee of Thailand, several left-wing Thai journalists, some Thammasat University students, a small number of army and air force officers, and various Chinese elements. During the latter part of November some associates of Pridi such as his wife, Poonsook, and his henchman, Chalio Pathumrot, were also arrested but subsequently released. Other former Pridi lieutenants and leading members of the Free Thai movement such as Tiang Sirikhan and Charn Bunnag just mysteriously disappeared amidst speculation that they either were murdered by the police or were tipped off by General Phao and went into hiding.¹⁰

On 13 November 1952, apparently at Pibul's behest, Phao showed himself in the National Assembly and forced an anti-Communist bill through all three readings in one day. During the course of the brief debate, Phao dramatically claimed to have uncovered evidence of a Communist plot to seize the country and to proclaim a Thai Republic not later than 31 December. The uprising in Thailand would be supported by Communist Chinese forces from the mainland of China and by the Vietminh in Laos; and the Soviet Union would provide air and sea protection.¹¹ Phao's sensational claim was based on a report emanating from

Kuomintang sources, which he apparently knew was spurious,¹² yet he deliberately exploited it. Although several MPs protested against the high-handed tactics of the government, the bill was adopted by 131 votes to 2. The terms of the Anti-Communist Activities Act, dubbed by the *Bangkok Tribune* as the “Un-Thai Activities Act”, were very broad, providing for varying prison sentences for any person participating in subversive Communist activities, being members of any Communist organization, attending Communist meetings, or any Thai engaging in Communist activities abroad.¹³

During December and early January, the police turned their attention from opposition elements to the Chinese, questioning and detaining a large number of Chinese suspects. The Communist *Chuan Min Pao* newspaper was closed on 23 December, while its evening counterpart, *Nan Ch'en Pao*, had to cease publication because both papers had used the same press. But the *Nan Ch'en Pao* was also to be closed and its editorial staff arrested on 26 January. A number of Chinese firms, schools and bookstores, such as the Andar Company, the Farland Tai Company, the Hua Chiao Bookstore, were raided by the police. The American embassy was convinced that the Thai government had received information regarding Chinese Communist activity from Chinese Nationalist elements, particularly from the office of the Taiwan military attaché. That the Thai government gave

some credence to the information received from these sources could be seen from the briefing paper used by the National Defence Council, in which certain statements were made which the American embassy believed were supplied to the Thai government by Chinese Nationalists.¹⁴

The whole anti-Communist campaign was touched off by the arrest on 9 November of a junior air force officer, Squadron Leader Prangphet Bunyarattaphan, on his arrival from Britain where he had been rejected as a Thai military trainee on security grounds.¹⁵ According to reports from American and British embassies, General Phao intended to use the arrest of Prangphet, who appeared to have connections with both left-wing elements and a group of disaffected young officers, as a springboard for launching a purge of anti-Phao elements in the armed forces, particularly the army.¹⁶ But he was stopped from pursuing this plan by Pibul, backed by the three Services' commanders-in-chief, General Phin Chunhawan, Admiral Yutthasat Koson and Air Chief Marshal Fuen Ronapakat, late in the night of 9-10 November. Pibul saw that the other Service Chiefs would be alarmed at any interference in the forces under their command and was able to insist that the operation should be diverted into an anti-Communist drive. Phao was apparently reluctant to take action against some left-wing elements, from whom he had been cultivating political support for some months, but eventually gave in.¹⁷

Being outmanoeuvred by Pibul, Phao was reported to have made a grudging remark at the meeting of the government bloc of MPs on 11 November, published in his own newspaper, *Chao*, the following morning, that the arrest was prompted by information received from Britain and the United States which incriminated Prangphet as a Communist sympathizer. He claimed that the government had been under pressure from foreign countries to promulgate an anti-Communist law; and that he himself was even condemned by the British and the American for being indecisive, and for “having his feet in two boats at the same time”.¹⁸ Phao’s statement, later denied, was not far from the truth inasmuch as reports from British and American embassies expressed their growing suspicions of Phao in turning a blind eye to what they thought of as “communist” activities.

Pibul himself was reported to become suspicious that Phao had deliberately allowed Suri Thongwanit to leave Thailand in September to attend the Peking Peace Conference.¹⁹ The British ambassador reported being told by Sang Patthanothai, Pibul’s close aide, that the Prime Minister was worried that Phao had contact with Communists in Peking and Europe, citing an intercepted letter to Phao from Paris arranging for Thai representation at the impending Vienna Peace Conference.²⁰ Phao explained to Pibul on 22 November that this was a move to infiltrate the peace movement. But his denial of

any contact whatever with Peking did not seem to convince Pibul, who requested from the British any information they might have on Phao's suspected duplicity.²¹ However, the allegations that Phao was sympathetic to the Communists or had contact with Peking look rather unconvincing. He might have toyed with the idea of expanding his power base by including some left-wing elements among his supporters, but his subsequent communist suppression disproved the charges. The round-up thus looks rather like the product of a domestic struggle, in which Pibul managed to curb Phao's power by lining up all other military leaders, and the British and American embassies, behind him. In consequence Phao was forced to take an anti-Communist action instead of a purge of his opponents in the army. The actual purge was at first directed at former associates of Pridi and the Peace Committee of Thailand, only to be diverted at the later stage to the Chinese Communists to justify the action to the public and to make the Americans happy.

The American embassy indeed applauded the Thai government's anti-Communist campaign. A despatch by the counselor of the embassy observed contentedly that "as the situation now stands, the arrests have created a more favourable atmosphere for the activities of USIS in Thailand since a large section of the pro-Communist press is now closed and the remainder compelled to pursue a more moderate policy for

self-protection.”²² In his summary report, Ambassador Stanton wrote:

Although this more positive program against communism carries the opportunity for the military clique to deal in a still more summary fashion with its political opponents, it has cleared the air of uncertainty over what had previously appeared to be a temporizing attitude on the part of the Phibun [Pibul] Cabinet toward the communist problem, and has also without doubt disrupted whatever plans the communists may have had for subversion and eventual seizure of power. The Government's new anti-communist measures also serve to keep Thailand aligned on the side of the Free World and have, for the present at least, discouraged the neutralist trends which were at times evident last year [i.e. 1952].²³

Peking, not surprisingly, saw the anti-Communist campaign of the Thai government in a different light. It denounced the Anti-Communist Act as a fascist law to “step up the persecution of people desiring peace.” The Thai government was attacked as being “servile to the American warmakers and hostile towards peace.”²⁴

THE THAI NATIONALITY AUTONOMOUS AREA IN YUNNAN

On 31 January and 2 February 1953, the New China News Agency announced the establishment of the Thai Nationality Autonomous Area (Hsi-shuang Pan-na Autonomous Chou) for the Thai-speaking people in the southernmost part of Yunnan province, less than 100 miles from Thailand's northern border. The area in question, known in Thailand as Sibsongpanna, was of 20,000 square kilometres and consisted of Cheli, Fuhai, Nanch'iao and Chenyueh and part of Chiangcheng, Szumao, Ningkiang and Liushun. A Thai Autonomous People's Government was set up, headed by Chao Ts'un Hsin, who said at the inaugural ceremony that the newly-formed government, "under the leadership of Chairman Mao Tse-tung, would lead the Thai people to help other nationalities inhabiting the area to establish their own autonomous governments; strive in a common effort to smash sabotage activities of American imperialists and Chiang Kai-shek's agents; strengthen national defences; and build a new, better life for the population in the region."²⁵

This action was in fact consistent with the Chinese administrative program, adopted by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference as early as 29 September 1949, and reaffirmed on 9 August 1952 when the Chinese

People's Government promulgated the General Program for the Implementation of Regional Autonomy for the National Minorities. The program allowed for one or more national minority to belong to any single autonomous region, county or district as part of the PRC.²⁶ But the Thai government was disturbed when they learnt of the founding of a "Thai autonomous government" in Yunnan. Pibul ordered the National Defence Council to study the matter in detail. He expressed his concern in a press interview on 26 February, stating that the new state, reportedly with a population of about 200,000 Thai tribal groups, was set up as an enemy to Thailand and that in future anti-government political refugees from Thailand might join this so-called autonomous state.²⁷ Several Thai newspapers voiced their misgivings that the Thai Autonomous Area would become a base for Communist propaganda and subversive activities directed against Thailand and Southeast Asia generally.²⁸

In its confidential briefing paper, the "Survey of Domestic News", of 12 March 1953, the Joint Staff Department of the Thai Defence Ministry came up with two likely purposes of this Peking move. According to this report, the formation of the Thai Autonomous Area was seen as an attempt to expand Communist influence in Southeast Asia by setting up a "competitive state" along the line of North Korea, the Vietminh,

and East Germany in order to facilitate subversive activities in adjoining states of the same historical, cultural and ethnic background. Having stirred up unrest in neighbouring states, the Communists would then move in and annex them “in the same way Hitler had annexed Sudetenland”. The second objective, according to the Joint Staff Department’s analysis, was to weaken the effectiveness of the Chinese Nationalist troops operating in the Shan States of Burma. The report felt that the Chinese Communists did not contemplate any serious military threat from KMT troops in Burma but were apprehensive lest they conspire with dissident Thai elements in southern Yunnan. As regards the effects on Thailand, the report saw dangers from the expansion of Communist influence into the Shan States and Laos, leading to instability in the northern and northeastern part of Thailand through propaganda and incitement.²⁹

Despite the reasonable second assumption about the purpose of the Autonomous Area, the Joint Staff Department seems to have given more weight to the suspected subversive motives of Communist China. Apparently, the Thai government was sceptical about the declared Chinese policy that Peking intended to provide a more effective local administration within the vast Chinese Communist state by the creation of autonomous regions similar to those established by the Soviet Union in dealing with its complex racial and minority groups.³⁰

Ambassador Stanton also shared the alarmist interpretation, even though it had been observed in an American embassy despatch of 8 April 1953 that only a few weeks after the announcement of the Thai Autonomous Area, the New China News Agency through a Peking radio broadcast on 19 March described preparations being made in Kansu province for the establishment of the Moslem Autonomous Region of Hsihaiku.³¹

According to the "Survey of Domestic News" of 16 April, Pridi and a number of Thai politicians were reported to have attended the conference at Cheli on 17 January to inaugurate the Thai Autonomous Area. Several items in this report such as the participants at the conference and the policies of the Thai Nationality Autonomous People's Government were based on the information given by General Li Mi to the Thai chargé d'affaires in Taiwan.³² Evidently, the Thai government attached some credence to these statements, supplied by Taiwan sources only to serve their own interests. The Taiwan information raised the unpalatable spectre of collaboration between Pridi and the Thai Nationality Autonomous People's Government in Yunnan and rekindled Pibul's and other military leaders' fears that Pridi would use Yunnan as base to regain power. The fact that Cheli had served as a Free Thai-O.S.S. base during the Second World War was one reason for their supposing that Pridi might have such a plan. Also, Sanguan Tularak who went to China in 1943

as Pridi's Free Thai representative had just reemerged in Peking at the Peace Conference as deputy head of the Thai delegation. In addition, Pibul was clearly worried that the Chinese might be seeking to resurrect his own pre-war Pan-Thai thesis and use it for their own political advantage. The establishment of the Thai Autonomous People's Government was thus perceived in Bangkok as evidence of a hostile Chinese intention to infiltrate, penetrate, and finally invade Thailand.

Prince Wan, the Foreign Minister, stated his belief to the *Herald Tribune* reporter in March 1953 that the object of the setting up of a Thai Autonomous Area was to create a centre for penetration not only of Thailand but of the neighbouring state of Laos, where the people were predominantly Thai in ethnic origin, and of Vietnam, which had many Thai tribes. He predicted an increase in underground activity, warning that the Chinese Communists would attempt to send agents down from the new state.³³ In May, he painted an alarming scenario to a Norwegian reporter thus:

The situation is extremely grave. I consider a Communist invasion of Siam to be of the very highest degree of possibility. . . . It would be unduly optimistic to underestimate the impending danger. The origin of the whole matter is the propaganda for the establishment of a Thai state, a plan originating in the Chinese province Yunnan on the other side of our border in the north. Communist

China wants to make it appear that it is not behind this propaganda, but the manifest aim is that the Thai state shall constitute, not only a centre of propaganda, but also a centre of infiltration and penetration, and finally of invasion. The Vietminh offensive in Laos and the conditions in Cambodia aggravate the situation. The whole affair is a perfect, time-limited, Communist measure, carried out in cooperation with Moscow and Peiping, and it may end with invasion.³⁴

THE EVACUATION OF KMT TROOPS

The advent of the Thai Autonomous People's Government in Yunnan and its political implications might have contributed in part to the Thai government's offer, announced by Pibul in an interview with the press on 26 March 1953, to permit the evacuation of KMT forces through Thailand provided they were first disarmed. In the same interview, Pibul further expressed the desire of his government to pursue a more positive policy toward establishing friendly relations with the Associated States of Indochina, as well as Burma, emphasizing the extent to which political stability in these neighbouring areas contributed to the security of Thailand. If any of these areas were threatened to be overrun by the Communists, Pibul contended, it would be natural for Thailand to give every support to their defence.³⁵ This new foreign policy orientation of "good neighbourliness"

was the outcome of the cabinet meeting on 18 March 1953.³⁶

But the compelling reason for Thailand's offer to permit the passage of KMT troops through Thailand was the decision of the Burmese government, announced by U Nu to Burmese Parliament on 2 March, to take the matter to the United Nations.³⁷ On 4 April, following a meeting with the Burmese *chargé d'affaires*, General Phao ordered the closure of Thailand's entire northern border probably as a gesture to show that Thailand was not a base of supplies to the KMT.³⁸

The United States also saw the undesirability of a UN debate and offered to pay for the removal of the KMT from Burma.³⁹ While it was stated that a UN debate would serve only the advantage of the Soviet Union and would drive a wedge between the United States and the governments of Asia, the more basic reason for American avoidance of a debate was that full disclosure of all the circumstances surrounding the KMT intervention would prove embarrassing.⁴⁰ Moreover, by now KMT troops in Burma seemed to have little real military value. They constituted a source of irritation and concern to the Burmese government and impeded the development of better relations between Burma and the United States. Some officials in the State Department also saw the potential danger of Chinese Communists having an excuse for crossing into Burma.⁴¹ But the State Department had also found Taipei

reluctant to withdraw these troops.⁴² For these reasons, the United States became actively engaged in getting the Thai government's assistance to facilitate the evacuation, in putting pressure on the Chinese Nationalist government to order troop withdrawal, and in initiating talks between the governments concerned.

In the resolution approved by the UN Political Committee on 22 April 1953, it was recommended that negotiations in progress through the good offices of certain member states should be pursued. This was a reference to informal discussions which the United States and Thailand were holding with Nationalist China on the one hand, and Burma on the other, to establish some means of solving the problem. On 8 May, the United States called for a four-power joint military conference between the four countries to reach an agreement on an evacuation plan. The talks, when they began in Bangkok on 22 May, were not joined by Burma until 16 June. Despite Burmese withdrawal in September that year, the Bangkok Conference continued. Finally, on 29 October 1953 a joint US-Thai-Nationalist Chinese communique was issued in Bangkok stating that 2000 KMT, including their families, were to be withdrawn from 7 November; that Nationalist China would no longer supply the KMT; and that those who remained in Burma would be disavowed.⁴³ The repatriation was carried out in three stages between November 1953 and May 1954. Out

of the total of 12,000 KMT in Burma, the Burmese government reported to the UN that 5329 men and 1142 dependents had been evacuated by 1 September 1954.⁴⁴ In late May 1954, General Li Mi announced the dissolution of the Yunnan Anti-Communist and National Salvation Army from his office in Taipei.⁴⁵ On 29 July 1954, the Joint Military Committee issued a communiqué declaring that it had accomplished its mission and would cease to take responsibility for any evacuees that showed up after 1 September 1954.

During this period, relations between Thailand and Burma deteriorated. On 12 October 1953, a Thai village in Maehongson was bombed by Burmese planes as the Burmese government intensified its campaign against the KMT. In March 1954, the Thai government became incensed over Burma's delay in acknowledging its responsibility for "border violations". Pibul told the Bangkok press that Burma's bombing close to the Thai border had "created unfriendly feeling in general."⁴⁶ In April, the Thai government reportedly announced that military aircraft would now patrol the border and that anti-aircraft units had been sent to the area to shoot down any Burmese military plane that might cross into Thai territory.⁴⁷

An additional source of bad feeling between the two governments had been the Burmese suspicion that Thailand had a direct interest in Mon and Karen insurgent activities. As the

Thais were in general on better terms with the Karens and Mons than with the Burmese, the latter naturally suspected that the Thai government would look with approval on the establishment of an insurgent buffer zone along the border, if indeed it would not actually assist in such endeavour.⁴⁸ The misunderstanding was further aggravated by several Burmese complaints about extensive wolfram smuggling operations through Thailand from Mawchi and Namyen mines by the Karen insurgents.

But the government of Burma soon recognized that it needed the cooperation of the Thai government in evacuating KMT troops, and that its relation with that government must be improved. On 5 April 1954, Burma accepted responsibility for the accidental bombing of the Thai village and offered monetary compensation. On 13 April, the Thai government acknowledged Burma's regret and waived its claim for compensation. The evacuation of KMT troops finally helped remove one big obstacle to a better relationship. On 13 August 1954, Burma's Minister of Home Affairs, Bo Khin Maung Gale, arrived in Bangkok for talk on border problems with his Thai counterpart. He asked for Thai cooperation in preventing the smuggling of food and supplies to KMT remnants across the border. His other requests included the opening of two border crossing points in the north at Tachilek and Maesot to alleviate the hardship of the people in the area; negotiations on a new extradition treaty; exchange

of information between local police officials; and improvement of communication systems between the two countries.⁴⁹ The friendship between Burma and Thailand reached its peak when their prime ministers exchanged goodwill visits in 1955.

THE VIETMINH INVASION OF LAOS

The announcement of the “good neighbour” policy by Pibul in March 1953 must have been stimulated in part by the escalation of the war in Indochina. In 1951 the French, despite substantial American aid, had lost control of all Tongking north of the Red River delta. The Vietminh had successfully employed guerrilla tactics, striking the French troops in small units and melting into countryside when attacked by the French. After the monsoon of 1952, three Vietminh divisions overran most of the hill country of northwest Tongking. In March and April 1953, Vietminh troops entered Laos, occupying Sam Neua and penetrating from Dien Bien Phu, down the valley of the River Ou, to within striking distance of Luang Prabang.⁵⁰

To many Thais, the open invasion of Laos by the Vietminh forces in April 1953 was a clear threat. The threat was seen first in terms of an encroachment on the sensitive buffer zone by the traditional Vietnamese enemy. If Laos were to fall into the hands of the Vietminh, Thailand would for the first time have a

Communist state right on its long and difficult-to-police border. In the Thai leaders' perception, this situation would be most unwelcome as the Communists could from their bases in Laos proceed to subvert the long neglected Lao population in Isan and pose a real threat to the stability of the country.⁵¹ Another cause of anxiety in Bangkok was some 50-60,000 Annamite refugees residing in five northeastern provinces, most of whom were known to be sympathetic towards Ho Chi Minh.⁵² The Thai government's initial reaction to the Vietminh military offensive in Laos was a studied, cautious one with the government press trying to play down the gravity of the news. Pibul, for example, told the press that the Thai government regarded the invasion of Laos as an "internal Indochinese affair", in which Thailand should not get involved.⁵³

When requested by the French and the American embassies in Bangkok to allow supplies such as petrol, aircraft, rations and probably ammunitions to pass through Thailand to help the French in Laos, the Thai government exercised caution. Prince Wan, the Thai Foreign Minister, told the American embassy counselor that he would find no difficulty in granting transit facilities through Thailand for Laotian and French refugees in accordance with international law and humanitarian principles. But he would have to refer the question of a supply route across Thai territory to the Cabinet. Prince Wan then

suggested that the Thai government would respond positively to such a request if it was under the aegis of the United Nations. In his opinion, Thailand could not possibly act alone; the risk would be too great.⁵⁴

There are three possible explanations for Thailand's circumspect attitude. First, an anti-French feeling was still present in the mind of many Thais, the seed of which had been planted by the French some 60 years earlier when they sliced large pieces off Thai territory. Secondly, the Thai government did not wish to unilaterally antagonize the Vietminh, with whom it might have to come to terms at some subsequent date. Now that the Vietminh appeared to be a strong force in Indochina and a possible victor over France, the Thai government pondered whether it would be wise to engage in any provocative activities without any external guarantee for its own security. In this connection the British embassy reported that some members of the Thai government such as General Phao, who had been in charge of the frontier security, had declared in private that as the French were finished in Indochina, he did not think it advisable to antagonize Ho Chi Minh unnecessarily.⁵⁵ Thirdly, the Thai attitude was probably a product of the "once bitten, twice shy" syndrome in consequence of the miscarriage of the "demi-official" efforts to help in building up Li Mi's army in the Shan State into a successful anti-Communist force.

By the end of April 1953, the Vietminh had advanced to within striking distance of the Laotian royal capital of Luang Prabang, about sixty miles from the Thai border. Here the Thai government, apprehensive of a possible Vietminh invasion, began to panic. It ordered strict enforcement of the closure of the frontier, joint air and police border patrol, and the evacuation of potential Vietminh adherents among Annamite refugees from the area. Pibul himself decided to pay an inspection visit to Nongkhai on the Mekong in May. In a conversation with Stanton on 30 April, he commented on the failure of the French to bring this clear-cut case of aggression before the United Nations and asked whether Stanton thought it would be in order for Thailand to do so if the Laotian government so desired.⁵⁶ The following day, Pibul made a desperate plea to Stanton for the immediate delivery of additional ammunition for American weapons already supplied. He stressed that the Thai army had sufficient small ammunition to last only four days under actual combat. The American ambassador was asked to inform Washington of the critical shortage of ammunition and “convey his [Pibul’s] earnest hope that in view of the gravity of the situation facing Thailand a sixty-day supply of small arms ammunition could be rushed to Thailand”. Stanton checked Pibul’s statement with the chief of MAAG and got confirmation that Thai stock of ammunition was low and in fact barely adequate for training purposes.⁵⁷

The sense of alarm was shared by the British. On 26 April 1953, a Staff Conference chaired by Churchill accepted the view of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff that the Songkhla position in southern Thailand was the best for the defence of Malaya against the invasion by land. It was agreed at the Conference that Britain “must seize and hold that position immediately if the security of Malaya on the landward side was in danger as a result of events in Indochina or Siam”. The conclusion of the Conference was endorsed 3 days later by the Cabinet defence committee.⁵⁸ This is a military strategy not dissimilar to the abortive “Operation Matador” designed back in 1941 to stop the Japanese landing troops south of the Kra Isthmus. Clearly, if Churchill was still haunted by the Japanese invasion experience, Pibul had better reasons to feel chastened by it.

On 5 May Pote Sarasin, the Thai ambassador in Washington, went to see Secretary of State Dulles to inform him of the security measures undertaken by the Thai government. He urged Dulles to make a strong statement on the Laos situation which would indicate support from the United States and the United Nations in case Thailand were attacked. In addition, Pote enquired about the possibility of the United Nations taking up the Laos situation. He was reported to have said that “the Thai government and nation would accept a United Nations resolution as a basis for their own policy decisions and actions”.⁵⁹

In reply, Dulles enthusiastically supported the idea, mentioning that it was thus far the responsibility of the French to raise the question of Laos in the UN but it had not done so for reasons of its own. Referring to Article 34 of the UN Charter, he advised the Thai ambassador of the desirability of Thailand bringing the question itself before the UN Security Council as a preventive measure. He pointed out that it would focus the attention of the world on Thailand's position and might act as a deterrent to communist forces. Pote was reported to have been favourably impressed with Dulles' reasoning; he replied that he would strongly recommend the action to his government.⁶⁰

The following day Dulles invited Pote back to have a further discussion about the Thai situation. He handed the Thai ambassador an aide memoire indicating that small arms ammunition requested by the Thai government was already en route; that the US government was prepared to send a senior military officer with a special accompanying mission to become Chief of the MAAG; and that if Thailand agreed to such an appointment "it would be expected that he would receive complete cooperation from the Thai government and Thai military authorities comparable to the cooperation granted to such officer and Mission in Greece during its period of crisis when the United States officer acted as extraordinary Adviser whose opinion carried great weight and who had a seat on the

Supreme War Council".⁶¹ As the final point in the aide memoire, Dulles followed up the idea of Thailand's appeal to the UN. He suggested that Thailand might wish to ask the Security Council under Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter to find that the situation along its northeastern frontiers endangered international peace and security. One line of action might be to request the appointment of a sub-committee of the Peace Observation Commission which would send a team of observers to border areas of Thailand to report on activities that might threaten Thai independence or territorial integrity.⁶²

The Thai government, grateful as it was for instant US ammunition delivery, apparently was not prepared to share all its military secrets with foreigners. On 19 May, the Thai embassy in Washington handed an aide memoire to the State Department expressing the government's appreciation for the assignment of a high-ranking US military officer as the head of MAAG. However, it was pointed out that a war council as such did not exist in Thailand, although there was a National Defence Council, whose composition included both military and civilian members, and whose functions also covered civil matters. herefore, argued the Thai government, it would be "impractical" for the American General to have a seat on that Council.⁶³ Not to offend the United States, the Thai government proposed as a compromise to set up a special committee in the Ministry of Defence

for the purpose of consulting with the General. Such a committee, it was suggested, would be composed of the Prime Minister who was concurrently Minister of Defence as chairman, Deputy Prime Minister, Commanders-in-Chief of the Army, Navy, Air Force and other high-ranking officers of the Thai Armed Forces as well as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The United States government agreed with this arrangement and assigned Major General William N. Gillmore as the new head of MAAG.

On the subject of the UN appeal, Pibul was so enthusiastic about the idea, especially as other military leaders were also favourable, that he decided on 7 May to go ahead without waiting for further Cabinet approval. He told the British chargé d'affaires as well as Sefton Delmer of the *Daily Express* on 7 May that the Thai government intended to bring before the United Nations the threat to Thailand's northeastern border by the Vietminh invasion of Laos.⁶⁴ However, his Foreign Minister, Prince Wan, preferred to await formal Cabinet approval. In the meantime, the idea came up against fierce opposition from the French who feared the debate in the United Nations developing into a general attack on French colonialism.⁶⁵ The British were also less than enthusiastic. They doubted if the timing was right for two reasons: first, the danger to Thailand seemed to have receded; secondly, the UN appeal would give the Soviet Union an occasion for propaganda speeches which would further embitter the atmosphere attending the Korean armistice negotiations.

Facing British discouragement and strong French objection, the Thai Cabinet decided to withhold the proposed UN appeal. As the heavy monsoon rains began to set in, the Vietminh forces also appeared to be withdrawing from Laos. But the United States still saw advantage in having Thailand bring the matter to the attention of the United Nations. On receiving the Thai Cabinet's decision from Pote on 11 May, the State Department urged Thailand to raise the question before the Security Council, promising US support, and indicating that the failure to raise the case "would be a great disappointment to the Secretary [of State]".⁶⁶

On 20 May, steeled with firm US support, the Thai government changed its mind and decided to go ahead with the presentation of its case. The French government indicated to the State Department that if the United States should persist in pushing this course of action there would be "serious repercussions in France". The Americans countered that while the French wishes were respected as far as French or Laotian initiatives were concerned, Thailand's desire to bring up the threat to its frontiers was another matter, which, far from affecting the French adversely, would redound to their advantage.⁶⁷ During May and June, the Thai embassy in Washington, in close consultation with the State Department, prepared a draft speech for the Thai ambassador as well as a draft resolution to be presented to the Security Council.

However, on 1 June at the request of French ambassador Bonnet, Dulles advised the Thai to postpone the presentation pending the forming of a new French government.⁶⁸ Then, on 14 June King Norodom Sihanouk, in an attempt to put pressure on France to grant Cambodia full independence, made a dramatic move by exiling himself to Bangkok. In consequence, the French took an extremely hostile attitude toward the issue of UN appeal by Thailand, fearing that it would be inextricably tied in with the situation in Cambodia. Their strong opposition was expressed by Schumann to American ambassador in Paris in such terms: "it would be most difficult now as a result of the Cambodian developments for France not to consider as an unfriendly act continued approval, even though tacit, by the US of any Siamese appeal to the UN".⁶⁹ In view of French hostility, there was thus no question of Thailand acting on behalf of Cambodia in the United Nations. When this was made known to Sihanouk by the Thai government, he cut short his intended stay and returned to Battambang on 20 June.

Meanwhile, in Washington Dulles deferred to French pressure and, now that the Vietminh threat had subsided, withdrew his earlier strong support to the Thai UN appeal. In a meeting with Pote on 22 June, he indicated to him that if the Thai government should present its case before the Security Council prior to the approaching Bermuda Conference scheduled

for 8 July, the United States would not be able to give the Thai complaint its strongest support. It would have to support the Thai presentation in general terms and without specific reference to Indochina, taking care to avoid prejudicing in advance deliberations concerning Indochina at the Bermuda Conference. But if the case were presented after the Bermuda Conference, the US delegation would give strong support to the Thai case subject to conclusions reached at the Bermuda Conference. On hearing this, Pote replied that the Thai government would probably postpone bringing the case pending the outcome of the Bermuda Conference when the course of the United States government could be more positively defined.⁷⁰ On 6 July, Pote told Dulles that the Thai government decided to defer the UN appeal indefinitely. He also set forth the Thai government's position on the Indochina question. First, the three Associated States must be granted real and full independence at the earliest possible moment. Secondly, in view of the absence of adequate regional arrangements or of a pact for collective security, and inasmuch as the three Associated States were not in a position to defend themselves, more troops of the Associated States must be trained and the United States must give direct military and economic assistance to the Associated States in addition to aid given to the French.⁷¹

What this episode shows is that the idea of UN

intervention in Laos was originally conceived by Prince Wan at the time of the French request for Thai military cooperation, out of his desire to have UN legitimacy and protection for Thai action. When Vietminh forces threatened Luang Prabang, the Thai government were anxious to have UN intervention. Dulles, developing the idea further, advised and encouraged the Thai government to request the appointment of a sub-commission of the UN Peace Observation Commission. The goals, as Dulles told the Thai, were to focus world attention on the threat to the security of Thailand and to deter the Vietminh invasion. But the French emphatically objected to any UN debate on Indochina and used the threat of giving up the fight in Indochina to force the United States to back out. Thanks to the adamant opposition from the French and the recession of immediate threat from the Vietminh, the plan fell through. But the Vietminh invasion of Laos in April 1953 had clearly shocked the Thai government and aggravated their fear that Thailand's security was threatened. Their attempt to seek US protection and international support under the auspices of the United Nations was motivated by a genuine desire to counter this threat.

Although the sudden retreat of the Vietminh invaders from Laos following the onset of the heavy monsoon gave Thai political leaders a sense of relief, uncertainties regarding Vietminh intentions remained. In many of the areas they abandoned, the

Vietminh left depots of rice and ammunition, thereby indicating their intention to return.⁷² They also established a base area for the Communist Pathet Lao in Phong Saly and Sam Neua, two Laotian provinces on their border.

Meanwhile, the Eisenhower Administration demonstrated its growing concern for Thailand's security by appointing General William Donovan, former head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), as the new ambassador to Thailand in place of the retired Stanton. According to one source Donovan had been picked for this post by Eisenhower "to prepare the country for an eventual Communist assault".⁷³ On 27 August 1953, Donovan arrived in Thailand accompanied by two military aides. He was followed a few days later by Major General William N. Gillmore, the new head of MAAG. The upgrading of the head of MAAG to an officer of a General rank was evidence of the greater degree of importance that the United States attached to Thailand. Gillmore was to have a seat in a new Defence Committee set up specially for the purpose of close Thai-US military consultation. In September Senator Knowland of California, after spending 3 days in Bangkok, informed the press that he considered a Pacific alliance "inevitable". On 27 October, Vice President Nixon stopped at Bangkok for a three-day visit during his Far East tour, thus becoming the first American Vice-President to visit Thailand. By sending high-ranking officials and prominent

public figures to Thailand, the United States clearly tried to bolster Thailand's morale and stiffen its will to resist Communist pressure. This was thought in Washington to be crucial. On 10 November, the Intelligence Advisory Committee came to an important estimate that Thailand would be most directly affected by a Vietminh victory in Indochina. "Unless the US were able to give Thailand a specific security guarantee and to convince the Thai government that it could safely continue to entrust Thailand's security to the West, Thailand would almost certainly begin to reorient its position toward the Communist bloc."⁷⁴

Thailand for its part also made an effort to strengthen its influence in Laos and Cambodia. The American embassy reported that General Phao's aid offer of 2000 shotguns with 25 shells per gun to the Cambodian King was secretly accepted by the Cambodian Cabinet in November 1953.⁷⁵ These arms were then airshipped to Cambodia. In December, a goodwill mission from Laos visited Bangkok, and the Thai government established a committee composed of top members of the government to promote closer ties with neighbouring states.⁷⁶ In the same month, the Thai ambassador to Cambodia made a speech at Phnom Penh, proposing a Buddhist bloc for mutual defence against communism.⁷⁷ This tentative suggestion apparently had American approval, but it aroused French suspicions of Thai motives. The reactions of the Laotians and Cambodians were

muted, rather than enthusiastic, and in May 1954 Thailand dropped the whole idea of using Buddhism as a unifying force.⁷⁸

Toward the end of 1953, Gillmore recommended to the Thai government and to the US Joint Chiefs of Staff a “Greek type” military assistance program for Thailand. According to his scheme, a Joint United States Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) would participate in strategic and tactical operational planning and advise Thai commanders and their staffs on organization at command levels ranging from the top echelon to units in the field. The reorganization program would require an additional 154 US military personnel, of whom 60 would be commissioned officers.⁷⁹ Gillmore’s recommendation was fully endorsed by Ambassador Donovan who travelled to Washington in December to give full briefing on the Thai situation.

THE UNITED STATES’ “MASSIVE RETALIATION” DOCTRINE

On 12 January 1954, Dulles delivered his famous “massive retaliation” speech to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.⁸⁰ The Secretary of State outlined the goal of US foreign policy which was to increase its deterrent power against Communist aggression at a reduced cost. He stressed the

importance of allies and collective security. "The way to deter aggression is for the free community to be willing and able to respond vigorously at places and with means of its own choosing." In this new strategy, local defence would still be important but its real effectiveness would be to hold any armed invasion long enough for the United States Air Force to strike at the vital industrial and communication centres of any Communist aggressor with "massive retaliatory power". He warned, in relation to Indochina, that "if there were open Red Chinese army aggression there, that would have grave consequences which might not be confined to Indochina".

Dulles' strategy sparked off wide debate both at home and abroad. The doctrine was widely assumed to be founded on an indiscriminating threat to respond to any communist-inspired aggression by means of nuclear strike against the centres of the Soviet Union and China. Critics thought this strategy both ineffective and dangerous.⁸¹ The chance of success of this strategy in Asia was even more remote than in Europe. It lacked credibility since there was no reason to believe that American interests in this area were vital enough to compel the United States' use of "massive retaliation". Nor was it likely that American Congress, American public opinion and American allies would allow the United States to use nuclear weapons in a local Asian war. Furthermore, Asian nations, like their European counterparts,

did not want their countries overrun by Communist troops any more than they desired to be liberated by a nuclear war. However, this interpretation was a misunderstanding of the Eisenhower Administration's policies, as enshrined in the National Security Paper NSC-162/2 of 30 October 1953. This document used the term "massive nuclear retaliation" specifically only in connection with the deterrence of Soviet moves towards a general war with the United States, most likely to begin with aggression against Western Europe. The need to issue a general threat of punishment to areas outside Europe in place of a US contribution to local defence was recognized, but no specific form of this punishment was stated in the document.⁸² The international uproar forced Dulles to clarify that massive nuclear response was just one option among many in the deterrent strategy. Yet he deliberately perpetuated the ambiguity in regard to the circumstance under which "massive retaliation" would be evoked in order to maintain maximum flexibility.⁸³ It looks as though Dulles wished to extend the nuclear threat to Southeast Asia in an attempt to force a favourable resolution of conflict in French Indochina.

To carry out the "new look" policy, the Eisenhower Administration intended to put more emphasis on local defensive force. The Administration argued that Asian ground forces could be maintained at a much lower cost than American ground forces. Thus, while security was maintained, money could

be saved by building up indigenous armies and backing them with American air and naval power. Given this military orientation, the Eisenhower Administration considered the Pibul government as an asset in the Asian region where the new policy could be implemented. The change in basic US policy to the emphasis on massive retaliatory power as a deterrent to aggression and the expansion of local forces was conveyed to the Thai government by Donovan.⁸⁴ It was soon proposed that the size of the Thai army be doubled with American assistance. But there was as yet no formal commitment of the security guarantee that Thailand had been seeking; and without it, the US strategy still lacked credibility. As it transpired, it was the events in Indochina as a whole in the following six months which eventually brought a shift in US policy in regard to its commitment in mainland Southeast Asia.

"UNITED ACTION": THE GENESIS OF SEATO

At the end of 1953, after the end of the monsoon season, Vietminh forces once again overran Laos, this time in central Laos. They reached the Mekong on 26 December and occupied Thakhek, a town on the bank of central Mekong directly opposite the Thai border town of Nakorn Phanom. The Pibul government, greatly alarmed by this development, declared a state of emergency in

nine border provinces and rushed in military reinforcements. But the Vietminh soon withdrew, their objectives were only to disperse French forces and to cause further panic in Paris. The attempt by General Navarre, the French Commander-in-Chief in Indochina, to block the Vietminh attack on northern Laos by reinforcing Dien Bien Phu since November had lost much of its value. In January, the Vietminh launched another diversionary offensive heading for Luang Prabang but advanced no further than the Bac River.⁸⁵ By 23 February 1954, their main forces had returned to Dien Bien Phu. There the French garrison was surrounded, awaiting a major attack from the Vietminh. Dien Bien Phu indeed became a major and decisive battle but the Vietminh troops did not lie idle elsewhere. In April 1954, they invaded northeastern Cambodia and occupied the town of Voeunsai but soon were expelled by Cambodian forces.⁸⁶ In Laos, the Vietminh-backed Pathet Lao under the leadership of Prince Souphanouvong was now firmly established in Sam Neua.⁸⁷

The deterioration of the French position in Indochina was viewed with great concern in Washington. Indochina had been seen by the Eisenhower Administration as “the key which would unlock the door to all of Southeast Asia and endanger the US position in the Western Pacific”.⁸⁸ The United States had agreed to underwrite the Navarre Plan in September 1953 at the cost of \$800 million a year plus large provisions of military

equipment and the lending of planes.⁸⁹ However, the French people, parliament and government were now reluctant to carry on the bloody struggle, at the end of which they knew they would be deprived of the colony their soldiers were fighting to hold on to.⁹⁰ At the four-power Berlin Conference in February 1954, France secured an agreement to place the Indochina problem on the agenda for the Geneva Conference on the Korean War, scheduled to be held in April. Dulles reluctantly agreed to this course; he warned French Foreign Minister Bidault that once peace negotiations were agreed to, there would be a great step-up in military activity on the part of the Vietminh with a view to secure a political victory.⁹¹ On 13 March, the Vietminh launched the expected full-scale attack against Dien Bien Phu.⁹²

On 20 March General Paul Ely, French Chief of Staff, arrived in Washington. The main object of his mission was to ascertain the American attitude in the event of a Chinese air intervention. Dulles avoided making a commitment, pointing out that any engagement of US forces and prestige would have to be under such conditions that success was certain.⁹³ However, Peking would be warned that the Free World would intervene rather than allow the situation to deteriorate any further as a result of Chinese aid to the Vietminh.

With a view to bolstering the French determination to fight and to issuing a fresh warning to the Chinese, Dulles

made the oft-quoted “united action” speech at the Overseas Press Club in New York on 29 March 1954.⁹⁴ He clearly hoped that by threatening allied military intervention he could compel the Chinese to desist from aiding the Vietminh who, in turn, might be forced into making concessions without the need for the United States actually intervening. Much of the thinking behind this strategy of deterrent was contained in the National Security Council document 5405 “US Objectives and Courses of Action with respect to Southeast Asia”. This document stressed the need to deter Communist Chinese aggression in Southeast Asia by issuing in connection with other governments a warning as to the consequences of such aggression. If Chinese Communists overtly intervened in Indochina or covertly participated so as to jeopardize the holding of the Tongking Delta area, the US would support UN action and, whether or not the UN acted, seek military action as a part of a joint effort of interested nations or in the extreme position the US would consider taking action unilaterally. This document was approved by the President on 16 January 1954 and became the basic US policy on Indochina.⁹⁵

On 2 and 3 April Dulles, in separate meetings with the British and French ambassadors, asked for both countries’ views on the possibility of an ad hoc coalition of 10 nations, consisting of France, the three Associated States, the UK, Australia, New

Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines and the US, to be set up prior to the Geneva Conference.⁹⁶ At a meeting between Dulles, Admiral Radford, and eight leading Congressmen on 3 April, unilateral intervention was eliminated as an option. The Congressional leaders insisted that the United States could under no circumstances act alone in this matter but had to be supported by Britain and other allies. Thus, on 4 April, President Eisenhower decided not to intervene in Indochina unless three conditions were met. A coalition would have to be formed; France would have to agree to grant full independence to the Indochinese states; and the French expeditionary force would have to continue to fight in Indochina.⁹⁷

In an urgent message to Churchill on the same day, Eisenhower urged the coalition of states interested in Southeast Asia as a solution for Indochina and suggested a quick trip by Dulles to London and Paris.⁹⁸ On 5 April, Dulles saw the Philippine and Thai ambassadors separately and discussed the “united action” proposal and the ten nations which the US thought should form a collective grouping. In the following days, Dulles also informed other interested states of the US view regarding the organization of this ad hoc grouping before the Geneva Conference. Thailand’s response was prompt. On 9 April, the Thai ambassador informed Dulles that his government accepted the proposed invitation to join in arranging for a

united front against communist aggression in Southeast Asia. Pote was reported to have said that he wanted to strengthen Dulles' hand before his trip to Europe to discuss the scheme with Eden and Bidault.⁹⁹

Dulles arrived in London for discussions with the British government on 11 April. Eden was said to have told him that he saw two separate problems. One was the local problem of defending Indochina, which he was not sure was possible by purely military means. The other was the general problem of the defence of the whole area of Southeast Asia in connection with which it was important to have as many nations as possible in Southeast Asia behind a common effort to hold as much of the area as possible. He believed some form of NATO arrangement might be the solution to the second problem.¹⁰⁰ Eden also indicated to Dulles that it was not possible for the British government to imply that it was going to take action involving very serious commitments when in fact it was not then in a position to make such commitments. On the other hand, he was willing to state publicly in the joint communiqué UK readiness to examine collective defence measures looking toward the security and freedom of the area.¹⁰¹

It is clear that the British disagreed with Dulles' idea of the creation of an ad hoc coalition to make it possible to launch concerted military action without delay if required. They were

reluctant to make commitments prior to the Geneva Conference, and considered it too risky to intervene in Indochina. Churchill and Eden were evidently concerned that the United States wanted as part of joint operations to stop the Vietminh to use the atomic bomb against China. Such actions might lead to a dangerous escalation into wider war and a Soviet nuclear attack on Europe. Primary British interests in Southeast Asia were in Malaya; Thailand was seen as a protective buffer that needed to be bolstered.¹⁰² A permanent, US-backed NATO-type pact with as many Asian members as possible would stabilize the situation and admirably serve British interests in Asia.

In the final meeting with Eden on 13 April, Dulles suggested getting in touch with the British after his return to Washington to see how best to proceed in organizing a united will to resist aggression in Southeast Asia. Eden agreed to the suggestion of the setting up of an informal working group, and said Ambassador Makins in Washington would be available for this purpose.¹⁰³ A joint communiqué was then issued at the end of the talks, recognizing the threat of Communist forces in Indochina to the peace and security of the entire area and stating their readiness to take part with the other countries principally concerned, in “an examination of the possibility of establishing a collective defence”.¹⁰⁴ Dulles left London for Paris apparently convinced that he had secured British agreement to the beginning

of an ad hoc grouping. The Franco-American communiqué issued on 14 April after the Bidault-Dulles talks in Paris contained a similar paragraph to the Anglo-American one regarding the examination of the possibility of establishing a collective defence.

On his return to the United States Dulles invited representatives of the ten nations to discuss “united action” on 20 April. But on 18 April the British ambassador, Sir Roger Makins, informed Dulles that his government had instructed him not to attend the meeting. Eden insisted that there was neither an understanding on his part that a working group would go forward at once nor an agreement between Dulles and himself on the membership. Dulles was furious and accused the British of sabotaging a meeting they had earlier agreed to attend.¹⁰⁵ The meeting had to be changed at the last moment to a briefing session attended by the 16 countries involved in Korea plus the Associated States to cover up the embarrassment. Eden subsequently explained to Dulles that he had overlooked the opening of the Colombo Conference on 26 April when he made the agreement in London and he felt that it would be most undesirable to give any public indication of membership in the program for united action before the end of the Colombo Conference.¹⁰⁶

British refusal to participate in “united action” thwarted Dulles’ immediate aim. The aim of the “united action” proposal

was to fulfill the Congressional precondition for US military intervention in Indochina. Unable to obtain allied support, the Eisenhower Administration was obliged to accept the provisional partition of Indochina as an outcome of the Geneva Conference, an outcome which “united action” was originally intended to prevent. Dulles’ ad hoc coalition scheme was then modified into a long-term alliance system with a view to “prevent further losses to communism”. In this sense, the “united action” proposal could be regarded as the genesis of the Southeast Asia Collective Defence system to be created that September.

THE GENEVA CONFERENCE ON INDOCHINA

The Indochina sessions of the Geneva Conference began on 8 May, in the shadow of the overwhelming Vietminh victory at Dien Bien Phu the day before. Only 5 days earlier Dulles had demonstrated his lack of confidence in the success of the Conference by returning to Washington, leaving Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith in charge of the US delegation. For various domestic reasons, Dulles did not find much room for diplomatic manoeuvre at Geneva. He thus decided to avoid becoming personally involved in the proceedings of the Conference. The failure of the Allies to intervene in Indochina, the feeling of the impotence in face of Communist advance,

and the blow of Dien Bien Phu forced Dulles to begin to think seriously about the idea of a US-Thai mutual defence treaty.

On 9 May, a discussion on Indochina between Dulles, Admiral Radford and Deputy Secretary of Defence Robert B. Anderson took place at Dulles's residence. Dulles asked for Radford's and Anderson's views on a possible negotiation of a "chip on the shoulder" mutual defence treaty with Thailand which might be open-ended to permit other adherents and which might provide for the stationing of a detachment of US troops in Thailand. Dulles made clear that on the latter point he was thinking of the "plate glass window" theory rather than a force sufficiently large effectively to defend Thailand against invasion.

Radford was cool to this idea and strongly asserted that if Indochina were to fall to the Communists there would exist no local military method of preventing the surrender over a period of several years of the rest of the area by Communist infiltration and, he feared particularly in the case of Thailand, political accommodation. Admiral Radford advocated that the only military solution was to go to the source of Communist power in the Far East, i.e., China, and destroy that power.¹⁰⁷

Dulles disagreed with Radford's espousal of a war with China. His idea was more in terms of increasing the deterrent to war. He told the meeting that he thought there was much to the British point of view that if one drew a line in advance then

one served notice on the enemy. At the same time, the enemy would be given an opportunity to retreat or stay his hand, the opportunity which would not be opened if one intervened in a war already under way. But Radford appeared unimpressed.¹⁰⁸

Dulles then drew up a memorandum for the President on the defence of Southeast Asia in the event of the “loss” of Indochina to the Communists. He made a distinction between Communist subversion and overt aggression from Communist China or the Vietminh. In Dulles’ opinion, it was more likely that a Chinese offensive would take the form of subversive and indirect aggression rather than open direct attack and could be countered by some buildup of local forces, as in Thailand; by some token participation of forces of the coalition; and by economic and social measures. But if there was overt military aggression by Communist China or forces which were directed by it, Dulles would agree with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the use of offensive measures, though not necessarily an all-out war against Communist China.¹⁰⁹

Thus, albeit resigning to the prospect of the “loss” of Vietnam, Dulles was determined to hold the rest of Southeast Asia by a policy of collective defence, supplemented by considerable economic and military aid. Thailand would be the bastion in the scheme which might include Laos, Cambodia and anything that could be salvaged from Vietnam.

With a view to building up Thailand as a bastion, Dulles told the Thai chargé d'affaires in Washington on 10 May 1954 that the Thai government should move ahead with its plans for enlarging the armed forces.¹¹⁰ On the same day in Bangkok, General Det Detpratiyut, Army Chief of Staff, when asked to express his view on the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, told the press that Thailand would have no objection to its being used as a military base against the Communists, should it become necessary, because Thailand was not in a position to stay neutral.¹¹¹ This aroused the interest of Bedell Smith, the Under Secretary of State, who raised the subject with both Prince Wan and Pote Sarasin in Geneva. He said to Pote that he had most strongly recommended to the State Department the establishment in Thailand of an air base with fighter planes in the event that the Thai government should request the installation of such a base.¹¹² But in a high-level army reshuffle on 21 May, General Det was suddenly transferred from the chief of staff post to an advisory post in the Ministry of Defence, although he still remained Deputy Minister of Interior. The government spokesman denied that the transfer had anything to do with Det's statement, and affirmed that Thailand was willing to have foreign military bases established in its territory. But he added an important proviso that such a measure was to be under the UN auspices. He also attempted to identify Dulles' initiative with the United Nations

by stating that the decision of members of the proposed regional security organ was tantamount to a UN decision since those members had a controlling voice in the United Nations.¹¹³ He made a further statement that Thailand would be prepared to send troops to fight Communists in Indochina if it were requested by the United Nations.¹¹⁴

Back in Geneva from a week's consultation visit to Bangkok, Pote reported to Smith on 30 May that Pibul thought a foreign base in Thailand would be acceptable only under any one of the following three conditions: first, as a result of UN resolutions, second, as the result of a decision by a collective security organization, third, in connection with a mutual defence pact with the US. The main concern of the Thai government was to build up its own military forces through MAAG; however, Thai economy had deteriorated so seriously that American economic assistance would be needed to help relieve the strain of the military expansion. Finally, Pote stated that Pibul was extremely upset by the exclusion of Thailand from the five-power staff talks to take place in Washington on 3 June. Pibul felt that if Thailand, the first country to respond to Dulles's call for "united action", was left out of the discussions, it would seem as if Washington just took Thailand for granted.¹¹⁵ Despite the protest, the Five Power Staff Agency was convened without Thai participation. As far as the American base was concerned, Pibul's reply

indicated his caution not to provoke China without a prior Western security guarantee.

In the meantime, Dulles, frustrated by the British in his united action initiative, tried to involve the United Nations in Indochina by reviving the plan of the previous year for Thailand's appeal for a UN Peace Observation Commission. On 15 May, the Thai Foreign Minister was asked by Bedell Smith if he would agree to bring back the Indochina matter before the UN. Prince Wan, while agreeing in principle to the idea, expressed his reservation about the timing. Apparently he would prefer to await some specific Vietminh military moves upon which Thailand's action could be based.¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, the Thai government, encouraged by the United States, decided to proceed with the UN appeal. On 29 May, the Thai delegation to the UN submitted a letter of appeal to the Security Council, asking for the dispatch of a Peace Observation Sub-commission to Indochina, on the ground that there existed in the "general area of Thailand" a condition of international tension which not only represented a threat to Thailand but was likely to endanger international peace and security.¹¹⁷ Faced with British and French pressure, Thailand had to modify with great reluctance the wording of its draft resolution.¹¹⁸ In the earlier draft, the Commission would have the authority to despatch the observers as it may deem necessary to any part of the general area of Thailand on the

request of any state concerned, which would specifically extend its scope beyond Thailand. Instead, as stipulated in the amended draft resolution, the observers would be sent to Thailand only, but “without precluding the possibility of sending observers to other parts of the region if invited and if the Commission should so decide”. In any event, the Thai resolution was vetoed in the Security Council by the Soviet Union on 18 June. Prince Wan, the Thai Foreign Minister, then gave notice to the Secretary General of the United Nations on 7 July that the General Assembly put Thailand’s request for a peace observation commission on the agenda, but the date for its consideration would depend on the outcome of the Geneva Conference. This was an attempt to register that the Soviet Union had not been entirely successful yet in blocking the Thai request. In deference to French requests, Thailand agreed to postpone the date for the Assembly debate until after 20 July, the Geneva deadline. After the conclusion of the armistice agreements for Indochina, Thailand did not press for a resumed session but reserved its right to raise the question again, if need be.¹¹⁹

Thailand’s diplomatic move had the immediate objective of strengthening the Western bargaining position in the Geneva negotiations, particularly with respect to the presence of the Vietminh troops in Laos and Cambodia.¹²⁰ It also desired to draw world attention to the threat on Thailand’s border. Pote

Sarasin, the Thai ambassador to the United States, reported to the Security Council that “although up to now my country has not been directly attacked, the situation in territories bordering on Thailand has become so explosive and tension is so high that a very real danger exists that fighting may spread to Thailand and the countries of the area and that foreign troops may effect direct incursions into Thai territory”.¹²¹

But the underlying motive of Thailand’s appeal to the United Nations was to provide a moral and legal basis for the United States to supplant France as the containing force in Laos and Cambodia.¹²² Thailand was very dissatisfied that France had been unable to fulfill the buffer function between its border and Chinese-backed Vietminh forces. The future of Laos and Cambodia was viewed in Bangkok as crucial for Thailand’s security. When the two countries gained their independence, they would not be strong enough to defend themselves without external assistance and protection. Price Wan gave his view to the press on 1 July that any attempt to neutralize these two countries which also deprived them of military and economic assistance would only pave the way for external aggressors and Thailand would be next in line. It was necessary for the West to give assistance and the United Nations must guarantee the integrity and genuine neutrality of Laos and Cambodia. He elaborated that genuine neutrality required both the capacity and willingness of a state to defend itself against aggression.¹²³

The above remark of Prince Wan was an allusion to developments in Geneva, particularly the Vietminh proposal of demilitarized and neutralized Laos and Cambodia and a secret agreement between Chou En-lai and Eden over the future of Laos and Cambodia. Chou told Eden on 16 June that the PRC, he thought, could persuade the Vietminh to withdraw from Cambodia and Laos, and that Peking would recognize their royal governments, provided that no American bases were established in their territories.¹²⁴ Chou's proposal reflected China's own fear of the American threat and its suspicion that the United States planned to use this area as a base contributing to the anti-Chinese strategy of "containment". The prevention of American military installations in the area contiguous to south China was one of the prime concerns of the PRC.

Toward the end of June Churchill and Eden made a trip to Washington in an effort to mend the widening rift in the Anglo-American alliance and Churchill secured from the United States government an agreement to respect an armistice on Indochina if it fulfilled seven conditions.¹²⁵ Eisenhower and Churchill also agreed that they would press forward with plans for collective defence in Southeast Asia irrespective of whether the Geneva Conference was successful or not.¹²⁶

In the meantime, a change of government in France took place. The new French Prime Minister, Mendès-France, set himself

a limit of one month for the achievement of a settlement, making it clear that he would resign if he failed. This new resolve of the French, the clarification of Anglo-American policy, together with Chinese and Russian pressure on the Vietminh led finally to a settlement on 20 July 1954. The Geneva Agreements partitioned Vietnam and cast Cambodia and Laos for a neutral role. Except for a total of 1500 French defence and training forces in Laos, all foreign troops were to be withdrawn from the two countries under the supervision of tripartite international control commissions. In Eden's view, neutralized Laos would assume a role of a protective pad between Thailand and the Communist part of Vietnam.¹²⁷

American approval of the settlement went no further than a unilateral statement that it "took note" of the agreements made and that it would "refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them," and it was added that the United States would "view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."¹²⁸ On 21 July, Eisenhower issued a statement affirming this position and stated that "the United States is actively pursuing discussions with other free nations with a view to the rapid organization of a collective defense in Southeast Asia in order to prevent further direct or indirect communist aggression in that general area."¹²⁹ With reluctant

American consent, Britain queried the Colombo powers about participating in the collective defence system. Apart from Pakistan, the replies from the other Colombo powers were negative. The Indian rejection was not unwelcome to the United States and Thailand. Pote Sarasin was once reported to have said that “collective arrangements which included India would insure united inaction rather than united action.”¹³⁰

By 5 August, the State Department had produced a draft of the treaty to be circulated to allies for negotiation and approval. The treaty was regarded by the Eisenhower Administration, deeply embarrassed by the outcome of the Geneva Conference which exposed the United States’ powerlessness to prevent the Communists from achieving territorial gains, as a means to prevent further “losses” to the Communists. Dulles said, “I hope we will be able to draw a line which will run north of Burma and include all of Laos and Cambodia and Vietnam south of the partition line at the 17th parallel.”¹³¹ The collective defence system would ensure that in any future contingency the Congressional stipulation regarding the need for allies would be readily met and the US could act more speedily. In Eisenhower’s view, with the Manila Pact, “the dilemma of finding a moral, legal, and practical basis for helping our friends of the region need not face us again.”¹³²

On 8 August, it was reported that the main purposes of

the pact as now envisaged by American officials were to warn China against any overt aggression in the region; to provide treaty obligations by other states to join the United States in this effort; to strengthen the military and national police establishments of Thailand and other countries, such as the Philippines; and to build up the economies of Thailand and the Philippines as well as other non-member nations of Asia.¹³³ Throughout August formal negotiations to establish the collective defence system were hurriedly carried out, and the delegations of Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippine Republic, Thailand, and the United States agreed to meet in conference at Manila on 6 September 1954.

THE MANILA TREATY

Thanks to the armistice agreements in Geneva, Thailand's attempt to effect UN involvement in Indochina had been aborted. The Thai government thus looked forward to the Manila Conference as the sole remaining viable route for security protection. On his departure to Manila, Prince Wan, the Thai Foreign Minister, told a press conference that Thailand wanted a strong Southeast Asian defence agreement as nearly in substance to the NATO Treaty as possible. But he admitted that circumstances in Asia were different from those in Europe and might

make a NATO-like arrangement impossible. He identified two kinds of danger to Thailand: one was the threat of aggression still shrouded in uncertainty, the other the danger of Communist infiltration and subversion.¹³⁴

Thailand's apprehension of the danger of subversion was freshly stimulated by the sudden emergence of Pridi Banomyong in Peking. In an article in the *People's Daily* (*Jenmin Jihpao*) broadcast on Radio Peking on 30 July 1954, he extolled the peaceful intention of China, praised the five principles of peaceful coexistence, and attacked the efforts of the American and Thai governments to set up a military alliance. He called upon the Thai people to "wage a struggle against American imperialism and the reactionary government of Thailand".¹³⁵ The resurrection of Pridi by the Chinese government was evidently Peking's last-ditch attempt to discourage Thailand from entering the SEATO alliance. It did not achieve the desired effect and Pridi was never again used as its propaganda tool.¹³⁶ The Thai government reacted strongly, linking Pridi's sudden emergence to the establishment of the "Free Thai State" in southern Yunnan the year before. It concluded that the Chinese Communists were adopting the same method in Thailand as in Vietnam by making use of nationalistic ideals as a pretext "in fomenting disaffection and false belief among the Thai people at home to rid themselves of American imperialism".¹³⁷

Pridi's appearance in Peking tended to confirm the Thai government's suspicions that all along Pridi had been behind the Thai Autonomous People's Government. It also added credibility to other reports the government was receiving in August and September from Taiwan and other intelligence sources. These reports about Chinese Communist troop concentrations in Yunnan and alleged collaboration between the PRC government and Pridi to overthrow the government in Bangkok aroused inordinate fears within the Thai government of a Chinese Communist threat.¹³⁸ On 14 September 1954 Pibul in his capacity of the Defence Minister directed the Foreign Minister to renew the appeal to the United Nations. But the move was opposed by the British. A Thai memorandum given to the British, French and American delegations to the United Nations on 1 October pointed to Pridi as a prominent threat, postulating that the Chinese Communists had promised to support Pridi and to supply him with military advisers to train the Free Thai Forces, 5,000 of whom were about to receive training in Yunnan with Pridi as their commander. The memorandum further claimed that "the Free Thais, the Vietminh and the Chinese Communists had agreed among themselves that the Chinese Communists would train and equip ten thousand Chinese overseas volunteers for the purpose of infiltration into Thailand."¹³⁹ It cited the Peace Committee of Thailand and the arrests of Pridi's Communist

followers in November 1952 as evidence of subversion. Finally it concluded,

It is in the expectation of the Thai authorities that Pridi's aggressive designs may be launched with the support of the Chinese Communists and the Vietminh after the rainy season, possibly in January 1955, by inciting the Thai people in the eastern and northern parts of the country to rebellion, in cooperation with trained Chinese and Vietminh agents who will have infiltrated there, and at the same time moving into Thailand the Free Thai forces for the overthrow of the Government.¹⁴⁰

Thailand's interpretation of the establishment of the Autonomous Area and its connexion with Pridi as an aggressive Communist plan was rejected by the British as unconvincing. The British gave a number of reasons for dismissing Thai claims of the Chinese Communist threat from Yunnan. First, they regarded the establishment of an Autonomous Area in China as essentially an aspect of Peking's domestic policy to bring various minorities living in border areas closer to central government. Secondly, the British argued that the Thai Autonomous Area contained only 10% of the Thai population in Yunnan, thus it did not support the allegation that Peking intended to form the foundation of a Pan Thai Movement. Thirdly, the Chinese People's Government could still have used Cheli as a centre for harbouring political

exiles from Thailand, for spreading subversive propaganda, and as a base for military operations, without creating an Autonomous Area. Fourthly, ethnic divisions did not correspond to political frontiers in Southeast Asia. A Pan Thai Movement would thus appear to have little chance of success. Finally, the British pointed out that neither Burma nor Laos, which also had a large Thai population, had shown alarm; they apparently felt that the Thai Autonomous Area constituted no immediate threat to their security. First Secretary of the British UN delegation, Ramsbotham, told his Thai counterpart, Thanat Khoman, that the British believed that various reports concerning the Thai Autonomous Area in Yunnan and the assistance given to Pridi's Free Thai forces were propaganda emanating from Taiwan. The British asked the Thai government for more information, "based on full and convincing evidence," before they could consider giving full support to Thailand's UN appeal.¹⁴¹

Darling, in his book *Thailand and the United States*, dismissed the alleged menace of Communist subversion from the Thai Autonomous People's Government as exaggerated because the Thai inhabitants in Yunnan were backward tribesmen with little prestige and support in Thailand. The possibility of Pridi leading these primitive people in a struggle against the Pibul regime was in his view very remote.¹⁴² Evidence from Thai documents suggests that during August 1954, the month

preceding the Manila meeting, the Thai government, given false information by outside scaremongers, was seized by paranoia and overly preoccupied with its security.

Prince Wan's objective in Manila was to get as strong a defence treaty as possible. This, however, did not correspond with the view of Secretary of State Dulles, who apparently had misgivings about the Manila treaty even before his departure from Washington. "The French and British are blocking everything we want to do," Dulles was quoted as saying in a telephone conversation on 30 August 1954 with his aide, Livingston T. Merchant. According to the memorandum on Dulles' call, the Secretary of State

has great reservations about the Treaty – whether it will be useful in the mood of the participants – whether we are not better off by ourselves. This running away from the word Communist; the unwillingness to allow unofficial observers to come from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia; and the objection to our having any military mission to Cambodia are examples. They seem to have no desire or intention to hold the balance of Indochina. By going into a treaty of this sort, we limit our own freedom of action. Once we sign, then we have to consult regarding any action. They are more concerned with trying not to annoy the Communists rather than stopping her.¹⁴³

Dulles was particularly disturbed when his Allies objected

to having the word “communist” appear in the preamble of the SEATO treaty. Dulles wanted the word included to make clear that the treaty dealt only with aggression from the Communist area so as to avoid getting involved in India-Pakistan disputes. The memorandum of the phone call said that Dulles had “serious question whether he should go or not”. But Merchant insisted that it was important that the Secretary attended the Manila conference because the effect of his absence on the Thais and the Cambodians would be “fatal”.¹⁴⁴

The wording of the Southeast Asia Collective Defence treaty, signed on 8 September 1954, resembled the ANZUS treaty rather than the NATO treaty. Article IV of the Manila Pact specifies that “each party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any of the parties or against any State or territory which the parties, by unanimous agreement, may hereafter designate would endanger its own peace and safety and agrees that it will, in that event, act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.”¹⁴⁵

Thus, an attack against one of the SEATO members would be viewed as a “common danger” rather than as an “attack on all”. Where NATO prescribes action “forthwith”, SEATO requires only that the “common danger” be “met in accordance with constitutional processes”. Dulles insisted on the “constitutional

processes" formulation similar to the ANZUS treaty to prevent the resurgence of such controversy within Congress as that which had accompanied the automatic response provision of the NATO treaty.¹⁴⁶ A unified SEATO command on the NATO model or a joint military force was also rejected. Dulles explained that "the United States' responsibilities were so vast and so far-flung that we believed that we would serve best not by earmarking forces for particular areas of the Far East, but by developing the deterrent of mobile striking power, plus strategically placed reserves".¹⁴⁷ Moreover, Dulles added a unilateral understanding to the treaty text that, as far as the United States was concerned, the commitment was to "apply only to Communist aggression". In the event of other aggression or armed attack the United States agreed to "consult" with member states.

In Article II, the parties agreed to maintain and develop through effective self-help and mutual aid "their individual and collective capacity . . . to prevent and counter subversive activities directed from without against their territorial and political stability." The provision reflected both the view that subversion was the more imminent threat in Southeast Asia and the difficulty of how to deal with it. It provided for immediate consultation when, in the opinion of any one of the parties, a threat had arisen to territorial integrity, sovereignty, or political independence "in any way other than by armed attack".

The treaty area as defined by Article VIII was “the general area of South East Asia including also the entire territories of the Asian parties and the general area of the South-West Pacific not including the Pacific area north of 21 degrees 30 minutes north latitude.” The northern boundary in the Pacific excluded both Hong Kong and Taiwan, as a tradeoff between Britain and the United States. The alliance was established to guarantee the partition line in Indochina but the three non-Communist states were prevented from becoming members because of understandings that the British and French delegations had reached with Chou En-lai at Geneva.¹⁴⁸ Thus, the States of Cambodia and Laos and “the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam” were permanently designated part of the treaty area by virtue of a special protocol. It meant these three states were not full members of the alliance but were given the rights to invoke the protection of the treaty, if they so wished. Both the United States and Thailand had wanted to include them in SEATO but their membership might have been seen as a contravention of the Geneva Agreements.

The success or failure of an alliance does not depend as much on the wording of the treaty document as on the existence of a strong community of interest of its members. When SEATO was founded, none of the signatories shared either common perceptions of security needs or identical expectations of

the alliance and as the alliance evolved their differences widened. The British, for example, saw the alliance as an instrument by which the Geneva settlement could be guaranteed and regional stability ensured, although they would have preferred a larger Asian membership. In addition, they saw SEATO as a means to correct the ANZUS anomaly; namely, their exclusion from the Pacific defence system. French interest in the regional alliance was restricted to the wish to preserve their residual political, economic and cultural influence in Indochina. The United States, however, regarded the alliance as a useful constitutional device to permit its prompt military intervention in the region, should the need arise. Its main objectives were to assure Thai leaders of American determination to defend Thailand, and to extend its protective umbrella to protocol states in Indochina. But it was also hoped that the treaty would have a deterrent effect so that American armed intervention needed not arise.

The absence of India, Indonesia and Burma from SEATO reduced its Asian membership to a minority. At the same time, the participation of Pakistan (then comprising Bangladesh) in this anti-communist alliance was somewhat incongruous, as its leaders openly admitted that their primary purpose in joining Western military alliances was to strengthen their position in their struggle with India. Pakistan's concern with Communist aggression was a secondary priority as evident from its tardiness

in ratifying its membership in January 1955 out of deference to the United States and expectation of increased economic aid.

The principal beneficiary of the Manila treaty was Thailand. Although the Manila treaty was not quite as close to the NATO treaty as Thailand would have liked, it constituted at least a formal defence commitment which the Thai government had sought from the United States for so long. For the first time it had the right to invoke the assistance of the Western powers directly without having to go through the United Nations if it were attacked. Thailand also welcomed the inclusion of Laos and Cambodia, whose defence it regarded as essential to its own security, among the protocol states. The alacrity of Thailand in accepting the Manila treaty was demonstrated by the speed in which the treaty was ratified, two weeks after the conclusion of the Manila Conference. For Thailand the Manila treaty was valued less for the multilateral framework it established than as a means to formalize a bilateral military alliance with the United States. A formal security relationship with the United States would ensure increased and regular American economic and military aid.

Even before the Manila Conference the United States had stepped up its aid program to enhance Thailand's military capability. On 9 April 1954, the State Department advised the Thai ambassador to suggest that his government promptly

request through the chief of JUSMAG in Bangkok necessary support and training for an army of about 90,000 men, including funds for soft goods.¹⁴⁹ This would double the size of the Thai army that was equipped and trained under MDAP. The US administration also considered plans for the development of a National Guard with special training to number about 100,000 men to supplement the regular armed forces and the police in Thailand. As the police were initially responsible for border patrol and defence, the United States drew up plans to develop specialized training camps for 45,000 police. Other measures included funds to build the strategically important Saraburi-Ban Phai Highway at the cost of about \$7.5 million.¹⁵⁰ This 297-mile highway, linking another highway north of Bangkok through Khorat to Khon Khaen province in the heartland of the Northeast, was considered as early as December 1953 to be of strategic rather than economic significance from the United States' viewpoint. In an embassy telegram from Bangkok, it was asserted that "if ever necessary to engage military operations in Thailand, the absence of this highway could seriously endanger successful operations".¹⁵¹

In connection with this armed forces expansion program a Thai military mission headed by General Sarit Thanarat, newly-appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army, was invited to Washington to hold talks with high US defence officials in July 1954. At the end of Sarit's visit the United States government

informed him that it agreed to allocate approximately \$25 million as additional military assistance for the purpose of strengthening the Thai armed forces. This grant would be used to improve the overall military training program, to increase the production of qualified junior and non-commissioned officers and technical personnel, and to extend MDAP support to that part of the Thai armed forces not yet so supported. In addition, the United States government approved the allocation of \$3 million toward the construction of the Saraburi-Banphai highway.¹⁵²

General Sarit returned to Bangkok on 27 July with credit for having secured substantial military aid from the United States. Having been awarded the Legion of Merit by General Ridgeway, the Chief of Staff of the US Army, Sarit gained a great deal of political prestige and enhanced his stature at home. Not to be outdone by his rival, General Phao, in his capacity of Deputy Minister of Finance, led an economic team to Washington in November 1954. He returned home suitably decorated with the Legion of Merit awarded by Secretary of the Army, Robert B. Stevens, for “exceptionally meritorious service” in fostering American-Thai relations.¹⁵³ But more importantly, he announced on arriving in Bangkok his impressive success in securing \$28.2 million in economic grant aid from the United States government.

The purpose of Phao’s trip to Washington was to add political weight to the Thai request for budget support from the

United States. Thai Government budgeting had been running into difficulty due to heavy defence expenditure and large development programs. Its revenue had not kept up with expenditure and its foreign exchange earnings had fallen substantially because of a decline in both demand and price for Thailand's principal exports such as rice, tin and rubber in 1953 and 1954. It was estimated that foreign exchange earnings would fall from \$352.4 million in 1953 to \$284 million in 1954.¹⁵⁴ Sarit had already added his voice to this concern by stating on his return from Washington that "we cannot increase our forces to the point where we would ruin the economic welfare of our country. That is why US aid is so essential. Yet we are willing and anxious to enlarge our armed forces to the utmost."¹⁵⁵ On 21 September, the Thai government found it necessary to make an official request to the US government to waive its obligation to furnish local currency for the administrative and operating expenditure of the JUSMAG mission in Thailand.¹⁵⁶ This would have necessitated a revision of Article VIII of the 1950 Military Assistance Agreement and thus was rejected by the United States for fear of creating a precedent.¹⁵⁷

On 31 October 1954, the Thai government submitted a formal request for large additional loan and grant aid from the United States. The amount of the loan requested was \$153,590,000 over six years for development projects such as power

development, telecommunications, railways and harbour improvement. In addition to these long-term development loans, the Thai government requested budget aid amounting to \$36,841,000, of which \$30,431,000 was itemized as military armed forces support.¹⁵⁸

The United States considered the Thai request sympathetically. As Harold E. Stassen, the Director of Foreign Operations Administration, was advised by the State Department, “since there is no prospect for a substantial improvement in Thailand’s revenues and foreign exchange earnings, the country will require additional external financing to maintain its present military forces, and to cover the cost of development projects necessary for (a) countering communist threats at subversion and (b) defense support.”¹⁵⁹ But Phao’s presence in Washington was also crucial in securing immediate US assurance. The State Department considered that it would be seriously damaging to US interests in Thailand for General Phao to receive no more than a general assurance of sympathetic consideration by the United States of Thailand’s aid request. He has been a strong supporter of US objectives in Thailand, has cooperated closely with US agencies, and is a leading political figure – a likely successor to Field Marshal Phibun as Prime Minister. For these political reasons, a firm commitment to General Phao of some increased assistance to Thailand is considered necessary, prior

to final review of the total grant and loan program proposed by the field.¹⁶⁰

Thus, by this time, the US administration was willing to accommodate Phao as a potential future leader and, in order to make his visit a success, decided to make an immediate commitment to grant \$28.2 million in support of Thailand's budget.¹⁶¹ It should be noted that this new type of American aid, budgetary support, was requested only one month after Thailand had ratified the Manila treaty.

At the first SEATO Ministerial Council meeting in Bangkok in February 1955, Pibul used the occasion to impress on the visiting delegates what he believed to be the grave communist danger to the states of Southeast Asia. Just before the conference opened, he declared that 20,000 "Free Thai" troops were being massed by the Chinese Communists near the northern Thai border. These forces, he claimed, were sufficient to invade Thailand and conquer the region. During the conference, the Asian delegates urged the establishment of a unified military command, a joint mobile striking force, and token American troops to be stationed at strategic posts within the treaty area. But Dulles again voiced his preference for large local ground forces in the region supported by mobile American air and naval power. He explained that SEATO was only one force in the containment of communism in Asia. Taiwan, Japan and South

Korea, he added, were other closely related fronts which had to be bolstered by massive retaliatory power. The United States could not overextend its limited military resources to any single region. However, in order to re-emphasize Thailand's pivotal role in the organization, Bangkok was selected as its headquarters and, in a subsequent SEATO meeting, Pote Sarasin was chosen as its first Secretary-General.

CONCLUSION

Thailand's decision to join the SEATO alliance was influenced by the perception of threat. This threat was claimed by the Thai government to have come from Communist China through three intermediaries: the Communists inside Thailand, the Pridi-Thai Autonomous People's Government axis based in Yunnan, and the Vietminh. As the research shows, Thai government claims of an internal Communist plot were spurious. The anti-Communist campaign begun in November 1952, giving rise to the passing of the Anti-Communist Activities Act, was a masquerade for an internal power struggle between Pibul and Phao. The direct consequence was the arrest of political opponents, namely the left-wing Peace Committee of Thailand, who were former associates of Pridi, and Chinese Communists. The Peace Committee of Thailand had become a source of irritation and

embarrassment for the government, criticizing at every turn its foreign and domestic policies, while Pridi's associates were often convenient scapegoats. The fact that some of them had slipped out to attend the Peking Peace Conference probably heightened Pibul's fear of Pridi's intrigue. As to the Chinese Communists, their arrest at the later stage of the campaign suggests a design to mobilize public support for government measures and to add authenticity to the claim of a communist plot. No doubt, their arrest was intended to please Western governments, which had sedulously urged the Thai government to adopt stern anti-Communist measures.

There are reasons to believe that the Thai government was also influenced by information supplied by Taiwan sources about Communist activities in Thailand. That Taiwan had an interest in seeing the Thai government take suppressive measures against the Communist elements in the Chinese community in Thailand was easy enough to see. But its motives in kindling Thailand's fear of Communist China could be ascribed to its desire to maintain KMT troops in the Shan States. It is true that since an airstrip became operationable in Monghsat in March 1952, Thailand was no longer an essential supply base. But it was still seen as a convenient transit route of supply to these troops. Therefore, the Taiwan government wished Thailand to appreciate the presence of KMT troops as a buffer force against Communist

aggression, and to continue to provide assistance for them. But the Thai government was no longer interested in such a policy. The KMT offensives in Yunnan had been a *débâcle*, exposing their military uselessness. Moreover, Burma was threatening to bring the matter before the United Nations with the embarrassing prospect of Thailand's connivance being disclosed and possibly condemned. Even the United States was revising its policy and withdrawing its support for the KMT.

Propaganda and rumours from Taiwan did play a prominent role in shaping the attitude of the Thai government toward Peking's move in setting up the Thai Autonomous People's Government in Yunnan. The linking of Pridi with this Chinese Communist creation was effective in stimulating the Thai leaders' apprehension of Communist China. That fear was aggravated by Pridi's sudden public appearance in Peking in July 1954 and his call for a struggle of the Thai people against the Thai government and American imperialism. Peking's intention, it seems, was to use Pridi as pressure on Thailand in order to prevent it from entering the impending SEATO alliance. Instead, Thai leaders were convinced that the People's Republic of China was hostile toward Thailand. Thus, they were inclined to believe reports that Chinese Communists were assembling troops in Yunnan to invade Thailand.

But between the setting up of the Thai Autonomous

Area in Yunnan and the emergence of Pridi, another threat was apparent and probably caused Thailand the greatest alarm. Vietminh incursions into Laos and Cambodia in 1953-54 not only heightened Thai apprehensions of Communist expansion but also revived the historic Thai-Vietnamese contest for domination of the two buffer states. Having often been open to military and political pressures from Burma to the west and Vietnam to the east in the pre-colonial era, the Thai government has always had an overriding concern for border security. Security for Thailand had come to be seen as requiring the friendship or allegiance of those principalities that surrounded the Bangkok heartland; the kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia belonged to this category on the eastern flank. Together they performed an age-old function of protective pads or buffers. The imminent departure of the French would leave Thailand's ancient buffers of Laos and Cambodia in a power vacuum and exposed to strong Vietminh influence. Pibul himself was reported to have told the British chargé d'affaires on 24 August 1953 that "the decline of French influence would mean that the Siamese must carefully consider where power would eventually reside in the Associated States. It was essential that neither the Vietminh nor the Chinese Communists should take over where the French left off".¹⁶² The ancient methods adopted by Thai rulers had been to exert influence in both Laos and Cambodia to provide a defensive

zone outside their own area of direct jurisdiction; if they had to fight at all, Thai kings preferred fighting in adjacent lands rather than on their own soil. In the modern period this old strategy had to be modified as external great powers were engaged on the other side. In order to maintain the regional balance of power, Thailand identified the United States as the strongest external power which could be drawn to exercise its power vis-à-vis China in support of Thailand's interests and to replace the French in protecting its buffers.

Another piece of history which had a relevant influence on Thailand's decision was the personal experience of some Thai leaders in the pre-war period. As the Thai Foreign Minister, Prince Wan Waithayakon, stated in his opening speech at the Manila conference, "For the preservation of peace and security, Thailand has tried many policies in the past, such as those of neutrality and of non-aggression treaties but found that they did not work, nor can any reason be seen why they should work now."¹⁶³ This was a clear reference to the first Pibul era when Thailand had declared a policy of strict neutrality and yet failed to prevent the Japanese invasion of Thailand in December 1941. Now that the French position in Indochina once again collapsed and northern Vietnam was surrendered to the Communists at the Geneva Conference, it was inevitable that Thai policy-makers would draw parallels with the events of 1940 and 1941. After all,

occupations of northern Vietnam had been the first step in the Japanese conquest of Southeast Asia. Significantly, both Pibul and Prince Wan were the dominant foreign policy figures in that earlier period too, and they had clearly learned from the experience that being a small power, Thailand needed a strong protector to deter external aggression. In their views, a policy of neutrality or a playing-off tactic could be pursued successfully in times of conflict, only when a country was strong enough to influence the balance of power.

But the success or failure of Thailand's efforts to rely on a friendly external power for protection was, as often in the past, dependent on the policy of that power. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the Thai government had long sought a security guarantee from the United States. American administrations, however, had been unwilling to undertake defence commitments on the mainland of Southeast Asia. Their involvement had been limited to the extension of economic and military aid to underpin the sympathetic Pibul regime and to prevent a reorientation of Thailand's foreign policy which might have been adverse to US interests.

The defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu and the outcome of the Geneva Conference in July 1954 caused the Eisenhower Administration to alter this policy. Already in April the French position in Indochina deteriorated so much that

Eisenhower and Dulles seriously considered a policy of military intervention to save France from defeat in Indochina. Thailand showed its willingness to support American intervention, first by responding positively and promptly to Dulles' "united action" proposal, and, then by appealing for a UN Peace Observation Sub-commission. As Dulles' ad hoc coalition scheme was stifled by the British, it was replaced by a long-term plan for a regional collective defence organization. Such an organization would enable the United States to fulfill the Congressional precondition for military intervention. Meanwhile, Dulles' strategy in Asia was to strengthen local defence capabilities and threaten massive retaliation as a deterrent; it was hoped that, given the clarification of American interests by means of this alliance, coupled with the more explicit threat, American retaliatory power would be a sufficient deterrent and would spare the US the problem of engaging American ground forces in local Asian wars.

The American decision to make a commitment in the form of a multilateral military alliance met Thailand's basic objective. Despite its disappointment in not getting an alliance identical to NATO, Thailand demonstrated its enthusiasm for the Manila treaty by becoming the first country to ratify the treaty. From the government's point of view, the security afforded by the treaty was then considered to outweigh the attendant obligations and the restrictions on its independence of action.

SEATO also provided for a formalized channel and a claim for greater American economic assistance. Thus, the decision to join a formal military alliance was well in line with the prevailing policy of obtaining more American economic and military aid. But in 1954 the perception of external threat, the traditional motive for joining a military alliance, subordinated other considerations and constituted the immediate reason for Thailand's entry into the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty Organization.

CHAPTER

7

CONCLUSION

The Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty was, essentially, a framework of an American commitment to Thailand. The Pibul government had consistently sought and encouraged such an American commitment. Since 1950, Pibul had striven to fashion Thailand as a firm and reliable ally of the United States by taking such cooperative actions as the Bao Dai decision, the participation in the Korean War, the supportive votes in the UN, the assistance to KMT troops, and the support for Dulles' "united action" proposal in 1954. In view of the independence of ideas on the part of his European allies, Dulles obviously appreciated the apparent loyalty of this small Asian partner. Thailand's prompt response to the "united action" call and its readiness to cooperate in bringing the Indochina crisis before the United Nations especially placed Dulles under an obligation. When the Thai plan to appeal to the Security Council in 1954 encountered once again British and French opposition, Dulles stood fast. He wrote to Bedell Smith on 28 May 1954 as follows:

Last Fall the Thais were ready to go ahead and papers were all drawn. Then at [the] last minute we advised them to give in to pressure from the French. Now again they are ready to go and have sent [a] representative especially to New York for [the] purpose and [the] matter has received wide publicity. In my opinion [the] US will appear as

totally bankrupt, incompetent and undependable if we now repeat the performance of last year and tell the Thais we will not support them.¹

The Thai also made sure Dulles was fully aware of their desire for a security guarantee. A mutual defence treaty or a regional security pact was set as one of their preconditions for further cooperation when Bedell Smith made an enquiry concerning a proposal of an air base in Thailand. While Dulles was frustrated in his effort to arrange an ad hoc coalition to issue a joint warning to China in response to the crisis in Indochina, he felt obliged to show his determination not only to the enemies and the American public, but also to his Asian friends. The SEATO alliance was thus created although a permanent organization which would engage the United States to the defence of Southeast Asia was never quite intended by the United States. In fact, "united action" was originally perceived to have only an ad hoc function. Moreover, the United States had no justifiable material or strategic interest in the area, as reflected in its earlier avoidance of such a defence commitment to Thailand. From the outset, the American commitment to SEATO was half-hearted. The United States ensured its freedom of action by refraining from a NATO-like commitment, and by refusing to set up permanent forces under a SEATO command.

In their search for protection, the Thai were aided by

Britain, which pursued its own strategic objectives. When Dulles met Eden on 25 April 1954, for example, Eden suggested a secret study of a joint Anglo-American guarantee of the Thai frontier instead of an immediate allied air intervention to save Dien Bien Phu.² Apparently, after the Laotian crises in 1953, the British felt that Pibul needed a specific multilateral guarantee in contrast to the way he had been left in the lurch in 1941. From the British point of view, Thailand could perform the role of defensive buffer for Malaya and Singapore. Thus, during the Geneva negotiations, a consensus was gradually formed between the State Department and Foreign Office that any future long-term defence system was to focus on Thailand.³

As the Geneva Conference reached its conclusion, the British felt that a collective regional system of security which included as many Asian states as possible would create a condition of political stability in the area. But the idea that China could be given a responsible part in guaranteeing the Geneva settlement and maintaining the regional stability encountered hostile American reactions. The United States wanted to draw a line and prevent further “losses” to communism by organizing a military alliance as a deterrent. The inclusion of the three Indochina states in the protective umbrella of SEATO was strongly supported by the Thai. Prince Wan told the Manila Conference that these three countries “deserve to be protected on their

own merits and, as a representative of Thailand, I should also say, as neighbours to my country".⁴ The real motive of the Thai government then was in fact to bring American power to fill the vacuum left by France in the buffer zones between Thailand and Communist Vietnam and China.

The perception of threat was indeed one of the motivating forces underlying Thailand's decision to join the alliance. But other forces were no less significant. These included the domestic political needs of Pibul and the Coup Group; the long tradition of the Thai conservative élite to seek protection from the strongest external power; and the personal awareness, gained in the prewar years by government leaders, of the disadvantages inherent in the policy of neutrality and the playing-off tactic.

From a Thai perspective, the SEATO alliance is a result of a long and continuous campaign by the Pibul government to get Western protection and assistance. The campaign began soon after the November 1947 coup d'état had restored Pibul to power. Having been associated with Japan during the Second World War, Pibul needed to regain international acceptance in order to maintain himself in power. The anti-colonial rhetoric of the previous government was discarded and a pro-Western policy was adopted. Britain was conciliated by police cooperation along the Thai-Malayan border; France was reassured that Thailand

had no territorial design in Indochina; and the United States was told that he was staunchly anti-Communist. Struggling to sustain his authority, Pibul tried to increase the dependency of the Coup Group on him in foreign affairs, while building up the police force as his own power base.

In August 1949 he launched a campaign to win Western financial and military assistance for Thailand. The campaign was intended to convince the West that Thailand was seriously anti-Communist, that it was ready to fight communism alongside the Western democracies, and that all it needed was arms and equipment. On 5 January 1950 the Thai government, with full knowledge that the United States was considering giving military aid to Thailand, submitted a formal request for a large amount of arms for the Thai armed forces. Pibul's decision to recognize the Bao Dai government needs to be seen in the context of the Thai request for military aid and the belief among the Thai military leaders that the two issues were linked.

The Thai motive then was not the fear of Communist subversion as implied by Nuechterlein.⁵ It is true that Thailand feared China and did not desire a powerful Chinese diplomatic representation in Bangkok in view of the large and economically powerful Chinese minority in Thailand. But the fear of Communist subversive threat had not really become a major consideration until 1953. By overlooking the Thai domestic context,

Nuechterlein was led to place too much reliance on the Thai government public comments, and thereby overemphasizing the Communist threat in his analysis. His speculations that the dissension of Pibul and Pote centred on the question of whether to commit Thailand decisively to one side or to remain neutral was also wide of the mark.⁶ Pote was himself as pro-American and anti-Communist as Pibul, but he stood by the principle that Bao Dai was a French puppet and to recognize it would merely serve to perpetuate French colonialism in Indochina, a view he still maintains today.⁷ On the other hand, Kenneth Patton, the American adviser to the Thai Foreign Ministry, was of the opinion that a decision to recognize Bao Dai would antagonize the neighbouring people who were emerging from their colonial status. Ho Chi Minh was then seen in Southeast Asia more as a nationalist than a Communist. Patton's advice was the view both Pibul and Pote subscribed to until 9 February 1950. Pibul's decision to recognize Bao Dai was not a result of the meeting with Jessup as conventionally suggested. It was his own personal decision made before he met Jessup, but after persistent persuasion by American, British and French diplomats in Bangkok. He was then supported in the Cabinet by the military clique which believed the decision would speed up American military aid.

Nuechterlein, however, was right in drawing attention to the underlying pattern of Thai foreign policy: "in acting in

time of danger to align Thailand with the strongest power in Asia".⁸ That was the tradition of the Thai conservative élite in their conduct of Thai foreign affairs, first initiated by Thai leaders in the reign of King Mongkut and continued right up to the coup d'état in 1932. The foreign policy outlook in the years covered in this thesis was indeed influenced by the long experience of Thailand in international relations. In the pre-colonial era, Thailand had continually been involved in intense rivalries and conflicts with its neighbours. The political affiliation of its tributary border principalities, regarded as buffers against strong neighbours, often occupied a central place in Thailand's security considerations. With the introduction of European colonial powers in the regional system of international relations, Thailand faced a new threat to its survival. In response, Thailand adopted two strategies: one was a policy of accommodation, the other was to seek a countervailing power as its protector. Both strategies owed their success entirely to the interest and attitude of the dominant power in question.

The fact that Great Britain had been unwilling to enter into a formal security relationship with Siam in the nineteenth century obscures the real nature of Thailand's foreign policy and portrays a false image of Thailand being ready to play one power off against another. It was in fact Great Britain on which the Thai leaders ultimately relied as the external protector against

French colonial expansion. British refusal to save Siam's Laotian territories in 1893 forced the Thai to surrender before French ultimatum. But when the independence of Siam itself was threatened by France, Britain intervened to safeguard its own economic and strategic interests as well as its prestige. In the event, Britain and France agreed to leave Siam as a buffer between their colonial possessions. Despite some territorial losses, Siam retained its political independence, something not enjoyed by other states in the region. Nonetheless, the experience of French imperialism made a deep imprint in the minds of the Thai people and continued to condition Franco-Thai relations in the twentieth century.

The post-1932 period was an exceptional phase in Siam's international experience. The new ruling élite that came to power after the coup d'état was intensely nationalistic. Their goal was to make Siam a modern and fully sovereign state, and a coequal member of the League of Nations. Treaties with colonial powers were renegotiated on an equal and reciprocal basis to establish the new status of Siam. The rise of Japanese influence in Siam was welcomed and even encouraged, in order to match that of Britain. They also took advantage of French weakness and indulged themselves in territorial enrichment. However, when the balance of power broke down in 1941, Thailand found its neutrality smashed and its territory defenceless, without any

outside protector. Thai leaders had to resort to the policy of accommodation and were forced to accept Japan's "New Order". Given this chastening experience, it is not difficult to understand why Thailand reverted to the traditional policy and searched for a protector after the war.

Immediately at the end of the war, Thailand hoped to rely on the protection of the United Nations against any future aggression. An entry into this organization became the first and foremost goal of Thai foreign policy. To attain this goal, Thailand conceded to China the exchange of diplomatic representatives, to the Soviet Union the repeal of the Anti-Communist Act, and to France the retrocession of the disputed Indochinese territories. The last concession was the most difficult to make and was perceived to be a fatal blow to the civilians in power. To defuse the domestic crisis, Pridi tried to steer the country toward regionalism and bring Thailand to the forefront of Asian nationalism. But his efforts backfired. His advocacy for Asian independence and his association with the Vietminh and Isan leaders in the Southeast Asia League only caused suspicions about his motives among the conservative Bangkok élite, already dissatisfied with many facets of his regime, and led ultimately to his downfall.

Another important factors which governed Pibul's decisions to align Thailand with the West during this period

was the Cold War environment. By the end of 1949, the Truman Administration became less reluctant to get involved in mainland Southeast Asia and was in fact ready to extend economic and military aid to Thailand. The American willingness to give aid was decisive in influencing Pibul's decision to favour the United States with the role of Thailand's future protector. As Pibul saw it, Britain was no longer capable of resuming its protector role. It was withdrawing from Asia, showed sign of economic weakness, and lacked the capacity to satisfy Thailand's demand for arms. On the other hand, the Chinese Communists were expanding their victories southward, soon reaching the Indochina border and Yunnan. The prospect of a strong, unified China alarmed the Thai, who feared that, given the large number of the overseas Chinese in Thailand, the new Chinese regime in Peking might interfere in their internal affairs. The Chinese posture as the protector of overseas Chinese in January 1950 and its revolutionary doctrine alienated the Thai élite and encouraged a perception of Chinese threat. The fact that Pridi appeared to be given asylum in Communist China only led Pibul naturally to ally himself with the opposite side.

When the Korean War broke out, the Thai government promptly offered troops and rice to assist the United Nations' efforts in the hope that, in the event Thailand were invaded, it would be protected by the United Nations. Pibul's anti-

Communist stand was rewarded by three Thai-US agreements in 1950 covering education, economic and military assistance programs. As the United Nations looked less likely to be an effective and reliable protector due to the Soviet veto, the Pibul government tried to emulate the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand by proposing a mutual defence treaty with the United States. This effort failed because the United States was still unwilling to make a defence commitment in the mainland of Southeast Asia.

But the Indochina crises of 1953 and 1954 caused a shift in American policy. The crisis atmosphere was generated by the Vietminh invasion of Laos in April and December 1953, and the attack on the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu in April 1954. For the Thai government, there was another cause for alarm, namely reports of Pridi's involvement in the setting up of the Thai Autonomous Government in southern Yunnan. Evidence found suggests that the Thai government relied a great deal on spurious intelligence fed by Taiwan on matters ranging from the movement of Communist forces in Yunnan to the activities of Chinese Communists in Thailand. By looking at Peking's motives through the Cold War lenses, the Thai government tended to interpret every move by Peking as a threat to its security. The perception or misperception of Communist threat was the overriding factor in 1954 which led the Thai government to

accept Dulles' invitation to join in a "united action", and subsequently the SEATO alliance.

The period 1947-1954 also saw the rise of the military in Thai politics. As the gradual ascendancy of the military corresponded with the strengthening of the security ties with the outside protector both during this period and during the Second World War, it is reasonable to speculate that the two phenomena are interdependent. One may even indulge in a suggestion of a hypothesis for future research that the decline of military rule in Thailand is predicated by the weakening of the alliance and vice versa. The nature of the alliance relationship with the United States between 1954 and 1973 deserves a close scrutiny in Thai domestic context, whereas the eclipse of the military thereafter could be studied against the background of the crumbling of the Thai-US alliance in consequence of the Sino-American *détente* and American domestic criticism of the alliance.

A close relationship with the United States bestowed prestige, security and resources to the military regime in power. Pibul was retained as head of the government by the Coup Group because he was regarded as the man who could draw the United States to take the responsibility as Thailand's protector. He in turn took full advantage of American support and was able to maintain himself in office despite his lack of real control over the armed forces. With American assistance, Pibul could

also point to the success of his foreign policy in preserving national security, an essential condition for sustaining the continuing support of the entire bureaucratic élite. So long as the protection by an outside power remained both credible and profitable, there was no real need for an internal adjustment in Thailand to accommodate external forces.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

¹ Translation of letter to Phraya Suriwongse Vayavadhana, Siamese ambassador to Paris, 4 March 1867 quoted in Abbot Low Moffat, *Mongkut, the King of Siam* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1961), pp.24-25.

² *Foreign Affairs Bulletin* (Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs), no.3 (August – September 1963), p.13.

³ See David Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Power in International Relations* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.8; cf. Peter R. Baehr, “Small States: A Tool for Analysis?” in *World Politics*, 27, no.3 (April 1975).

⁵ David Vital, *The Survival of Small States: Studies in Small Power – Great Power Conflict* (London, Oxford University Press, 1971), pp.8-9.

⁶ *Idem*, “The Analysis of Small Power Politics” in August Schou and Arne Olav Brundtland, *Small States in International Relations* (Stockholm, Almquist & Wiksell, 1971), p.19.

⁷ Marshall R. Singer, *Weak States in a World of Powers: The Dynamics of International Relationships* (New York, The Free Press, 1972), p.304.

⁸ Bruce M. Russett, *Power and Community in World Politics* (San Francisco, Freeman & Co., 1974), p.301.

⁹ Robert E. Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), p.17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.21-22.

¹¹ K.J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1972), p.113.

¹² George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), p.30.

¹³ Arnold Wolfers, "Collective Defense Versus Collective Security" in idem (ed.), *Alliance Policy in the Cold War* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1959, reprinted 1976), p.51.

¹⁴ Ole R. Holsti, Terrence P. Hopmann, and John D. Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative Studies* (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1973), pp.4-12.

¹⁵ Harold Guetzkow, "Isolation and Collaboration: A Partial Theory of International Relations", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1, 1957.

¹⁶ Quoted in Richard Butwell, *U Nu of Burma* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1963), p.172.

¹⁷ Michael Leifer, *Cambodia: The Search for Security* (London, Pall Mall Press, 1967), p.57.

¹⁸ George Modelski (ed.), *SEATO: Six Studies* (Melbourne, F.W. Cheshire, 1962), p.152.

CHAPTER 2

¹ Peter Lyon, *War and Peace in South-East Asia* (London, Oxford University Press, 1969), p.7.

² George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, edited by Walter F. Vella and translated by Susan Brown Cowing (Honolulu, East-West Center Press, 1968), pp.189-190.

³ W.A.R. Wood, *A History of Siam* (London, T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1926), p.35. This conventional theory of the ancestral role of the Nanchao Kingdom is still a subject of considerable controversy. A Thai historian, Charnvit Kaset Siri, noted that this theory was popularized in Thailand by Luang Wichit Wathakan, a leading Thai nationalist, some time before the outbreak of the Pacific War. It put the emphasis on the Thai being driven out of Nanchao by the Chinese; the latter were thus regarded as the worst enemies of the Thai. See Charnvit Kaset Siri, *The Rise of Ayudhya* (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1976), pp.30-36, 47.

⁴ Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia* (London, The Macmillan Press, 1981), p.187. "Siam" had been the official name of the country until 24 June 1939 when it was

changed into “Thailand”. At that time the designation of the people officially became “Thai”, a word which had always been in popular Thai usage. Thus, while the country will be referred to as “Siam” or “Thailand” interchangeably, the people will be referred to as “Thai”.

⁵ Ibid., pp.187, 190.

⁶ Suebsaeng Promboon, “Sino-Siamese Tributary Relations 1282-1853” (University of Wisconsin Ph.D. dissertation 1971), p.85.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ For detailed studies in Sino-Thai tributary relations see *ibid.*; also Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade 1652-1853* (Harvard East Asian Monographs no.76, Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977)

⁹ See Suebsaeng, “Sino-Siamese Tributary Relations”, pp.121-122; Joseph P.L. Jiang, “The Chinese in Thailand: Past and Present”, *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol.7(1) (March 1966), p.53.

¹⁰ Sarasin, *Tribute and Profit*, p.242.

¹¹ As most parts of mainland Southeast Asia were underpopulated then, the traditional base of power was the control of men rather than territories. See David J. Steinberg (ed.), *In Search of Southeast Asia*, (London, The Pall Mall Press, 1971), pp.6-7; Benjamin A. Batson, “The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam” (Cornell University Ph.D. thesis 1977), p.17.

¹² Walter F. Vella, *Siam under Rama III (1824-1851)* (New York, J.J. Augustin Incorporated Publisher, Locust Valley, 1957), chapter 6; Hugh Toye, *Laos: Buffer State or Battleground* (London, Oxford University Press, 1968), pp.20-22; Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, p.112.

¹³ Vella, *Siam under Rama III*, pp.100-101. See also Roger M. Smith, *Cambodia's Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1965), pp.14-15; David P. Chandler, “Cambodia's Relations with Siam in the Early Bangkok Period: The Politics of a Tributary State”, *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol.60(1) (January 1972), 153-170; Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, p.120.

¹⁴ On details of French attempt to dominate Siam with an aid of Constantine Phaulkon in the 1680s, see Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, chapter 20.

¹⁵ J. Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China* (1830, reprinted Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.141-142; see also *The Crawford Papers* (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1968). Also Namngern Boonpiam “Anglo-Thai Relations, 1825-1855: A Study in Changing of Foreign Policies” (University of Nebraska-Lincoln Ph.D. dissertation 1979), pp.41-45. Namngern also gives other reasons for Crawford’s failure such as language barrier, factional rivalry at the Thai court, Crawford’s credentials, and his personality.

¹⁶ See text of Treaty and Commercial Agreement between the East India Company (Great Britain) and Siam, signed at Bangkok on 20 June 1826, in *The Consolidated Treaty Series* (henceforth cited as *CTS*) edited and annotated by Clive Parry (New York, Oceana Publications, Inc., Dobbs Ferry, 1969) vol.76, pp.303-312.

¹⁷ Vella, *Siam under Rama III*, p.117. D.G.E. Hall, *Henry Burney: A Political Biography* (London, Oxford University Press, 1974), pp.90-96.

¹⁸ Vella, *Siam under Rama III*, p.124. See text of Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Siam and the United States, signed at Bangkok on 20 March 1833, in *CTS* vol.83, pp.211-215.

¹⁹ Vella, *Siam under Rama III*, p.23 and chapter 9. See also David K. Wyatt, “Family Politics in Nineteenth Century Thailand”, *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, IX(2) (September 1968), p.220; W.A. Graham, *Siam*, vol.II (London, Alexander Moring Ltd., 1924), pp.95-97.

²⁰ Robert Hunter was a British merchant residing in Bangkok between 1825 and 1844. By 1844 his relations with the Thai authorities turned sour as their commercial partnership turned into competition. Hunter was finally expelled from Siam in December 1844 after charges and countercharges of violation of the Burney treaty. Before he left Siam, Hunter threatened that the British government would send warships “to look into the matter”. For details see Vella, *Siam under Rama III*, pp.129,135; Namngern, “Anglo-Thai Relations, 1825-1855”, pp.109-129.

²¹ Wyatt, “Family politics”, pp.208-228.

²² Brooke was not granted a royal audience because the king was ill. See Vella, *Siam under Rama III*, p.139.

²³ Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, pp.493. See also Constance Maralyn Wilson, "State and Society in the Reign of Mongkut, 1851-1868: Thailand on the Eve of Modernization" (Cornell University Ph.D. thesis 1970), chapter 5.

²⁴ See Wyatt, "Family Politics", p.221.

²⁵ See Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, p.114; Wilson, "State and Society", chapter 5.

²⁶ See text of Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between Great Britain and Siam, signed at Bangkok on 18 April 1855, in *CTS* vol.113, pp.83-92.

²⁷ Namngern, "Anglo-Thai Relations, 1825-1855", p.142.

²⁸ George Coedès, *The Making of South East Asia*, translated by H.M. Wright, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p.170.

²⁹ Rosebery to Dufferin no.181, 23 July 1893 in British and Foreign State Papers (henceforth cited as *Bfsp*) vol. 87, p.264; also Henry Norman, *The Peoples and Politics of the Far East* (London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1895), pp.518-519.

³⁰ D.R. Sardesai, *British Trade and Expansion in Southeast Asia 1830-1914* (New Delhi, Allied Publishers Private Ltd., 1977), p.94.

³¹ Sarasin, *Tribute and Profit*, p.239.

³² *Ibid.*, p.231.

³³ Neon Snidvongs, "The Development of Siamese Relations with Britain and France in the Reign of Maha Mongkut, 1851-1868" (London University Ph.D. thesis, 1961), p.43.

³⁴ Roger M. Smith, *Cambodia's Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1965), p.21.

³⁵ See text of Treaty of Commerce, Extradition, Succession and Tribute between Siam and Cambodia, 1 December 1863, in *CTS* vol.128, pp.295-304.

³⁶ See text of Treaty between France and Siam for the regulation of the position of the Kingdom of Cambodia, signed at Paris on 15 July 1867, in *CTS* vol.135, pp.213-216.

³⁷ Translation of letter to Phraya Suriwongse Vayavadhana, Siamese ambassador to Paris, in *King of Siam Speaks* edited by M.R. Seni and Kukrit Pramoj (Bangkok, no date), p.187.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Neon, "The Development of Siamese Relations", pp.762-763, 805.

⁴⁰ For discussions of the Front Palace Incident see David K. Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1969), pp.35-62; Noel Alfred Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910: Politics and Military Reform during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn" (Cornell University Ph.D. thesis 1974), chapter 4; Ian George Brown "The Ministry of Finance and the Early Development of Modern Financial Administration in Siam, 1885-1910" (London University Ph.D. thesis 1975), p.36.

⁴¹ Pensri Duke, *Les Relations Entre la France et la Thaïlande (Siam) au XIX^e Siècle d'après les Archives des Affaires Étrangères* (Bangkok, Librairie Chalermit, 1962), pp.120-121.

⁴² Ibid., pp.124-125; Tej Bunnag, *The Provincial Administration of Siam 1892-1915: The Ministry of the Interior under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab* (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1977), p.75.

⁴³ Toye, *Laos*, p.37; Chandran Jeshurun, *The Contest for Siam 1889-1902: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry* (Kuala Lumpur, Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan, 1977), p.41.

⁴⁴ Chandran Jeshurun, *Contest for Siam*, pp.32-33.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.34; Claire Hirshfield, "The Struggle for the Mekong Banks 1892-1896" *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, IX(1) (March 1968), pp.30-31.

⁴⁶ Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p.656; also Battye, "Military, Government and Society", p.313.

⁴⁷ Battye, op.cit., p.315.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp.315-320.

⁴⁹ Hirshfield, "The Struggle for the Mekong Banks", p.32. The arrival of a British gunboat, *Swift*, a 750-ton vessel to Bangkok in April may also have misled the Thai to expect British support. See Chandran Jeshurun, *Contest for Siam*, pp.50-51; also Jones to Rosebery no.42, 20 April 1893, in *BFSP* vol.87, p.222.

⁵⁰ Phipps to Rosebery no.167, 19 July 1893, and Jones to Rosebery no.174, 20 July 1893, in *BFSP* vol.87, pp.259, 262.

- ⁵¹ Jones to Rosebery no.253, 1 August 1893, in *BFSP* vol.87, p.293.
- ⁵² Chandran Jeshurun, *Contest for Siam*, pp.69-70; See also Dufferin to Rosebery no.248, 29 July 1893, in *BFSP* vol.87, p.290.
- ⁵³ Marquess of Crewe, *Lord Rosebery* (London, John Murray, 1931), ii, p.426.
- ⁵⁴ Rosebery to Gladstone, 26 August 1893, Gladstone Papers, quoted in Chandran Jeshurun, "The Anglo-French Declaration of January 1896 and the Independence of Siam", *Journal of the Siam Society*, LVIII(2) (July 1970), p.113.
- ⁵⁵ Chandran Jeshurun, *Contest for Siam*, p.61.
- ⁵⁶ Dufferin to Rosebery no.250, 31 July 1893, in *BFSP* vol.87, p.292.
- ⁵⁷ See text of Treaty of Peace and Convention between France and Siam, 3 October 1893, in *CTS* vol.179, pp.149-152.
- ⁵⁸ Hirshfield, "The Struggle for the Mekong Banks", p.49; Chandran Jeshurun, "The Anglo-French Declaration", pp.105-126.
- ⁵⁹ See text of Declaration between France and Great Britain with regard to Siam etc., 15 January 1896, in *CTS* vol.182, pp.271-273.
- ⁶⁰ For details of the administrative reform, see Tej, *The Provincial Administration*.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.92 citing letter from Chulalongkorn to Damrong 143/454, 18 January 1896.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, pp.150-153.
- ⁶³ For a discussion of British commercial and security concern in the southern peninsula of Siam, see Eunice Thio, "Britain's Search for Security in North Malaya, 1886-1897", *Journal of Southeast Asia History*, X(2) (September 1969), pp.279-303.
- ⁶⁴ See text of Convention between Great Britain and Siam relative to Non-Alienation of Territory, 6 April 1897, in *CTS* vol.184, p.343.
- ⁶⁵ Chandran Jeshurun, "Lord Lansdowne and the 'Anti-German Clique' at the Foreign Office: Their Role in the Making of the Anglo-Siamese Agreement of 1902", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, III(2) (September 1972), pp.229-246.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Both Britain and France were alarmed by reports that Siam would

grant Russia and Germany rights to set up coaling stations in its southern peninsula. In addition, King Chulalongkorn had developed close personal friendship with Tsar Nicholas II and on the former's visit to Russia in 1897 agreement was reached to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Russians appears to have intervened to try settle Franco-Thai border dispute. See R. Quested, "Russian Interest in Southeast Asia: Outlines and Sources 1803-1970", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol.1 no.2 (September 1970), pp.52-55.

⁶⁷ See text of Declaration between France and Great Britain concerning Siam, Madagascar and the New Hebrides, 8 April 1904, in *CTS* vol.195, pp.214-216.

⁶⁸ See text of Convention and Protocol between France and Siam relative to Friendship and Boundaries, 13 February 1904, in *CTS* vol.195, pp.47-54.

⁶⁹ See texts of Treaty between France and Siam relative to Frontiers and Jurisdiction, 23 March 1907, in *CTS* vol.204, pp.46-52, and Treaty and Notes between Great Britain and Siam regarding the Cession and Boundaries of the Siamese Malay States, the Jurisdiction of the Siamese Courts and the Non-Cession etc. of Siamese Territory, 10 March 1909, in *CTS* vol.208, pp.367-374.

⁷⁰ See text of Treaty revising existing Treaties between the United States of America and Siam, 16 December 1920, in *BFSP* vol.113, pp.1174-76.

⁷¹ See text of Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Japan and Siam, 10 March 1924, in League of Nations Treaty Series (henceforth cited as *LNTS*) vol.31, pp.188-211.

⁷² See texts of Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between France and Siam, 14 February 1925, in *LNTS* vol.43, pp.189-218, and Treaty for the Revision of their Mutual Treaty Arrangements and Protocol concerning Jurisdiction applicable in Siam to British subjects, etc., 14 July 1925, in *LNTS* vol.49, pp.29-72.

⁷³ Thawatt Mokarapong, *History of the Thai Revolution: A Study in Political Behaviour* (Bangkok, Chalermnit, 1972), pp.86-87.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.94-101; see also Batson, "The End of the Absolute Monarchy", pp.26-30.

⁷⁷ For details of the members of the Paris group see Thawatt, *op.cit.*, pp.4-12.

⁷⁸ See account of the 1932 coup in Thak Chaloemtiarana (ed.), *Thai Politics: Extracts and Documents, 1932-1957* (Bangkok, Social Science Association of Thailand, 1978), pp.81-93; also Thawatt, *History of the Thai Revolution*, pp.30-42.

⁷⁹ Thawatt, *op.cit.*, p.118.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.146-149; see English translation of the text of Pridi's Economic Plan in Kenneth P. Landon, *Siam in Transition: A Brief Survey of Cultural Trends in the Five Years since the Revolution of 1932* (London, Oxford University Press, 1939), Appendix III, pp.260-302. See also Charivat Santaputra, "Thai Foreign Policy 1932-1946" (Southampton University Ph.D. thesis, 1982), p.108. Charivat noted that Mano and his foreign minister, Phraya Srivisan Vacha, skillfully manipulated the fears of possible adverse foreign reaction to Pridi's drafted Economic Plan, which envisaged the nationalisation of foreign business concerns in Siam.

⁸¹ Thawatt, *History of the Thai Revolution*, p.175.

⁸² For a detailed analysis of the coup in June 1933, see *ibid.*, pp.162-196.

⁸³ See, for example, texts of Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation and final Protocol between the United States and Siam, 13 November 1937, in *LNTS* vol.192, p.247, Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Siam and Great Britain, 23 November 1937, in *LNTS* vol.188, p.333, Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between Siam and Japan, 8 December 1937, in *LNTS* vol.188, p.375.

⁸⁴ Prior to the vote, the Thai Foreign Minister had told the Japanese minister to Siam that "Siam could not afford to take side in the Sino-Japanese quarrel". See Edward Thadeus Flood, "Japan's Relations with Thailand: 1928-41" (University of Washington Ph.D. thesis 1967), p.54; also Record of League of Nations debate in *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, Second Series, vol.XI, no.473.

⁸⁵ Josiah Crosby, *Siam: The Crossroads* (London, Hallis Carter, 1945), p.63.

⁸⁶ For details of the meeting between the Japanese minister and Phahol and Pibul, see Flood, "Japan's Relations", pp.51, 58-65. Since the early days of June 1932 coup, the new regime had been apprehensive of foreign interventions. It seems natural for the coup promoters to suspect that colonial powers, notably Britain and France, might attempt to intervene to restore the old regime, with

which they had been on good terms. This fear was not restricted to the coup promoters; many Thai were still suspicious that the British and the French had not abandoned ambitions to expand their empire in Southeast Asia. Hence in the immediate aftermath of the 1932 coup political groups from all sides cooperated in avoiding bloodshed and unrest which, they thought, would have become a convenient pretext for foreign powers to intervene to protect lives and properties of their own nationals in the first instance, but ultimately to take over Siam. See Thawatt, *History of the Thai Revolution*, pp.105-110; also Crosby, *Siam: The Crossroads*, p.92.

⁸⁷ John Coast, *Some Aspects of Siamese Politics* (New York, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1953), p.15.

⁸⁸ See E. Thadeus Flood, "The 1940 Franco-Thai Border Dispute and Phibuun Sonkhraam's Commitment to Japan", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, X(2) (September 1969), p.307.

⁸⁹ Direk Jayanama, *Siam and World War II*, English edition edited by Jane Godfrey Keyes (Bangkok, The Social Science Association of Thailand Press, 1967), p.14. A *thalweg* is the middle or chief navigable channel of a waterway which constitutes a boundary line between states.

⁹⁰ Flood, "The 1940 Franco-Thai Border Dispute", p.309; also Direk, op.cit., p.15.

⁹¹ Flood, "Japan's Relations", pp.239-259.

⁹² See text of the non-aggression treaties and the attached letters in Direk, *Siam and World War II*, Appendix 1-3, pp.270-276.

⁹³ *British Public Record Office*, hereafter cited as *BPRO*, FO371/24756 F3706/3268/40 Crosby to Foreign Office no.242,243, 6,7 August 1940, pp.33-36.

⁹⁴ Ibid.; Direk, *Siam and World War II*, p.21. Pibul told the cabinet in August that if these "lost territories" should be handed over to Japan without the Thai government showing any sign of concern at such action, his government would have to answer to Siam's future generations.

⁹⁵ Direk, *Siam and World War II*, p.25; Also United States, Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (henceforth cited as *FRUS*), 1940, vol.4, pp.113-115: 751G.92/19 Grant to Hull, 13 September 1940.

⁹⁶ See BPRO, FO371/24756 F4342/3268/40 Crosby to Foreign Office no.324, 21 September 1940, p.134. On 17 September 1940 the Assembly also voted to extend the transitory provisions of the constitution an additional 10 years beyond the original terminal date of June 1942.

⁹⁷ See Flood, "The 1940 Franco-Thai Border Dispute", p.324. Flood's account is based on his interview with Torigoe Shin'ichi, the prewar Japanese naval attaché to Thailand, and personal memoirs of Tamura Hiroshi, then Japanese military attaché in Bangkok. See also J. W. Morley (ed.), *The Fateful Choice: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-41* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1980) p.218 which uses the archives of Japan's National Defence Agency. Pibul also refused to give the Japanese a written commitment on the ground that a secret treaty would have to be discussed in the cabinet which was bound to leak it to the British. See Flood, "Japan's Relations", p.333.

⁹⁸ See text of Peace Convention between France and Thailand with Protocol, 9 May 1941, in BFSP vol.144, pp.805-812; BPRO, FO371/28111 F3970/5/40 Sir R. Craigie (Tokyo) to Foreign Office no.776, 11 May 1941. The Cambodians, on the other hand, were much aggrieved by the loss of nearly a third of their national territory. Sihanouk attributes the death of King Sisowath Monivong of Cambodia in April 1941 to his grief over the loss of Battambang to Thailand. See Norodom Sihanouk, *Souvenirs Doux et Amers* (Paris, Hachotte, 1981), p.51.

⁹⁹ Flood, "Japan's Relations", p.553; Direk, *Siam and World War II*, Appendix 4, pp.276-285.

¹⁰⁰ BPRO, FO371/28110 F1724/5/40 Crosby to Foreign Office no.169, 7 March 1941. See also details of the negotiations in Tokyo in Flood, "Japan's Relations", pp.470-553.

¹⁰¹ BPRO, FO371/28123 F7316/210/40 Crosby to Foreign Office no.527, 5 August 1941; FRUS, 1941, vol.5 pp.250-251: 792.94/137 Grant to Hull, 2 August 1941; Flood, "Japan's Relations", p.615.

¹⁰² FRUS, 1941, vol.5, p.267: 740.0011PW/412 Grant to Hull, 9 August 1941.

¹⁰³ Thak, *Thai Politics*, pp.448-450; FRUS 1941 vol.5, p.271: 892.24/73 Memorandum of Conversation by Willys R. Peck of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, 14 August 1941.

¹⁰⁴ Direk, *Siam and World War II*, p.56; BPRO, FO371/28161 F11157/9789/40 Crosby to Foreign Office no.741, 22 October 1941; FRUS, 1941, vol.5, pp.320-322: 792.94/159 Peck to Hull, 15 October 1941.

¹⁰⁵ Direk, *Siam and World War II*, p.57; *FRUS*, 1941, vol.5, pp.345-346: 892.24/87a Hull to Peck, 22 November 1941.

¹⁰⁶ Direk, *Siam and World War II*, p.57.

¹⁰⁷ Thamsook Numnonda, *Fuen Adit* (Recollection of the Past) (Bangkok, Ruangsins, 1979), p.174 quoting 3 December 1941 cabinet record.

¹⁰⁸ Direk, *Siam and World War II*, pp.64-65, 114.

¹⁰⁹ Netr Khemayothin, *Ngan Taidin khong Phan-ek Yothi* (The Underground Work of Colonel Yothi) (Bangkok, Kasembannakit, 1967), vol.2, p.3.

¹¹⁰ *FRUS*, 1942, vol.1, p.916: 711.92/31 Aide-memoire from State Department to British embassy in Washington, 7 February 1942; *BPRO*, FO371/31856, F1444/396/40 Viscount Halifax (Washington) to Foreign Office, 10 February 1942.

¹¹¹ Andrew Gilchrist, *Bangkok Top Secret: Being the Experiences of a British Officer in the Siam Country Section of Force 136* (London, Hutchinson & Co.Ltd., 1970), pp.24-30.

¹¹² Thamsook Numnonda, *Thailand and the Japanese Presence 1941-1945*, (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1977), pp.21-41. Pibul was to claim at the end of the war that these cultural reform measures were his secret ploy to prevent the nipponization. See Pibul's circular letter to newspapers' editors in September 1945, *United States National Archives*, Department of State, 892.00/9-3045.

¹¹³ See Thamsook, *Thailand and the Japanese Presence*, pp.83-95.

¹¹⁴ Netr, *Ngan Taidin*, vol.2, pp.21-31.

¹¹⁵ See "Political Memoirs of Nai Thawi Bunyaket" in Jayanta Kumar Ray (ed.), *Portraits of Thai Politics* (New Delhi, Orient Longman Ltd., 1972), p.83.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.80-84.

¹¹⁷ Pridi was appointed the sole regent by the Assembly on 1 August 1944, following the resignation of Prince Aditya from the Council in fear of Pibul's threat. The other regent, Chaophraya Bichayendra, had died since 21 July 1943.

¹¹⁸ For details of Thai underground movement see, for example, Gilchrist, *Bangkok Top Secret*; Direk, *Siam and World War II*; Netr, *Ngan Taidin*; Nai Chantana (pseud. for Malai Chuphinit), *X.O. Group* (Bangkok, Progress Press, 1946); N. Smith & B. Clark, *Into Siam the Underground Kingdom* (New York and Indianapolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1954); John B. Haseman, *The Thai Resistance Movement During the Second World War* (Northern Illinois University, 1978).

¹¹⁹ Nai Chantana, *X.O. Group*, p.312; Haseman, *Thai Resistance Movement*, pp.125-126.

¹²⁰ It was claimed that Pridi, as one of the regents, did not sign the declaration of war against the United States and Britain. See Thawee's memoirs in Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics*, p.80; also Charnvit Kasetsiri, "The First Phibun Government and Its Involvement in World War II", *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol.62, part 2 (July 1974), p.54.

¹²¹ *The Royal Thai Government Gazette*, part 44, vol.62, 16 August 1945, pp.503-506; see Thak, *Thai Politics*, pp.459-460.

¹²² See *Department of State Bulletin*, vol.XIII, no.321, 19 August 1945, pp.261-262.

¹²³ BPRO, FO371/46549 F6542/296/40, p.16, Extract of President Chiang Kai-shek's statement to the National Defence Council and Central Executive Committee on 24 August 1945. Thailand in fact never declared war on China, although it recognized the Japanese-installed Wang Ching-wei regime at Nanking.

¹²⁴ Official Report Fifth Series, *Parliamentary Debates* (Hansard), the House of Commons 1945-46, vol.413, 1-24 August 1945 (London, HMSO, 1945), p.299.

¹²⁵ See Songsri Foran, *Thai-British-American Relations during World War II and the Immediate Postwar Period, 1940-1946* (Bangkok, Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, 1981), pp.181-220, 306-309.

¹²⁶ See text of the Agreement between the United Kingdom and India with Siam for the Termination of the State of War, 1 January 1946, in *BFSP* vol.146, pp.455-461.

¹²⁷ See Thawee's memoirs and Seni's memoirs in Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics*, pp.114, 165, 170.

¹²⁸ BPRO, FO371/54419 F3917/1224/40 Gilchrist to Foreign Office, 18 February 1946.

¹²⁹ See Seni's memoirs in Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics*, pp.149-174.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp.170-171; see also BPRO, FO371/70032 F12529/4130/40 Memorandum by B.R.Pearn, F.O. Research Department, 31 August 1948, p.13.

¹³¹ Direk, *Siam and World War II*, pp.243-244.

¹³² Ibid., p.237; *The United Nations Yearbook*, p.419.

¹³³ *The United Nations Yearbook*, pp.418-419.

¹³⁴ FRUS, 1946, vol.VIII, p.1068-69: 892.014/8-2646 Memorandum of Conversation between M. Bonnet, French ambassador; Acheson, Acting Secretary of State; Moffat (SEA); and Wallner (WE).

¹³⁵ In fact, the Pibul government had established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in February 1941 but the exchange of diplomatic representatives was deferred then because of the war. See Direk, *Siam and World War II*, p.237; Prayoon Phamonmontri, *Chiwit Ha Phaendin Khong Khaphachao*, (My Life through Five Reigns), (Bangkok, Bannakit Press, 1975), pp.427-433.

¹³⁶ Crosby, *Siam: The Crossroads*, p.122.

¹³⁷ Edwin F. Stanton, *Brief Authority* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1956), p.171.

¹³⁸ Likhit Dhiravegin, "Thailand's Foreign Policy Determination", *The Journal of Social Sciences*, (Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University), vol.XI(4) (October 1974), p.48.

¹³⁹ See Fred W. Riggs, *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity* (Honolulu, East-West Center Press, 1966) and David A. Wilson, *Politics in Thailand* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1962); also Donald Hindley, "Thailand: The Politics of Passivity", *Pacific Affairs* 41:3 (Fall 1968), pp.355-71.

¹⁴⁰ Batson, "The End of the Absolute Monarchy", p.16.

¹⁴¹ Lyon, *War and Peace*, p.34.

CHAPTER 3

¹ See *United States National Archives* (henceforth cited as *USNA*), Bangkok Embassy Post File 1947, Stanton to State Department (S.D.) no.28, 7 January 1947, and Secretary of State Byrnes to Stanton no.0014, 8 January 1947.

² Evelyn Colbert, *Southeast Asia in International Politics* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1977), pp.112-113.

³ *Bangkok Post*, 24 April 1947.

⁴ *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947, Tel. no.00182 from Stanton to S.D., 15 March 1947. The information had been given to Stanton personally by Daridan. See also Tel. no.174 from Stanton to S.D., 10 March 1947.

⁵ By January 1947 the British were conceding dominion status to Burma at the London conference. See J.F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1958) pp.539-542. In February 1947 Indian self-government was conceded to take effect by June 1948. According to Pridi's own account, "during the conversation I had with these patriots [Asian nationalists who sought refuge in Thailand], we came to the conclusion that all the countries in Southeast Asia would, thanks to their own efforts, become independent in the near future." Pridi Banomyong's Story, *Bangkok Post*, 28 November 1974.

⁶ The membership of this Commission consisted of Peruvian, British, American, French and Thai representatives; the Thai representative being Prince Wan Waithayakon, Thai ambassador to the United States. The Thai delegation in charge of making the Thai case before the Commission were Prince Sakol Worawan and Tiang Sirikhan.

⁷ The Thai Government Communiqué of 5 July 1947. See *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947, Stanton to S.D. no.472, 16 July 1947. See also *Bangkok Post*, 7 July 1947.

⁸ *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947, Memorandum of Conversation between William Phillips and K.P. Landon, 12 June 1947.

⁹ *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947, Memorandum of Conversation between William Phillips and Abbot Low Moffat, 20 June 1947.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² The Thai Government Communiqué of 5 July 1947. American editor and publisher of the *Bangkok Post*, Alexandor Macdonald, formerly of the O.S.S., was particularly outspoken in support of the Federation idea. See his editorial in *Bangkok Post*, 10 August 1946.

¹³ The Thai Government Communiqué of 5 July 1947.

¹⁴ *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947, Telegram no.499 from Stanton to S.D., 26 June 1947.

¹⁵ *Bangkok Post*, 1 July 1947; also *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947, Stanton to S.D. no.472, 16 July 1947.

¹⁶ The Thai Government Communiqué of 5 July 1947.

¹⁷ *Bangkok Post*, 12 August 1947.

¹⁸ Pridi's Story in *Bangkok Post*, 28 November 1974.

¹⁹ Thai government's reply from Prince Sakol to William Phillips, Chairman of the Conciliation Commission, 1 November 1947 in *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947, Stanton to S.D. no.571, 5 November 1947; also *Bangkok Post*, 6 November 1947.

²⁰ *British Public Records Office* (hereafter cited as *BPRO*) FO371/54419 F3917/1224/40 Memorandum from Gilchrist to Foreign Office (F.O.), 18 February 1946. Incidentally, Khuang himself was half-Cambodian and had strong ties with Battambang province, one of the disputed territories.

²¹ Pridi's Story in *Bangkok Post*, 28 November 1974. See also Oun Sananikone, *Lao Issara, Memoirs*, translated by J.B. Murdoch (Cornell University data paper 100, Ithaca, N.Y., 1975).

²² Peter A. Poole, *The Vietnamese in Thailand* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1970), pp.41-42.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.41.

²⁴ *Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Library and Archives* (henceforth cited as *TMFA, L&A*) File 1.3.2/8, UN File on Peace Observation Commission 1954, Memorandum on facts and evidence of Communists' intended aggression on Thailand from Director of Thai Central Intelligence Department, Air Marshal Fuen Ronnapakat to Acting Foreign Minister, no. KT928/2497, 26 November 1954.

²⁵ *Bangkok Post*, 6 November 1947.

²⁶ As coup promoter Colonel Kat put it, “the powerful allowed Thailand to become a member of the Union of Southeast Asia [*sic*] together with Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, all French colonies. It was done without shame, through force, without the least listening to public opinion”. Thak, *Thai Politics*, p.554.

²⁷ On 1 April 1933 the Assembly, on the insistence of the Mano government, passed a law making communism a crime. The controversial subject then was Pridi’s radical Economic Plan, the introduction of which caused him to be banished outside the country for nearly a year. The law banning communism was in force until 22 October 1946, when it was repealed by Parliament. A Thai Communist Party was formed on 1 November 1946 by Prasert Sapsunthon, a Progressive Party renegade MP who had sponsored the bill abrogating the anti-communist law.

²⁸ *USNA, Department of State File* (henceforth cited as *USNA, DS*) 892.00/8-2647 Fortnightly Summary of Political Events in Siam for the Period 1-15 August 1947, no.512.

²⁹ *USNA, DS* 892.00/12-547 US Embassy report no.607, p.2. Also Kamol Somvichian, “The Thai Military in Politics: An Analytical Study” (University of London (SOAS) Ph.D. thesis, August 1969), p.123.

³⁰ *USNA, DS* 892.00/8-2647 US Embassy report no.512.

³¹ Charles F. Keyes, *Isan: Regionalism in Northeastern Thailand*, Cornell University data paper 65 (Ithaca, N.Y., 1967), pp.30-33.

³² N. J. Brailey, *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore: A Frustrated Asian Revolution*, (Boulder, Colo., Westview Press, Inc., 1986), p.123.

³³ Toye, *Laos*, pp.14-22.

³⁴ Brailey, *op. cit.*, p.124.

³⁵ Keyes, *Isan*, pp.26-27.

³⁶ Direk Jayanama, *Siam and World War II*, pp.258-65.

³⁷ *Ibid.* Appendix V, “Formal Agreement” pp.285-293, Appendix VI “Heads of Agreement”, p.293-297. Thailand’s assets in London totalled £15.4 million at the end of the War. *Ibid.*, p.195.

³⁸ *BPRO, FO371/63407 F453/453/40* Politico-Economic Review of 1946 from British Legation in Bangkok to F.O., 1 January 1947, p.1.

³⁹ Ibid. p.3.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.4.

⁴¹ USNA, DS 892.00/8-2647 US Embassy report no.512, p.5.

⁴² Direk, *Siam and World War II*, pp.264-265. Negotiations for the settlement of Commonwealth war claims against Thailand were finally concluded by an agreement on 3 January 1951, for the payment of a lump sum of £5,224,220.

⁴³ Pierre Fistié, *L'Évolution de la Thaïlande Contemporaine* (Paris, Librairie Armand Colin, 1967), p.201.

⁴⁴ Thak Chaloehtiarana, "The Sarit Regime 1957-1963", (Cornell University Ph.D. thesis, 1974), p.22.

⁴⁵ BPRO, FO371/63910 F4527/1565/40 Thompson to F.O. no.140, 6 April 1947. Fistié gave the figure of the increase of the cost of living during the war (1939-1947) at 12 fold. Fistié, *L'Évolution*, pp.199-201.

⁴⁶ Bank of Thailand, *Commemorative volume published on the occasion of the cremation of Prince Viwatthanachai Chaiyan (1899-1960)*, Bangkok, 1961, p.204.

⁴⁷ quoted in Thak, "The Sarit Regime", p.24.

⁴⁸ T.H. Silcock, *Thailand: Social and Economic Studies in Development* (Canberra, Australian University Press, 1967), p.7.

⁴⁹ USNA, DS 892.00/4-2147 US Embassy report no.360, p.2 The amount of banknotes in circulation in 1938 was around 300 million baht. See Laurence K. Rosinger (ed.), *The State of Asia: A Contemporary Survey* (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1951), pp.268-291.

⁵⁰ Thak, "The Sarit Regime", pp.24-25. See also Coast, *Some Aspects*, p.39.

⁵¹ USNA, DS 892.00/4-747 US Embassy report no.333, p.5; 892.00/4-2147 US Embassy report no.360, p.3.

⁵² The vote was 86 to 55 in favour of the government. See also Anant Pibulsonggram, *Chompon P. Pibulsonggram* (Bangkok, Soonkanpim, 1976) vol.4, p.725.

⁵³ Thak, "The Sarit Regime", p.30.

⁵⁴ Pridi was reported to have told the British ambassador in March 1947 that he had agreed at the personal request of the late king's uncle, Prince Rangsit, to issue the communiqué about "the accident" and to refrain from ordering an immediate autopsy. See BPRO, FO371/63910 F4344/1565/40 Thompson to F.O. no.282, 28 March 1947.

⁵⁵ USNA, DS 892.001/6-1446 Charles W. Yost, Chargé d'Affaires to S.D., no.139.

⁵⁶ BPRO FO371/54410 F9255/327/40 Thompson to F.O. no.826, 21 June 1946. But the panel of doctors who conducted the autopsy established that the bullet entered through the front of the head. Colonel Dreiberg, a British member of the medical panel, informed the British ambassador that after a certain surgical and pathological examination of the royal remains, and tests carried out with the Colt.45 automatic from which the fatal shot was fired, there could be no doubt in his opinion that the weapon was not more than two inches from the late king's forehead when discharged. The British ambassador reported that Dreiberg was inclined to rule out accident entirely, believing that the death was due to suicide rather than murder. See FO371/54410 F9255/327/40 Thompson to F.O. no.826, 21 June 1946; FO371/54410 F9330/327/40 Thompson to F.O. no.834, 24 June 1946. See also Rayne Kruger, *The Devil's Discus*, (London, Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1964), p.107.

⁵⁷ USNA, DS 892.00/11-1446 US Embassy report no.170, pp.4-5.

⁵⁸ It is difficult to put a precise number of Chinese in Thailand because of a complicated spectrum of different kind of Chinese in Thailand. A. Doak Barnett gave the following rough estimate that "the figure of three million is commonly cited, but most of the people who use it are not able to define what they mean by a Chinese. . . it seems probable that Thailand contains between one-half and three quarters of a million Chinese immigrants with alien status; about 1.5 million ethnically-pure Chinese; roughly 2 million persons indisputably Chinese in a cultural sense; between 2.5 and 3 million persons who consider themselves to be Chinese; and several million who have some Chinese blood but consider themselves to be Thai". A. Doak Barnett, *A Contest of Loyalties: Overseas Chinese in Thailand* (American Universities Field Staff Inc., N.Y., vol.II, no.4, December 1954) p.21. See also G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1957) p.182. Skinner estimated the size of the Chinese community in Thailand at 2,124,000 people in 1947. Of this total number, about 765,000 were China-born Chinese.

⁵⁹ By 1930 the Chinese were estimated to constitute 85 per cent of the “commercial class” and to hold in their hands 90 per cent of the country’s commerce and trade. Whereas the majority of the Thai engaged mainly in the production of all the paddy and Western economic interests were predominant in teak and tin production, the Chinese were overwhelmingly dominant in a “middleman” role of transporting, processing and exporting rice, rubber, timber and tin. Skinner, *Chinese Society*, pp.216,220.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.162-163.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.173.

⁶² Ibid., p.229.

⁶³ Ibid., p.250. The original immigration fee of 4 baht for identification was raised to 10 baht in 1928/29. In 1931 an additional fee of 30 baht for a residence certificate was imposed which was to be raised in 1932 to 100 baht and again in 1938 to 200 baht. The 1938 Immigration Act also empowered the Minister of Interior to fix the amount of money each alien must have in possession on entering the country. Ibid., p.177.

⁶⁴ Kenneth P. Landon, *The Chinese in Thailand* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1941) pp.173-174.

⁶⁵ For details see Skinner, *Chinese Society*, pp.262-263.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp.264-267.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Also see Barnett, *A Contest*, p.3.

⁶⁸ Skinner, *Chinese Society*, p.279; also Seni’s memoirs in Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics*, p.164.

⁶⁹ See text of the Treaty of Amity between Siam and China with notes in *BFSP*, vol.146, pp.683-686.

⁷⁰ *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947, Stanton to S.D. no.250, 17 January 1947.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Thak, *Thai Politics*, pp.550-555.

⁷³ Skinner, *Chinese Society*, p.288.

⁷⁴ Thak, "The Sarit Regime", pp.32-33; also Thawee's memoirs in Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics*, pp.110-111; Suchin Tantikun, *Rattapraphan ph.s.2490* (The Coup d'État 1947), (Bangkok, Social Welfare Association of Thailand Press, 1972), pp.69-71.

⁷⁵ John L.S. Girling, *Thailand: Society and Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1981) pp.126-127.

⁷⁶ Thak, "The Sarit Regime", p.36; Suchin, *Rattapraphan*, pp.74-75.

⁷⁷ General Phin Chunhawan, one of the Coup Group leaders, then still a retired officer, came out to defend the honour and integrity of Pibul as a national leader. *Srikrung*, 22 March 1947 cited in Thak, "The Sarit Regime", pp.38-39.

⁷⁸ *The Straits Times*, 25 March 1947 and 5 April 1947; USNA, DS 892.00/4-747 US Embassy report no.333; Anant, *Chompon P. Pibulsonggram*, pp.662-669.

⁷⁹ BPRO FO371/63910 F4204/2565/40 Thompson to F.O. no.277, 26 March 1947.

⁸⁰ BPRO FO371/63910 F4350/1565/40 Thompson to F.O. no.289, 29 March 1947.

⁸¹ USNA, DS 892.00/4-847 Stanton to S.D. no.268; also USNA, Bangkok File 1947 Memorandum of Conversation on 15 April 1947 between Hubert Graves of British embassy, A.L. Moffat (SEA), and K.P. Landon (SEA).

⁸² USNA, Bangkok File 1947 Acheson to American embassy in Bangkok no.00203, 17 April 1947; also BPRO FO371/63910 F5410/1565/40 Lord Inverchapel, British embassy in Washington to F.O. no.2330, 18 April 1947.

⁸³ BPRO FO371/63910 F4344/1565/40 minutes by C.M. Anderson, 31 March 1947.

⁸⁴ BPRO FO371/63910 F9300/1565/40 Thompson to F.O. no.245(30/85G/47) 28 June 1947. Also FO371/63910 F5318/1565/40 Thompson to F.O. no.360, 22 April 1947; FO371/63910 F9718/1565/40 Thompson to F.O. no.31/85G/47, 8 July 1947.

⁸⁵ Coast, *Some Aspects*, p.40.

⁸⁶ See Thak, *Thai Politics*, pp.558-561.

⁸⁷ USNA, DS 892.00/12-547 US Embassy report no.607 pp.3, 13 The embassy source of information was Thamrong himself. See also Anant, *Chompon P. Pibulsonggram*, vol.4, p.727.

⁸⁸ Ibid. Also *USNA*, DS 892.00/11-947 Stanton to S.D. no.NIACT 809.

⁸⁹ For the account of the coup see *USNA*, DS 892.00/12-547, op. cit.; *BPRO* FO371/63973 F15907/1565/40 Office of the Military Attaché, Bangkok to the Director of Military Intelligence, The War Office (MI2) no.MA/329/G, 12 November 1947; Suchin, *Ratthaprahan*, pp.89-142; Thak, "The Sarit Regime", pp.39-48.

⁹⁰ Suchin, *Ratthaprahan*, p.123.

⁹¹ Stanton, *Brief Authority*, p.210.

⁹² *USNA*, DS 892.00/12-547, op. cit. p.5.

⁹³ *USNA*, DS 892.00/11-1847 Stanton to S.D. no.861, 18 November 1947.

⁹⁴ *BPRO* FO371/63911 F15371/G Thompson to F.O. no.953, 19 November 1947; F15104/1565/40 Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, 21 November 1947.

⁹⁵ *USNA*, DS 892.00/12-1247 Stanton to S.D. no.613. Pridi's entourage included Lieutenant Vacharachai, his aide-de-camp and private secretary, who was openly accused in the conservative press of having personally assassinated King Ananda. Others were Singto Sukhum and Chaem Phromyong, Islamic Adviser to the Crown. *USNA*, DS 892.00/12-1847 US Embassy report no.615.

⁹⁶ *BPRO* FO371/63911 F15065/1565/40 Memorandum from Massigli, French ambassador in London, 12 November 1947.

⁹⁷ *North China Daily News*, 25 November 1947.

⁹⁸ *BPRO* FO371/63912 F15693/1565/40 Thompson to F.O. no.993, 27 November 1947.

⁹⁹ Thawin Udon, for example, was released on bail on 22 December 1947, two days too late for him to register as a candidate in the impending election. *USNA*, DS 892.00/1-1648 US Embassy report no.15.

¹⁰⁰ Coast, *Some Aspects*, p.43. The Supreme Council of State which came into existence after the November Coup consisted of Prince Rangsit, Prince Dhani, Prince Alongkot, Phraya Man, and General Adul. It replaced the regency council which originally comprised only Prince Rangsit and Phraya Man.

¹⁰¹ Fistié, *L'Évolution*, pp.212, 285; Coast, *Some Aspects*, p.44.

¹⁰² USNA, DS 892.00/2-648 Outgoing Telegram from S.D. to US embassy in London no.437 dated 10 February 1948; also USNA, DS 892.00/2-2048 Memorandum from Landon (SEA) to Butterworth (FE).

¹⁰³ USNA, DS 892.00/3-2248 US Embassy report no.118, p.4.

¹⁰⁴ See USNA, DS 892.00/4-2948 US Embassy report no.162; see also Khuang's resignation letter in Suchin, *Ratthaprahan*, pp.132-133.

¹⁰⁵ Coast, *Some Aspects*, p.46.

¹⁰⁶ USNA, DS 892.00/4-948 Memorandum of Conversation between Prince Rangsit of Chainat, President of the Supreme Council of State, and Edwin Stanton. Kat had been promoted from Colonel to Lieutenant General on 27 January 1948 to be on the same par with Lieutenant General Phin.

¹⁰⁷ USNA, DS 892.00/4-2948 US Embassy report no.162.

¹⁰⁸ Coast, *Some Aspects*, p.47.

¹⁰⁹ *New York Times*, 10 November 1947 quoted in Frank C. Darling, *Thailand and the United States* (Washington, D.C., Public Affairs Press, 1965), pp.60-61.

¹¹⁰ USNA, Bangkok File 1948, Lovett to US embassy in Bangkok no.177, 14 April 1948; also Telegram no.1460 from US embassy in London to S.D., 9 April 1948.

¹¹¹ BPRO FO371/76277 F2404/1011/40, p.2.

¹¹² USNA, Bangkok File 1948, Stuart, US embassy in Nanking, to Bangkok no.11, 15 April 1948.

¹¹³ USNA, DS 892.00/4-848 Lovett to US embassy in Bangkok no.167 dated 12 April 1948.

¹¹⁴ USNA, DS 892.01/4-1048 Stanton to S.D. no.NIACT289; 892.01/4-1248 Stanton to S.D. no.291; 892.01/4-1448 Stanton to S.D. no.304. Stanton opposed very strongly any immediate recognition of the Pibul government. In his cable of 12 April, he wrote "I should like to reiterate that I feel very strongly the unwisdom of immediately entering into diplomatic relations with the Phibun regime as though its establishment had followed normal constitutional processes. I feel such action would not enhance our relations or prestige with

the Siamese people and that it is not in best interests of this country. I would therefore be lacking in frankness if I did not make it clear to Department that if it is the considered policy of the Department immediately to establish diplomatic relations with the Phibun regime, I am not the person to carry out such policy and I would beg to be relieved of necessity of so doing.”

¹¹⁵ USNA, DS 892.01/4-1348 Lovett to Stanton no.170, 13 April 1948.

¹¹⁶ USNA, DS 892.00/4-2648 State Department release no.319 dated 23 April 1948.

¹¹⁷ USNA, DS 892.01/4-1748 Lovett to Stanton no.189, 21 April 1948.

¹¹⁸ USNA, DS 892.00/4-2148 Memorandum of Conversation between K.P. Landon (SEA) and Jean Daridan, counselor of the French embassy in Washington, 21 April 1948.

¹¹⁹ See BRPO FO371/70014 F7509/781/40 F.O. minute by A.M. Palliser, 25 May 1948.

¹²⁰ *The Straits Times*, 26 May 1948.

¹²¹ *The Straits Times*, 18 November 1948.

¹²² TMFA, L&A File NC1:1/757 Memorandum from General Phao, Director General of the Police Department, to Secretary General of the Cabinet no.3092/2496, 19 March 1953. The memorandum referred to the Foreign Ministry's policy concerning a proposed Franco-Thai border agreement in 1948. At the time French rule in Indochina was viewed as transient. Thus, it was considered prudent not to enter into any agreement with France which would adversely affect the independence movements in Indochina. In July 1948 Pibul also declared that Thailand regarded the Vietnamese conflict as an independence movement and not a Communist revolt. See Russell Fifield, *The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1958), p.249.

¹²³ Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.67.

¹²⁴ BPRO FO371/84348 F1011/1 Thompson to Bevin, 22 May 1950.

¹²⁵ Apart from general laws prescribing national uniformity, special attempts were made to assimilate the Thai Moslems, for example, on 18 August 1943 the Thai Assembly passed two bills, one placing a special tax on persons unable

to read and write the Thai language, the other repudiating the official recognition of polygamy among Thai Moslems. USNA, Bangkok File 1948, Office of Intelligence Research Report no.4707, 19 November 1948, p.17.

¹²⁶ Mahyideen (or Mahyudin) was the son of Tengku Abdul Kadir, former Sultan of Pattani, and was married to the younger sister of Sultan of Kelantan. It was reported that Mahyideen maintained a guerrilla band on the Thai border. Although he did not admit his control of guerrilla forces, Mahyideen had once stated that guerrilla activity would continue until the demands of the Malays in Thailand had been met. Ibid., pp.37-38. Apparently as Mahyideen resided in Kota Baru of Kelantan, he became a source of embarrassment for the British authority who desired border cooperation from the Thai government.

¹²⁷ Nantawan Haemindra, "The Problem of the Thai Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand", Part one, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol.VII, no.2, September 1976, p.214.

¹²⁸ There are conflicting reports as to the origin of the clash. According to American embassy report, a force of Thai police attempted to break up a religious meeting of some two to three hundred Malays near the town of Narathiwat, resulting in a two-day battle. USNA, DS 892.00/5-1448 Summary report no.189. But according to despatches received in Bangkok by the Interior Ministry from the Governor of Narathiwat, 1000 Malays attacked a Thai police force stationed near the Kelantan border; Nantawan, "The Problem of the Thai Muslims", p.216.

¹²⁹ Nantawan, "The Problem of the Thai Muslims", pp.206,217.

¹³⁰ *The Straits Times*, 19 November 1948.

¹³¹ *The Straits Times*, 6 September 1948.

¹³² *The Straits Times*, 27 August 1948.

¹³³ USNA, Bangkok File 1948, Memorandum of Account to Select Group by Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner-General for the UK in South East Asia, on visit to Bangkok (Top Secret), 8 December 1948.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ *USNA*, DS 892.00/4-2948 US Embassy report no.162.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *TMFA*, L&A, File 10.36.22/1 Telegram from Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs to Thai ambassador, Nanking no.63/2490, 24 August 1947.

¹³⁹ *BPRO* FO371/5441 F17619/520/40 Thompson to F.O. no.287, 10 December 1946; Also *TMFA*, L&A, File 10.36.32/1 Memorandum from Police Department to Minister of Interior no.9305/2490, 27 September 1947.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *USNA*, DS 792.001/7-2451 William T. Turner to S.D. no.58.

¹⁴² *TMFA*, L&A, File 10.36.36/5 Official Communiqué from the Minister of Education, 11 May 1948. Also *Bangkok Post*, 13 May 1948.

¹⁴³ *The Daily Mail*, 14 August 1948.

¹⁴⁴ *TMFA*, L&A, File 10.36.32/4 Aide Memoire presented to the Thai embassy in Nanking by the Chinese government, 17 August 1948.

¹⁴⁵ *TMFA*, L&A, File 10.36.32/4 Minister of Foreign Affairs to Chinese ambassador no.11902/2491, 21 September 1948.

¹⁴⁶ Pibul himself in the capacity of Minister of Interior sent a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs denying the *Pravda* report on 30 June that the Thai Police had suppressed Communist organization and arrested 100 Chinese Communists. *TFMA*, L&A, File 10.36.32/4 P. Pibulsonggram, Minister of Interior, to Minister of Foreign Affairs, no.T11227/2491, 24 August 1948. See also Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *The Left Wing in Southeast Asia* (New York, William Sloane Associates, 1950), p.68.

¹⁴⁷ *USNA*, DS 892.00B/7-2648 Memorandum of Conversation between Pibul and Stanton.

¹⁴⁸ *The Straits Times*, 19 April 1948; Thompson and Adloff, *The Left Wing*, pp.59-60.

¹⁴⁹ *USNA*, DS 892.00/4-2948 US Embassy report no.162.

¹⁵⁰ *USNA*, DS 892.00/11-2248 US Embassy report no.419, p.6. See also *BPRO*

FO371/84348 FS1011/1 Thompson to Bevin no.86, 22 May 1950, p.3. The Central Peace Maintenance Committee had sub-committees in the provinces and its main function was reportedly to “nose out” sedition wherever it was to be found. In 1949, it had a secret fund of 62 million baht to spend, the details of how the money had been used was not revealed, for security reasons.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.7.

¹⁵² USNA, DS 892.00/12-1748 US Embassy report no.449.

¹⁵³ USNA, DS 892.00/11-2248 US Embassy report no.419; also Thawee’s memoirs in Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics*, p.123.

¹⁵⁴ USNA, DS 892.00/11-3048 Memorandum of Conversation between Pibul and Stanton. See also 892.00/12-1748, op. cit.

¹⁵⁵ Pridi’s Story, *Bangkok Post*, 5 December 1974. American intelligence also reported the presence of Pridi near Bangkok under the protection of the Thai navy in early February 1949; USNA, DS 892.00/2-949 Memorandum from Reed(SEA) to Butterworth(FE). Pridi had departed from Singapore to Hong Kong in May 1948, then to Shanghai before leaving China for Thailand in February 1949. See Vichitvong Na-Pombhejara, *Pridi Banomyong and the Making of Thailand’s Modern History* (Bangkok, Siriyod Printing Co. Ltd., 1983), pp.261-265.

¹⁵⁶ USNA, DS 892.00/2-2349 John F. Stone, First Secretary, US Embassy, Bangkok to S.D. no.63. On 16 February 1948 Pibul made a broadcast warning the nation and particularly the press against internal strife which would draw Thailand into “the surrounding war flames and the communist trap”. The following day, the Cabinet unanimously decided to proclaim a state of emergency and Pibul stated at the press conference that he had received a telegram from Paris that Ho Chi Minh had definitely linked up with Mao Tse-tung. *Liberty*, 17 February 1948.

¹⁵⁷ Pridi’s Story, *Bangkok Post*, 8 December 1974; Vichitvong, *Pridi Banomyong*, p.267.

¹⁵⁸ Keyes, *Isan*, p.34.

¹⁵⁹ Thai Noi (pseud. for Salao Lekharuchi), *Prachathippatai 42 Pee* (42 Years of Democracy), vol.3 (Bangkok, Phraepittaya, 1974), pp.207-209; also Coast, *Some Aspects*, p.53.

¹⁶⁰ BPRO FO371/76280 F6659/1017/40 and F6660/1017/40 Thompson to F.O., 29 April and 2 May 1949. Apparently, Thai intelligence mistook the defeated KMT troops to be the Red Army.

¹⁶¹ BPRO FO371/76280 F8097/1017/40 Thompson to F.O., 2 June 1949.

CHAPTER 4

¹ George McTurnan Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam* (New York, The Dial Press, 1967), pp.23-25; The Senator Gravel Edition, *The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1971) vol. 1, pp.18-19.

² Leahy Memorandum, 30 April 1945, SWNCC35/10, State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee Papers as quoted in Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War 1941-1945* (Harvard University Press, 1981), p.247.

³ Message to Congress, 12 March 1947, printed in Margaret Carlyle ed., *Documents on International Affairs, 1947-1948* (London, 1952), p.6.

⁴ Ruth T. McVey, *The Calcutta Conference and the Southeast Asian Uprisings* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1958), p.1. The Calcutta Conference is formally named the Conference of the Youth and Students of Southeast Asia Fighting for Freedom and Independence, 19-25 February 1948.

⁵ See discussions in McVey, *Calcutta Conference*; John H. Kautsky, *Moscow and the Communist Party of India* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1956), pp.33-41; Charles B. McLane, *Soviet Strategies in Southeast Asia* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1966), pp.357-360; Evelyn Colbert, *Southeast Asia in International Politics 1941-1956* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1977), pp.120-122.

⁶ Stanton, *Brief Authority*, p.220.

⁷ USNA, Bangkok File 1948, Stanton to S.D. (Confidential) no.236, 29 June 1948.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ USNA, Bangkok File 1948, J.D. Hickerson to various diplomatic posts (Secret), Subject: Basic Factors in Soviet Far Eastern Policy, 13 October 1948.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ US Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Foreign Relations, Hearings, *Nomination of Philip C. Jessup*, 82nd Congress, 1st Session, 1951, p.603, Acheson memorandum to Philip C. Jessup (Top Secret), 18 July 1949.

¹² US Department of State, *US Relations with China* (China White Paper), publication 3575 (Washington, USGPO, 1949), p.XVI.

¹³ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, henceforth cited as *FRUS*, 1949, vol.VII, pp.1210-1214: 711.90/11-1649 Memorandum from Jessup to the Secretary of State (Secret).

¹⁴ *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., vol.1, pp.37-38. The “domino theory” was popularized by President Eisenhower in his press conference of 7 April 1954. See *ibid.*, p.597.

¹⁵ *FRUS*, 1949, vol.VII, pp.1215-1220.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.1215.

¹⁷ *Department of State Bulletin*, hereafter abbreviated as *DSB*, 27 March 1950, p.502. On Jessup Conference see also *FRUS* 1950, vol.VI, pp.18-29, 68.

¹⁸ *DSB*, 20 March 1950, pp.427-30.

¹⁹ *DSB*, 13 March 1950, p.411.

²⁰ *DSB*, 27 March 1950, pp.470-71.

²¹ *FRUS* 1950, vol.VI, p.43: 792.5MAP/3-950 Memorandum for the President from Dean Acheson (Top Secret), Annex A.

²² *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947 Memorandum of Conversation, participants: Arthakit Banomyong, Thai Foreign Minister, Prince Wan Waithayakon, Thai Ambassador, Robert A. Lovett, Acting Secretary of State, Kenneth P. Landon, Acting Chief, Division of Southeast Asian Affairs, 1 October 1947.

²³ *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947 Stanton to D.S. no. A-97, 12 December 1947.

²⁴ *USNA*, Military Branch, Plans and Operations Division 091 Siam, War Department General Staff File, Memorandum of Conversation, participants: Prince Wan, Major General Luang Suranarong, Major M.C.Nithatsanathorn, Major Chatchai Chunnawan, W.W. Butterworth, K.P. Landon, 1 April 1948.

²⁵ *USNA*, Military Branch, P&O Division 091 Siam, Memorandum for General Wedemeyer (Secret), Subject: State Department Policy Statement on Siam, 28 October 1948.

²⁶ *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947 Marshall to US embassy in Bangkok no.48 (Secret), 10 September 1948.

²⁷ *USNA*, Military Branch, P&O Division 091 Siam, Thai ambassador's note no.2092/2491, 18 November 1948.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *USNA*, Military Branch, P&O Division 091 Siam, Memorandum for General Schuyler (Secret), 8 November 1948.

³⁰ *USNA*, *DS* 892.00/11-2248 Stanton to D.S. no.419, 22 November 1948.

³¹ *USNA*, Bangkok File 1947, Stanton to D.S. no. A-97, 12 December 1947.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *BPRO* FO371/76298 F742/1191/40 F.O. to British embassy in Bangkok no.46, 27 January 1949. Walton Butterworth, Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs of the State Department, reportedly told M.A. Graves, British counselor in Washington, that the US government was not disposed to make outright gifts of arms and equipment to Thailand. In his view, as Thailand was in the sterling group, it seemed reasonable to leave the area to British predominant influence.

³⁴ *USNA*, Military Branch, P&O Division 091 Siam, Memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Iseley (Secret), 25 January 1949; Telegram from Major General Ray T. Maddocks, Director of P&O Division to US embassy in Bangkok, 25 January 1949.

³⁵ See *BPRO* FO371/76298 F4575/1191/40 Thompson to F.O. no.247, 29 March 1949; FO371/73299 F5929/1191/40 Thompson to F.O. no.312A, 27 April 1949; *USNA*, Military Branch, P&O Division 091 Siam, Memorandum of Conversation between M.A. Graves, counselor, British embassy in Washington and K.P. Landon, Assistant Chief, Division of Southeast Asian Affairs, 5 January 1949.

³⁶ *USNA*, *DS* 711.92/2-1049 Stanton to S.D. no.35 (Secret), Subject: Policy Suggestions regarding Siam. Stanton's suggestions included the extension of technical assistance, the supply of limited quantities of military supplies

and equipment for specific purposes, a modest expansion of informational activities to counter Communist propaganda and the taking of favourable action on such Thai requests as the return of their gold impounded in Tokyo.

³⁷ *Thailand*, *The National Archives*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs File 90/9, Memorandum by Upadit Pachariyangkul, 27 December 1951.

³⁸ *DSB*, 24 October 1949, p.638.

³⁹ *USNA*, *DS* 892.50/6-1049 Lacy Memorandum.

⁴⁰ *USNA*, *DS* 711.92/8-2249 Memorandum from Reed(SEA) to Jessup.

⁴¹ *USNA*, *DS* 711.92/9-149 Stanton to S.D. no.301 (Secret), 1 April 1949

⁴² *Ibid.* and 892.00/8-249 Stanton to S.D. no.676 (Secret); see also *FRUS* 1949, vol.VII part 1, pp.50-53; 890.00/6-1449 Stanton to S.D. no.201.

⁴³ *USNA*, *DS* FW892.00/8-249 Memorandum from Butterworth(FE) to the Secretary of State (Secret), 5 August 1949.

⁴⁴ *USNA*, *DS* 892.00/8-949 Memorandum from Butterworth and Berkner to the Secretary of State, 9 August 1949.

⁴⁵ *TMFA*, *L&A*, File 3.4.3/5 Tel. no.175/2492 and no.192/92 Wan Waithayakon to Foreign Minister, 15 July and 30 July 1949; also airgram no.T2479/2492 Wan Waithayakon to Foreign Minister, 2 September 1949.

⁴⁶ *TMFA*, *L&A*, File 3.4.3/5 airgram no.T2479/2492.

⁴⁷ *BPRO*, FO371/76280 F13276/1017/40 Thompson to F.O., 3 September 1949.

⁴⁸ *TMFA*, *L&A*, File 3.4.3/5 Telegram from Pote Sarasin no.161/2492, 27 July 1949.

⁴⁹ *TMFA*, *L&A*, File 3.4.3/5 Memorandum by K.S. Patton, 21 July 1949. Kenneth S. Patton was in service of the Thai government as the political adviser for 4 years until February 1950.

⁵⁰ *Liberty*, 18 August 1949.

⁵¹ *USNA*, *DS* 892.00B/8-2949 Stanton to S.D. no.753; see also *BPRO* FO371/76280 F13276/1017/40 Thompson to F.O. no.657, 3 September 1949.

⁵² *The Sunday Times*, 18 September 1949; also *USNA*, *DS* 892.00(W)/9-849 Stanton to S.D. no.791.

⁵³ *TMFA, L&A*, File 3.4.3/6 Colonel M.L.Khab Kunjara, Secretary to the Prime Minister to the Foreign Minister (Secret-Urgent) no.T3259/2492, 30 August 1949.

⁵⁴ *TMFA, L&A*, File 3.4.3/3 Airgram no.13586/2492 Pote Sarasin to Thai embassy in Washington, D.C., 9 September 1949.

⁵⁵ *USNA, DS 892.00B/6-249* Memorandum of Conversation with Pote Sarasin by Stanton.

⁵⁶ *USNA, DS 892.00B/9-2049* US embassy in Bangkok to S.D. no.328.

⁵⁷ *BPRO, FO371/76280 F13757/1017/40* Thompson to F.O. no.684, 13 September 1949.

⁵⁸ In fact, according to American embassy's source, Pibul told the Defence Council afterwards that his statements were made to sound "stronger" than he had intended. On the other hand, according to the interviewer, Applegate, as related to Stanton, it appears that during the interview Applegate suddenly decided to pose a question on the attitude of the Thai government to the entry of British and/or American in the actual invasion by Communist forces. Before replying to this impromptu question, Pibul noticeably hesitated, but finally replied that Thailand would welcome British and American troops who were combatting communism in other parts of the world. See *USNA, DS 892.00B/9-2349* Stanton to S.D. no.35.

⁵⁹ *USNA, DS 892.00B/10-449* Stanton to S.D. no.343.

⁶⁰ *BPRO, FO371/76280 F15381/1017/40* Thompson to F.O., 5 October 1949; also *USNA, DS 892.00B/10-1349* Stanton to S.D. no.367.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *BPRO FO371/76288 F18520/1058/40G* Thompson to R.H. Scott, 30 November 1949.

⁶³ *BPRO FO371/84348 FS1011/1* Thompson to Bevin, 22 May 1950. The market value, as distinct from the official rate, of sterling was around 60 baht. It had been the Thai government's policy to use the profit made from sales of sterling by the Bank of Thailand to commercial banks to destroy currency notes.

⁶⁴ *Thailand, The National Archives*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs File no.90.1/3 Memorandum by Konthi Supamongkol, Head of Western Political Affairs Department, 22 November 1949.

⁶⁵ Skinner, *Chinese Society*, p.326.

⁶⁶ *Siam Nikorn*, 15 November 1949.

⁶⁷ *USNA, DS 892.00(W)/12-849 Stanton to S.D. no.1040.*

⁶⁸ Skinner, *Chinese Society*, p.327.

⁶⁹ *TMFA, L&A*, File 10.36.34/1 Note no.1146/2493 Thai Permanent Delegate in New York to Secretary General of the UN, 4 April 1950. According to this Note, the number of Chinese persons detained in Bangkok prisons as of 7 February 1950 was 244; there was no cruel treatment of any kind; and the number of Chinese deported in 1949 was 85.

⁷⁰ *Thailand, The National Archives*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs File no.93/17 Confidential Report of the meeting of Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Policy, chaired by Prince Wan Waithayakon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 5 August 1957. cf. George Modelski, "Thailand and China: From Avoidance to Hostility" in A.M. Halpern (ed.), *Policies Toward China: Views from Six Continents* (New York, McGraw Hill Book Co. for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1965), p.352.

⁷¹ *USNA, DS 892.00(W)/12-2249 Stanton to S.D. no.1089.*

⁷² *FRUS*, 1949, vol.VII, Part 1, p.113: 851G.01/12-2349 the Secretary of State to US embassy in Bangkok no.704 (Secret).

⁷³ *FRUS*, 1949, vol.VII, Part 1, p.115: 851G.01/12-2849 Stanton to S.D. no.1100 (Secret); also *FRUS* vol.VI, pp.693-694: 751G.02/1-1250 Stanton to S.D. no.23.

⁷⁴ *TMFA, L&A*, File 3.4.3/5 Memorandum by K.S. Patton, 21 July 1949.

⁷⁵ *BPRO FO371/83620 FF10340/3 Thompson to F.O. no.104*, 9 February 1950.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*; see also *FRUS* 1950, vol.VI pp.724-725: 751G.02/2-850 Stanton to S.D. no.114.

⁷⁷ *BPRO FO371/83620 FF10340/4 Thompson to F.O. no.106*, 10 February 1950.

⁷⁸ The National Defence Council (or the Council for the Defence of the Kingdom) was chaired by the Prime Minister. Between 1948 and 1952 it consisted of all Ministers, Commanders-in-Chief of the army, navy, the air force, the Chiefs of Staff of the army, navy, the air force, the Chief of Defence Staff and four other members. The National Defence Council was set up as an advisory council to the Cabinet in matters concerning national security. Since all Cabinet ministers had a seat in the Council, it could be considered a *de facto* decision-making body, a convenient way to include the military in the high-level policy making, when required.

⁷⁹ USNA, DS 792.00(W)/2-2450 Stanton to S.D. no.174; 792.00(W)/3-250 Stanton to S.D. no.197. Also BPRO FO371/83620 FF10340/5 Thompson to F.O. no.149, 23 February 1950; FF10340/6 Thompson to F.O. no.152, 24 February 1950.

⁸⁰ USNA, DS 792.00/3-1350 Stanton to S.D. no.185.

⁸¹ BPRO, FO371/83620 FF10340/6 Thompson to F.O. no.152, 24 February 1950.

⁸² USNA, DS 792.00/3-1350 Stanton to S.D. no.185.

⁸³ USNA, DS 792.00(W)/3-250 Stanton to S.D. no.197. Pote Sarasin was not out of government service for long. Later that year he was appointed as Chief Delegate for Thailand to the UN Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea. He then went on to become Thai ambassador to the United States, SEATO Secretary General, and Prime Minister of Thailand.

⁸⁴ Pote, a wealthy lawyer and businessman, once did Piubl a great favour, when Pibul was arrested and in disgrace after the Second World War, by selling him at a giveaway price a house at centrally-sited Soi Chitlom in Bangkok. Thereafter, they became close friends. See A. Pibulsonggram, *Chompon P. Pibulsonggram*, book 4, pp.70,75.

⁸⁵ BPRO, FO371/84514 FZ1022/12 Malcolm MacDonald to F.O. no.1192/24/50, 18 February 1950.

⁸⁶ USNA, DS 792.5MAP/3-1750 Memorandum from Lacy to Butterworth.

⁸⁷ USNA, DS 792.5MAP/2-1350 Acheson to Stanton no.112 (Secret); 792.5MAP/2-1850 Stanton to S.D. no.163 (Secret).

⁸⁸ USNA, DS 792.00(W)/2-2450 Stanton to S.D. no.174; see also FRUS 1950, vol. VI, pp.747-748; 751G.02/3-150 Stanton to S.D. no.190.

⁸⁹ *BPRO* FO371/83620 FF10340/6 Thompson to F.O. no.152, 24 February 1950. Pote later confided to Barry T. Benson, former US commercial attaché to Thailand, that Kenneth Patton and Phraya Srivisan were Pote's advisers on the Bao Dai recognition, but Patton had left Thailand just before the break between Pote and Pibul. Pote also felt undue pressure was exerted by the US in that the Jessup Conference was held in Bangkok at the time, and both Stanton and Jessup suggested that if Thailand recognized Bao Dai it would influence other Southeast Asian nations to do likewise. See *USNA*, Bangkok File 1950, RG84, Barry T. Benson(London) to Stanton (Secret), 18 September 1950.

⁹⁰ *BPRO*, FO371/84363 F10386/1 Thompson to F.O., 1 March 1950.

⁹¹ *USNA*, DS 792.5MAP/4-1050 Stanton to S.D. no.315 (Secret); 792.5MAP/4-1050 Acheson to Embassy in Bangkok no.282 (Secret) dated 12 April 1950.

⁹² *USNA*, DS 792.5/4-1350 Stanton to S.D. no.325 (Secret). Stanton wrote: "he [Pibul] was so elated he not only informed Cabinet but also had his secretary inform press."

⁹³ *Ibid.*; 792.5/4-1950 Stanton to S.D. no.337 (Secret).

⁹⁴ *FRUS*, 1951 vol.VI p.1600: 611.92/3-1550 Stanton to S.D. no.616 (Secret). The contentious point of opposition was, however, not close ties with the United States but the timing of the recognition. Most of the opposition was centred on the point that Pibul was too hasty in committing Thailand and should have waited for the United States to demonstrate its commitment more firmly first.

⁹⁵ *USNA*, DS 792.00/6-1550 Turner, chargé d'affaires of US embassy in Bangkok to S.D. no.453.

⁹⁶ *TMFA*, L&A, File 1.8/2.1 Letter from the Prime Minister to Speaker of the National Assembly no.P5986/2493, 21 July 1950.

⁹⁷ *FRUS* 1951 vol.VI, p.1600: 611.92/3-1551 Stanton to S.D. no.616 (Secret)

⁹⁸ *TMFA*, L&A, File 1.8/2.1, Telegram no.59/2493 from Acting Foreign Minister (Khemjati) to Thai Permanent Delegation in New York, 25 October 1950. The number of Thai troops in Korea had never been increased to 4000 as originally offered.

⁹⁹ *TMFA*, L&A, File 1.8/2.1, Telegram no.44/2493 from Pibulsonggram, Acting Foreign Minister to Thai Permanent Delegation in New York, 16 September 1950. The connection between Thailand's support for the US and military aid was made abundantly clear to the Thai government. Price Wan, Thai

Ambassador to the United States cabled home this message: "But because of H.M. Government's clear-cut attitude in recognizing Bao Dai and supporting United Nations in the matter of Korea, the State Department was able to secure on the 24th August the unfreezing of initial batch of arms to be sent to Thailand, as the arrival of arms would create a very strong political impression in Thailand." *TMFA, L&A, 1.8/2.1* (1950), Telegram no.157/2493, 25 August 1950.

¹⁰⁰ *BPRO, FO371/84350 FS1015/20* Whittington to Bevin, 22 November 1950, p.3.

¹⁰¹ *TMFA, L&A, File 1.8/2.1, Telegram no.57/2493* Thai Permanent Delegation in New York to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 December 1950.

¹⁰² *TMFA, L&A, File 1.8/2.1, Telegram no.1/2494* Thai Foreign Minister (Nai Warakan Bancha) to Thai Permanent Delegation in New York, 4 January 1951.

¹⁰³ *TMFA, L&A, File 1.8/2.1* (1950) Prime Minister's Secretarial Office to Foreign Minister no.T663/2494, 22 January 1951.

¹⁰⁴ *USNA, DS 792.00/7-1150* Turner to S.D. no.21.

¹⁰⁵ *USNA, DS 792.00/2-2151* Turner to S.D. no.565, p.22. See also Thailand, The National Assembly, Report on the Proceeding of the National Assembly 9/2493 (second special session) vol.1, 3 July 1950.

¹⁰⁶ *London Daily Telegraph*, 3 June 1949.

¹⁰⁷ John Welfield, *The Postwar International Order and The Origins of the Japanese – American Security Treaty*, Australia – Japan Research Centre, Research Paper no.94, The Australian National University, December 1982, p.58.

¹⁰⁸ *FRUS 1951, vol.VI, pp.190-191: 790.5/4-951* Stanton to Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Rusk) (Confidential and Personal).

¹⁰⁹ *FRUS 1951, vol.VI, p.185: 694.001/4-551* Draft Memorandum for the President from Secretary of State (Acheson).

¹¹⁰ *USNA, Bangkok File 1951, Acheson to US embassy in Bangkok no.1518, 17 April 1951.*

¹¹¹ *USNA, Bangkok File 1951, Turner to S.D. no.196, 22 September 1951; see also FRUS vol.VI, pp.254-255: 790.5/11-951* Memorandum of Conversation in Bangkok by Turner, participants: G.T.S.A. Wallinger, British ambassador, Aaron S. Brown, American counselor, and William Turner, American chargé d'affaires.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.; see *FRUS* 1951, vol.VI, pp.208-209: 790.5/4-1751 Secretary of State to US embassy in Bangkok no.1519.

¹¹⁴ George Modelski (ed.), *SEATO: Six Studies* (Melbourne, F.W. Cheshire, 1962), p.90.

¹¹⁵ *USNA*, *DS* 792.001/5-1150 Rolland H. Bushner, second secretary of US embassy in Bangkok, to S.D. no.336.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

¹ See for example *FRUS* 1950, vol.VI, pp.134-135: 792.5MAP/8-2250 Acheson to Stanton no.167.

² Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.87.

³ See text of Agreement for Financing certain educational exchange programs between Thailand and the United States, 1 July 1950, in *UNTS* vol.81, p.61; also *BPRO*, FO371/92952 FS1011/1 Whittington to Morrison, 23 April 1951, Siam: Annual Review for 1950, p.7.

⁴ Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.79.

⁵ See text of Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement between the governments of Thailand and the United States, 19 September 1950, in *UNTS* vol.132, p.199.

⁶ See Griffin Report on Thailand's needs for US Economic and Technical Aid, May 1950, in Samuel P. Hayes, *The Beginning of American Aid to Southeast Asia: The Griffin Mission of 1950* (Lexington, Mass., D.C. Heath & Co., 1971), pp.223-267. Griffin recommendations divided the proposed economic aid program into 4 major categories: Agriculture (of which irrigation constituted the dominant item) \$2.83 million; Public Health \$3.06 million; Education \$0.993 million; and Industry, Transport and Communications \$4.53 million. The proposed program was at first cut to \$7.5 million but thanks to strong intervention from the American ambassador in Bangkok, it was later restored to around 9 million dollars. See *FRUS* 1951, vol.VI, pp.1608-1609: 892.00-R/6-

2751 Memorandum of Conversation between Stanton, American ambassador to Thailand, William C. Foster, ECA Administrator, and Allen Griffin, Director, Far Eastern Division, ECA. The economic and technical aid program for Thailand was actually \$8.9 million in 1950-51, \$7.0 million in 1951-52, and \$6.2 million in 1952-53. See *Report of the Special Study Mission to Pakistan, India, Thailand, and Indochina*, 83rd Congress, 1st Session, 12 May 1953, (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1953), p.48.

⁷ *FRUS* 1951, vol.VI, pp.1612-1614: 892.00-R/6-2751; also Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, pp.79-80.

⁸ The amount for railway rehabilitation was \$3 million, irrigation project \$18 million, and port construction and development \$4.4 million. See *UNTS* vol.158, pp.3-57 Loan Agreements between the World Bank and the Government of Thailand, 27 October 1950.

⁹ See Hayes, *The Beginning of American Aid*, p.258.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *FRUS* 1951, vol.VI, p.1608: 112/4-1751 Under Secretary of State (Webb) to the Director of the Bureau of the Budget (Lawton).

¹² Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.81.

¹³ *FRUS* 1952, vol.VI, p.1623: PSA Files: Lot 58 D258, Box 13693 Memorandum by the Officer in Charge, Thai, Malayan and Indochinese Affairs (Landon) to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Merchant), 17 July 1951.

¹⁴ See article 1.2 of Agreement Respecting Military Assistance between the Governments of the USA and Thailand, 17 October 1950, in *UNTS* vol.79, p.41.

¹⁵ *USNA*, DS 792.5 MAP/5-1050 S.D. to American embassy in Bangkok no. 42. See the proposed draft of unilateral note to Thai government in *USNA*, DS 792.5 MAP/6-850 Stanton to S.D. no.432.

¹⁶ *FRUS* 1950, vol.VI, p.102: 492.00234/6-1750 Stanton to S.D. no.536.

¹⁷ Russell H. Fifield, *The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia: 1945-1958* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1958), p.250.

¹⁸ *USNA*, DS 792.5 MAP/3-350 Stanton to S.D. no.165; also *USNA*, DS 792.5 MAP/3-1750 Lacy (PSA) to Butterworth (FE); also *USNA*, DS 792.5 MAP/3-3050 Stanton to S.D. no.204, p.7.

¹⁹ Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.90. After the suppression of the Manhattan Rebellion, both General Phin and General Phao expressed their appreciation to American embassy staff for American arms aid which, they said, was a vital factor in assisting the government to suppress the attempted coup. See *USNA*, DS 792.00/7-2451 Phin conversation with R.H. Bushner, second secretary of American embassy in Thailand, on 21 July 1951; also *USNA*, DS 792.00/7-1651 Phao conversation with N.B. Hannah, second secretary of American embassy in Thailand, on 14 July 1951. This contrasted notably with official statements at the time that US MAAG arms had not been used.

²⁰ *BPRO*, FO371/92965 FS10345/1 Whittington to Morrison, 1 May 1951.

²¹ *FRUS* 1951, vol.VI, p.1614: 892.00-R/6-2751.

²² *USNA*, DS 792.5/10-3154 The Request of the Government of Thailand for Additional Loan and Grant Aid submitted by the Thai Ministry of Finance to the US Government, 31 October 1954.

²³ *USNA*, DS 792.5 MAP/5-2351 American chargé d' affaires in Thailand (William T. Turner) to S.D. no.1894.

²⁴ *USNA*, DS 792.5 MAP/6-1551 Questions and Answers on Title III Program – Thailand (Top Secret).

²⁵ *USNA*, DS 792.5 MAP/10-351 MDAP General Report from Bangkok for August 1951, no.235.

²⁶ *BPRO* FO371/84348 FS1011/1 G.H. Thompson to Bevin no.86, 22 May 1950, p.3. Thai police officers were also sent to Malaya for specialized training courses. While the police force purchased various wireless equipment, guns and ammunition from the UK, a British offer to sell arms and equipment for 3 Thai army infantry divisions in February 1950 was turned down, apparently because this compared unfavourably with free arms deliveries from the US.

²⁷ *USNA*, DS 792.00/12-2650 Political Report for November 1950 from William T. Turner, counselor of American embassy in Bangkok, to S.D. no.417.

²⁸ *FRUS* 1951, vol.VI, p.1623: PSA File: Lot 58 D 258, Box 13693.

²⁹ Thomas Lobe, *United States National Security Policy and Aid to the Thailand Police*, Monograph series in World Affairs, vol.14, Book 2, University of Denver, Colorado, 1977, pp. 20-25. See also Alfred W. McCoy et. al., *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia* (New York, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), p.138.

Lady La-ia-d, wife of Prime Minister Pibul, later stated that “the US began to pour aid – “Sea Supplies” as it was called – into the country, which gave a big boost to Sarit’s army and Phao’s police. The boost given to the police was particularly noticeable”. Jayanta K. Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics* (New Delhi, Orient Longman Ltd., 1972), p.212.

The police training camp was opened in Lopburi on 17 April 1951 where the police received special training in guerrilla warfare under a contract with SEA Supply Co. *USNA*, DS 792.00(W)/4-1951 Stanton to S.D. no.1635.

³⁰ Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.114.

³¹ McCoy et. al., *Politics of Heroin*, p.138.

³² Robert H. Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma* (Cornell University, Southeast Asia program, data paper 93, Ithaca, 1973), pp.11,12.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.12.

³⁴ *BPRO*, FO371/92952 FS1011/1 Whittington to Morrison, 16 April 1951, p.5.

³⁵ *TMFA*, L&A, File NC1:5/24(1950) Minister of Interior (Mangkorn Phromyothi) to Foreign Minister no.T10671/2493 dated 30 July 1950.

³⁶ *TMFA*, L&A, File 10.36.34/4 (1950-59) Memorandum regarding the proposed opening of the Chinese Assistant Military Attache’s Office at Amphur Mae-Sai, 5 October 1951.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *TMFA*, L&A, File 10.36.34/4 (1950-59) Patrick Pichi Sun, Chinese chargé d’affaires to Thai Foreign Minister no.40/529, 15 January 1951.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *USNA*, Bangkok File 1951, Turner to S.D. no.703, 11 April 1951. cf. McCoy, *Politics of Heroin*, pp.137-141; also Taylor, *KMT Intervention in Burma*, p.34; also *BPRO*, FO371/101168 FS1015/63 Wallinger to R.H. Scott, 22 September 1952.

⁴¹ *TMFA, L&A*, File 10.36.34/4 (1950-59) Nai Warakan Bancha to Pibul no. N2039/2494, 30 January 1951.

⁴² *TMFA, L&A*, File 10.36.34/4 (1950-59) Memorandum regarding the proposed opening of the Chinese Assistant Military Attaché's Office at Amphur Mae-Sai, 5 October 1951. The Foreign Minister's note to the Chinese embassy dated 24 January 1951.

⁴³ *TMFA, L&A*, File 10.36.34/4 (1950-59) Minister of Defence (Pibul) to the Foreign Minister (Nai Warakan Bancha) no.2243/2494, 5 February 1951.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *BPRO*, FO371/92962 FS1022/2G Whittington to F.O. no.145, 17 March 1951.

⁴⁶ *TMFA, L&A*, File 10.36.34/4 (1950-59) Secretary to the Cabinet Office (Luang Chamnan Aksorn) to Foreign Minister no.T2594/2494, 15 March 1951. The Military Attaché's Office was reported to have moved itself on 16 March to Lampang, the nearby province. See *USNA*, Bangkok File 1951, Airpouch no.703.

⁴⁷ *USNA*, Bangkok File 1951, Memorandum of Conversation between Whittington (British chargé d' affaires) and Stanton, 11 April 1951. The British government, according to Whittington, was astonished to hear that the Thai government was even considering granting permission for the transport of arms and supplies through Thai territory to the Chinese Nationalist guerrillas. The British government's views were that any such action would be extremely dangerous in that, firstly, support of the Chinese Nationalist guerrillas by Thailand would be considered a hostile act by the Chinese Communists; secondly, such support might well be highly provocative and cause the Chinese Communists to invade Burmese and/or Thai territory; and thirdly, furnishing of such aid and comfort by the Thai government to the Chinese Nationalist troops in Burmese territory, where they had no business, would lead to strained relations between the Burmese and Thai governments. Whittington was further instructed to tell Prime Minister Pibul that it was the view of the British government that supports of Chinese Nationalist guerrillas, even in Chinese territory, was out of order.

⁴⁸ Taylor, *KMT Intervention in Burma*, p.14.

⁴⁹ McCoy et.al., *Politics of Heroin*, p.129.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.128-129.

⁵¹ Taylor, *KMT Intervention in Burma*, pp.43-45.

⁵² USNA, Bangkok File 1951, John M. Farrior, American vice-consul in Chiang-mai to American embassy in Bangkok, 7 May 1951.

⁵³ USNA, DS 690B.93/4-2551 Memorandum of Conversation on 24 April 1951 between U Hla Muang, Burmese ambassador to Thailand and Stanton.

⁵⁴ USNA, Bangkok File 1951, Turner to S.D. no.361, 26 November 1951. Also USNA, DS 792.00/4-1552 Aaron S. Brown, counselor of US embassy to S.D. no.669, p.10.

⁵⁵ USNA, DS 792.00/10-2951 Bushner to S.D. no.294, p.8.

⁵⁶ USNA, DS 792.00/2-2151 Turner to S.D. no.565, p.3. One such MP who called for a constitution amendment to curtail the Senatorial power in December 1950 was the Deputy Minister of Justice, Khemchat Bunyarataphan.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.4.

⁵⁸ USNA, Bangkok File 1950, Memorandum of Conversation between Seni Pramroj and Norman B. Hannah, second secretary of American embassy in Bangkok, 27 October 1950. Seni was reported to have told Hannah that “as long as the lion [the British] and the eagle [the US] have not made clear their policy how can the chipmunk take upon itself the burden of fighting the UN’s wars”. In his parliamentary speech Seni’s boss, Khuang, cautioned the government to adopt the wait-and-see policy and observe first how other members reacted to the Security Council’s appeal. Speech of Nai Khuang Aphaiwongse during the first joint session C8/2493, 22 July 1950 cited in Pracha Guna-Kasem, “Thailand and the United Nations (1945-1957)” (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1960), p.136.

⁵⁹ USNA, DS 792.00/2-2151 Turner to S.D. no.565, p.5.

⁶⁰ USNA, DS 792.00/12-2650 Turner to S.D. no.417. p.13; also BPRO, FO371/84350 FS1015/20 Whittington to Bevin no.252, 22 November 1950. p.2.

⁶¹ USNA, DS 792.00/2-251 Memorandum of Conversation on 31 January 1951 between Sang Pathanothai, and N.B. Hannah, 2 February 1951.

⁶² Mahachon, 30 October 1950. A copy of translation appears in USNA, DS 792.001/12-1150 Turner to S.D. no.388, enclosures no.3 and 4.

⁶³ *USNA*, DS 792.00/12-2650 Turner to S.D. no.417, p.7.

⁶⁴ *USNA*, DS 792.00/12-1250 Turner to S.D. no.390.

⁶⁵ *The Bangkok Tribune*, 24 November 1950.

⁶⁶ *USNA*, DS 792.00/2-2151 Turner to S.D. no.565, p.16.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.18. Sang was well known for his regular wartime government radio broadcast as a character in the dialogue “Nai Man and Nai Kong” attacking the Allies. After the war he was indicted as a war criminal and became Pibul’s prison-mate.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*; also *USNA*, DS 792.00/12-2650.

⁶⁹ See *USNA*, DS 792.00/2-2151, pp.19-20.

⁷⁰ *USNA*, DS 792.00/3-351 Memorandum of Conversation on 31 March 1951 between Field Marshal P. Pibulsonggram and Edwin F. Stanton.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Kamol Somvichian, “The Thai Military in Politics: An Analytical Study” (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London (SOAS), August 1969), pp.160-161.

⁷³ *USNA*, DS 792.00/9-1951 Bushner to S.D. no.192, p.29.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.29; also *USNA*, DS 792.00/7-1651.

⁷⁵ *USNA*, DS 792.00/10-2951 Bushner to S.D. no.294.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*; also Thak Chaloemtiarana, *Thailand: The Politics of Despotism* (Bangkok, Social Science Association of Thailand and Thai Khadi Institute, Thammasat University, 1979), pp.53-54; also idem (ed.), *Thai Politics: Extracts and Documents, 1932-1957* (Bangkok, Social Association of Thailand, 1978), pp.673-4.

⁷⁷ *USNA*, DS 792.00/7-651 Memorandum from Anderson (CA) to Landon (PSA), subject: Recent Coup d’état Thailand.

⁷⁸ *USNA*, DS 792.00/9-1951, p.9. The five listed were General Phin, Commander-in-Chief of the Army; Lieutenant General Sarit, Commander of the First Army; Air Marshal Fuen; Police General Phao, Deputy Director General of the Police Department; and Police Director General Luang Chart Trakarn Koson.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.29.

⁸⁰ Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.91; also BPRO, FO371/92956 FS1015/57 Whittington to F.O. no.179, 6 July 1951.

⁸¹ BPRO, FO371/92956 FS1015/61 Whittington to F.O. no.49, 13 July 1951; also BPRO, FO371/92950 FS1015/73 British ambassador (Waller) to Foreign Secretary (Morrison) no.215, 11 August 1951.

⁸² USNA, DS 792.00/10-1951 Bushner to S.D. no.280, p.4.

⁸³ Ibid., see also USNA, DS 792.00/12-1351 Bushner to S.D. no.399. On 7 December, Bushner told Air Marshal Fuen that the unity and stability of the Thai nation might be endangered should anything happen to the King or to the Prime Minister. He also added that should Thailand's unity and stability be further damaged it might cause the United States to reconsider its military aid activities.

⁸⁴ USNA, DS 792.00/10-2951 Bushner to S.D. no.294, pp.6,7. It may be relevant to note that General William J. Donovan's law office was in New York. Donovan was the head of the CIA's predecessor organization, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and later he became US ambassador to Thailand during 1953. He was also one of the vice-chairmen of an organization in the China Lobby, the Committee to Defend America by Aiding Anti-Communist China. Taylor, *KMT Intervention in Burma*, pp.38-39; Ross Y. Koen, *The China Lobby in American Politics* (New York, MacMillan Company, 1960), pp.59-60. Donovan and Phao were also close friends. Lobe, *US National Security Policy and Aid to Thailand Police*, pp.23,129.

⁸⁵ TMFA, L&A, Special Political File: Communism, Chinese troops in Burma, Burmese ambassador to Thai Foreign Minister, D.O. no. MFA63/S, 25 April 1951.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Memorandum from M.L. Peekthip Malakul, Thai chargé d' affaires to Burma to Thai Foreign Minister, 9 May 1951.

⁸⁷ Ibid., Peekthip to Thai Foreign Minister no. T588/2494, 1 October 1951; also FRUS 1951 vol.VI, pp.296-297: 493.90B234/9-2451 Key to S.D. no.312.

⁸⁸ TMFA, L&A, Special Political File: Communism, Chinese troops in Burma, Aide Memoire from British embassy (29 September 1951) and from American embassy (1 October 1951); also FRUS 1951, vol.VI, p.299:493.9283/10-151 Turner to S.D.

⁸⁹ See *FRUS* 1951 vol.VI, p.298: 790B.00/9-2851 Turner to S.D. no.765. On receiving instructions from London, Ambassador Wallinger told American chargé d' affaires, Turner, that he personally was somewhat embarrassed at having to participate in such démarche to the Thai government; not so much because of the British position but because it would put Turner in an absurd position and furthermore might lead to real complications if the Thais take the approach seriously. According to Turner's report, Wallinger said: "it was probably unnecessary to mention that he had sufficient information to prevent any illusions about the real source of supply of KMT troops in Burma; he mentioned flights of four-motored planes; crashing of helicopters; American Major Stewart proceeding on same plane with General Phao to north; huge profits made by Phao and probably Prime Minister in opium in return trips of planes from north; said that Burmese and Indians were also fully informed of real circumstances." See also *FRUS* 1951, vol.VI, p.317: 790B.00/11-2851 Memorandum by the Special Assistant for Mutual Security Affairs (Merchant).

⁹⁰ *TMFA, L&A*, Special Political File: Communism, Chinese troops in Burma, Warakan Bancha to the Prime Minister no. N19812/2494, 9 October 1951.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, Director General of the Police (Phao Sriyanon) to Under Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs no. 11599/2494, 18 October 1951.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, Under Secretary of the Foreign Ministry to the Prime Minister no. N21914/2494, 30 October 1951.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Luang Chamnan Aksorn, Secretary to the Cabinet Office to Foreign Minister no. T12961/2494, 19 November 1951.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *BPRO*, FO371/101173 FS1041/5 Wallinger to F.O., 9 February 1952.

⁹⁷ Taylor, *KMT Intervention in Burma*, p.13 quoting the *New York Times*, 11 February 1952. It may be relevant to know that the Thai chargé d' affaires in Taipei had exchanged notes constituting a provisional air agreement with the Taiwan Minister of Foreign Affairs on 29 September 1951. Essentially, in return for permission for the Pacific Overseas Airlines (Siam) Ltd. to make temporary landings at Taipei on the Bangkok-Taipei route, the Thai government authorized the Civil Air Transport to extend its Taipei-Bangkok route "to points outside the territories of Thailand". See *UNTS* vol.215, p.169.

⁹⁸ *BPRO*, FO371/92957 FS1015/91 Wallinger to F.O., 20 November 1951.

⁹⁹ The nine-men Provisional Executive Committee were composed of Generals Phin Chunhawan, Det Detpratiyut, Sarit Thanarat, Admirals Luang Yuthasat Koson, Luang Chamnan Atthayut, Luang Sunawin Wiwat, Air Marshals Fuen Rithakhani, Luang Choet Wutthakat, and Luang Prung Prichakat.

¹⁰⁰ *FRUS* 1951, vol.VI, p.1642: 792.02/12-551 Memorandum by Lacy (PSA) to Allison (FE), dated 10 December 1951.

¹⁰¹ Kamol, "Thai Military in Politics", p.176.

¹⁰² *USNA*, DS 792.00/12-1151 Bushner to S.D. no.392.

¹⁰³ *BPRO*, FO371/92958 FS1015/106 Wallinger to F.O. no.524, 7 December 1951. The constitution which was proclaimed was the 1932 Constitution as amended in 1939 regarding the name of the country and in 1940 regarding the extension of transitory period.

¹⁰⁴ Phao became Deputy Minister of Interior; Colonel Pramarn Adireksarn, Deputy Minister of Communications; Colonel Siri Siriyothin, Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs; Police Colonel Lamai Uthayanond, Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

¹⁰⁵ *BPRO*, FO371/92953 FS1013/7 Wallinger to Foreign Office, 5 September 1951. Also *BPRO*, FO371/92957 FS1015/86 Wallinger to Foreign Secretary (Eden), 14 November 1951.

¹⁰⁶ *USNA*, DS 792.00/3-2852 Aaron S. Brown, counselor of US embassy in Thailand, to S.D. no.619. The only significant changes which were made in the amendments were (1) limiting from 90 to 60 days the power of the King to delay bills; and (2) permitting the military authorities to proclaim a state of martial law with or without the King's consent. See also *USNA*, DS 792.00/3-852; according to American embassy's sources, General Phao, Major General Prayoon Phamornmontri, Deputy Minister of Finance, Air Marshal Fuen, and Air Force Group Captain Dhawi Chulasap flew to the King's resort palace at Hua Hin on 7 March to bring the King back to Bangkok. Also *USNA*, DS, 792.00/4-2152 Brown to S.D. no.690, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁷ *USNA*, DS 792.00/3-2852 Brown to S.D. no.619. Also Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.121.

¹⁰⁸ *USNA*, DS 792.00/3-2852 Brown to S.D. no.619.

¹⁰⁹ *USNA*, DS 792.00/4-1552 Brown to S.D. no.669.

¹¹⁰ Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.118.

¹¹¹ *USNA*, DS 792.00/4-2152 Brown to S.D. no.690.

¹¹² It was reported in an American embassy despatch that Phao favoured his ageing father-in-law, Phin Chunhawan, as Prime Minister while Sarit was attempting to persuade pro-royalist Democrat Party leader, Seni Pramoj, to assume the prime ministership. See *USNA*, DS 792.00/4-2152 Brown to S.D. no.690, p.5.

¹¹³ The new ambassador to the United States was Pote Sarasin. Warakan Bancha replaced Luang Wichit at the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

¹¹⁴ *USNA*, DS 792.00/3-3152 Memorandum of Conversation, participants: Tiang Sirikhan, 1st category MP, and Robert Anderson, assistant attaché of US embassy, dated 29 March 1952.

¹¹⁵ *USNA*, DS 792.00/10-2752 Brown to S.D. no.344, p.3.

¹¹⁶ Sarit's business empire covered banks, matches monopoly, construction contracting companies and insurance business. See Kamol, "Thai Military in Politics", p.248. He was in fact Chairman of the Bank of Asia for Industry and Commerce, the Eastern International Development Corp., the Rajata Shipping Service Company, the Rajata Construction Company, the Rajata Match Company, the Rajata Sila Company and the Government Lotteries. BPRO, FO371/92957 FS1015/87 A.R.K. McKenzie to Olver, 9 November 1951.

¹¹⁷ *USNA*, DS 792.00/10-2752 Brown to S.D. no.344, p.4.

¹¹⁸ *USNA*, DS 792.00/12-852 Brown to S.D. no.448.

¹¹⁹ *USNA*, DS 792.00/1-2352 Stanton to S.D. no.565, p.5.

CHAPTER 6

¹ Batson, “The End of the Absolute Monarchy”, pp.176-177; J.M. Brimmell, *Communism in South East Asia: A Political Analysis* (London, Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 112.

² Brimmell, *Communism in South East Asia*, pp.114-115.

³ Ibid., p.242.

⁴ In 1950s there seems to have been only a small number of ethnic Thai Communists, engaging in some propaganda through the fortnightly *Mahachon* magazine. It was reported that on 1 May 1952 pamphlets were distributed in Bangkok, describing the clandestine convening of the Second National Congress of the Thai Communist Party. The reasons for the lack of appeal of communism among the Thai populace were given by Virginia Thompson in 1950 as: widespread of land ownership, the lack of intense economic misery, popular devotion to the monarchy, the pacific influence of Buddhism, and the absence of a colonial background. See Thompson and Adloff, *The Left Wing in Southeast Asia*, p.52; see also David Wilson, “Thailand and Marxism” in *Marxism in Southeast Asia* edited by Frank N. Trager (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1959), pp.58-101.

⁵ USNA, DS 792.001/7-2451 Despatch no.58 from US embassy in Bangkok to S.D., Subject: Communism in Thailand, p.16.

⁶ USNA, DS 792.00/10-952 Charles N. Spinks, counselor of American embassy in Bangkok, to S.D. no.294.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The six delegates named Suri Thongwanit, Pan Kaewmat, Somsak Raksanti, Athon Buddhissombun, Rawi Phonchai, and Charuaiphon Kalyanamit. They reportedly joined five colleagues already abroad, namely, Sanguan Tularak, a Pridi supporter who was Thailand's first ambassador to China in 1946; Prasert Sapsunthon, a former Suratthani MP and founder of a one-man Communist Party in 1946; Lamchiak Sapsunthon, his daughter; Nitya Phongpet; and Was Sunthonchamon, a former Central Labour Union official. See TMFA, L&A UN File 1.3.2/8 Confidential memorandum from Prince Wan to the British, French and American delegations to the United Nations, 1 October 1954; also USNA, DS 792.00/10-2752 Aaron S. Brown, counselor of American embassy in Bangkok, to S.D. no.344, p.9.

⁹ USNA, DS 792.00/12-852 Brown to S.D. no.448, p.6. The delegates of course chose not to return to Thailand.

¹⁰ USNA, DS 792.00/1-2253 Brown to S.D. no.561, pp.2-3; 792.00/2-1853 Brown to S.D. no.640, p.5. According to British reports, Tiang and Phao were brought up together and “relations between them are said to be close.” See BPRO FO371/101169 FS1015/87 Ambassador Wallinger to F.O. no.463 (Top Secret), 26 November 1950. In October 1959, however, the Thai court passed a death sentence on a policeman on finding him guilty of murdering Tiang Sirikhan, Chan Bunnag and three others on 12 December 1952. Phao was then living in exile in Switzerland and was not involved in the court proceeding. See Chit Wiphasathawat, *Phao Saraphap* (Phao Confesses), (Bangkok, Phraephattaya, 1960), pp.241-303.

¹¹ BPRO FO371/101169 FS1015/82 Wallinger to F.O. no.255 (10111/92/52), 18 November 1952.

¹² USNA, DS 792.00/1-1753 Spinks to S.D. no.545, p.8.

¹³ See text of the Anti-Communist Activities Act in Thak, *Thai Politics*, pp.819-821; BPRO FO371/101169 FS1015/82 Wallinger to F.O. no.255(10111/92/52), 18 November 1952.

¹⁴ USNA, DS 792.00/1-1753 Spinks to S.D. no.545, p.12.

¹⁵ BPRO FO371/101168 FS1015/66 Wallinger to F.O. no.440, 11 November 1952.

¹⁶ BPRO FO371/101169 FS1015/81 Wallinger to F.O. no.258 (10111/93/52), 20 November 1952; FO371/106882 FS1011/1 Wallinger to F.O. no.16 (1016/1/53), 20 January 1953. It was suggested in an American embassy report that Phao even hoped that he might be able to pursue such a purge to the extent of weakening Sarit's power in the army. See USNA, DS 792.00/1-1753 Spinks to S.D. no.545.

¹⁷ Phao's reluctance to stage a purge was confirmed by himself in an interview with American embassy's second secretary, Norman B. Hannah, on 2 December 1952. But he ascribed it to a desire to keep the police's contacts in the Communist movement, and to trace the plot to the leaders. See USNA, DS 792.00/12-952 Brown to S.D. no.450 and enclosure.

¹⁸ BPRO FO371/101168 FS1015/72 translation of news in *Chao* newspaper, 12 November 1952.

¹⁹ USNA, DS 792.00/1-1753 Spinks to S.D. no.545, p.6.

²⁰ BPRO FO371/101169 FS1015/83 Wallinger to F.O. no.454, 22 November 1952.

²¹ BPRO FO371/101169 FS1015/84 Wallinger to F.O. no.456, 23 November 1952.

²² USNA, DS 792.00/1-1753 Spinks to S.D. no.545, p.3.

²³ USNA, DS 792.00/1-2353 Stanton to S.D. no.565.

²⁴ David A. Wilson, "China, Thailand and the Spirit of Bandung" part I in *The China Quarterly*, no.30 April-June 1967, p.158.

²⁵ *New China News Agency*, 2 February 1953; also *Bangkok Post*, 26 February 1953.

²⁶ See article 51 of the Common Program, adopted by the 1st Plenary Session of the CPCCC in Peking on 29 September 1949; also Colin Mackerras, *Modern China: A Chronology from 1842 to the Present* (London, Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1982), p.452.

²⁷ *Bangkok Post*, 26 February 1953.

²⁸ See *Prachathipatai*, 1 and 3 March 1953; *Kiattisak*, 4, 7 and 9 March 1953.

²⁹ TMFA, L&A File 10.36.35/1: Thai Autonomous State in Yunnan 1953-54, Survey of Domestic News by the Joint Staff Department no.5/96 (27 February-12 March 1953), pp.24-25; see also USNA, DS 792.00/4-853 Spinks to S.D. no.796.

³⁰ See Daniel D. Lovelace, *China and "People's War" in Thailand, 1964-69* (Berkeley: University of California, China Research Monographs, 1971), p.30. At the Bandung Conference in April 1955 Chou En-lai assured Prince Wan that the Autonomous Area in Yunnan did not constitute a threat to Thailand. The Area was set up as only an autonomous minority area of China and not for the purposes of infiltration or subversion to Thailand. See George McT. Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1956), pp.13-15.

³¹ See Edwin F. Stanton, "Spotlight on Thailand", *Foreign Affairs*, 33 (10), October 1954, pp.72-85; USNA, DS 792.00/4-853 Spinks to S.D. no.796, p.5.

³² TMFA, L&A File 10.36.35/1: Thai Autonomous State in Yunnan 1953-54, Survey of Domestic News by the Joint Staff Department (27 March-16 April 1953) p.38; also translation of letter no. Co215 from Li Mi to Somchai Anuman Rajadhon, Thai chargé d'affaires at Taipei, 6 March 1953.

³³ *New York Herald Tribune*, 26 March 1953.

³⁴ USNA, DS 792.00/5-1253 Translation from Norwegian *Dagbladet* of 7 May 1953.

³⁵ USNA, DS 792.00/4-853 Spinks to S.D. no.796.

³⁶ Thailand, *The National Archives*, File KT90.2.1/11 (1953) Foreign Policy towards Neighbouring Countries, Luang Chamnarn Aksorn, the Secretariat to the Cabinet, to Foreign Minister no. NW77/2496, 20 March 1953.

³⁷ Taylor, *KMT Intervention in Burma*, pp.23-25.

³⁸ *Bangkok Post*, 4 April 1953.

³⁹ *New York Times*, 8 April 1953.

⁴⁰ Taylor, *KMT Intervention in Burma*, p.26.

⁴¹ See USNA, DS 690B.9321/2-1953 Memorandum from Robert Anderson to Philip Bonsal, Director of the Office of Philippine and South East Asian Affairs (Top Secret).

⁴² See USNA, DS 690B.9321/8-2252 Top Secret Memorandum from John M. Allison, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, to H. Freeman Matthews, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, subject: KMT troops in Burma; 690B.9321/12-1852 Karl L. Rankin, American ambassador to Taiwan, to Allison (Top Secret); 690B.9321/2-2253 Rankin to Dulles no.878 (Top Secret).

⁴³ During the negotiations the United States had put a lot of pressure on Chiang Kai-shek. As Senator H. Alexander Smith of the Foreign Relations Committee was apprised by Rankin on 6 November 1953:

It is the conviction of our Embassy officials that our changing policy with respect to national groups [KMT] in Burma has hurt our relations with GIMO [Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek]. In recent months, since Burma has complained to the UN of the presence of these troops on her soil, the US has attempted to resolve the problem by encouraging cooperation between Formosa and Burma. The GIMO apparently has been surprised at our attitude because he thought we favored the creation of insurrectionary groups that could effectively raid Communist China.

It is reported, therefore, that after our support had been given to the unsuccessful raid attempt against Yunnan Province, we have backtracked and now want the Nationalists to get out of Burma. Meanwhile, Chiang has agreed to pull the hard core – some 2000 Nationalist troops – out of Burma. The others who are there apparently do not want to leave because they are settled there and consider it their home.

Princeton University, Mudd Library, H. Alexander Smith File, Foreign Relations Committee Box 110, Memorandum of Conference in Taipei on 6 November 1953, p.3.

⁴⁴ *UN Document A/2739*, p.6. According to US Embassy report, KMT evacuees' grand total was 7032 including 5780 troops, 889 dependents, 177 prisoners, and 186 refugees plus 1323 weapons and 50,000 rounds of ammunition. See *USNA, DS 792.00(W)/10-2954* Parsons to S.D. no.948.

⁴⁵ Taylor, *KMT Intervention in Burma*, p.50.

⁴⁶ *The New Times of Burma*, 10 March 1954.

⁴⁷ *USNA, DS 690B.92/4-2054* Kenneth B. Atkinson, attaché of American embassy in Rangoon to S.D. no.407 (Secret).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ See *TMFA, L&A File NC1:5/40* Memorandum on Thailand-Burma border problems by South and Southeast Asia Department, 9 August 1954; and Memorandum of Conference on Thailand-Burma border problems between the Thai mission headed by General Det Detpratiyut, Deputy Minister of Interior, and the Burmese mission headed by Bo Khin Maung Gale, Minister of Home Affairs, 17 August 1954.

⁵⁰ Toye, *Laos*, pp.84-85.

⁵¹ *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol.XIII, p.514: 751J.00/4-2753 Memorandum of Conversation by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), Participants: Robertson (FE), Thai ambassador Pote Sarasin, Bonsal (PSA), Landon (PSA).

⁵² *TMFA, L&A*, UN File 1.3.2/5 United Nations, Verbatim Record of the 672nd Meeting of the Security Council, 3 June 1954, Speech by Pote Sarasin, Thailand's Ambassador to the United States.

⁵³ *BPRO*, FO371/106886 FS1016/20 Whitteridge, chargé d'affaires of the British embassy in Thailand, to F.O. no.155, 1 May 1953.

⁵⁴ *BPRO*, FO371/106886 FS1016/11 Whitteridge to F.O. no.146, 27 April 1953.

⁵⁵ *BPRO*, FO371/106887 FS1016/34 Whitteridge to F.O. no.74, 19 May 1953. The British was extremely suspicious that Phao might make a deal with the Vietminh through Tiang Sirikhan, who had disappeared in early 1953. They accused Phao of emasculating the plans to evacuate the Annamite refugees from the area and turning the blind eye to the sending of supplies and money across the border to the Vietminh by these refugees. See also *BPRO*, FO371/106887 FS1016/36 Whitteridge to F.O. no.1022/233/53, 10 June 1953. Stanton, however, thought the British had been unduly apprehensive of a sell-out by Phao to Communists and Communist sympathizers. See *USNA*, DS 792.00/1-3153 Stanton to S.D. no.1464.

⁵⁶ *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, pp.532-533: 751G.00/4-3053 Stanton to S.D. no.2146.

⁵⁷ *USNA*, DS 792.5MSP/5-253 Stanton to S.D. no.2176.

⁵⁸ *BPRO* CAB131/13 D(53) 7th meeting of the Cabinet Defence Committee minute 4(6) Conference annex, 29 April 1953.

⁵⁹ *USNA*, DS 792.5/5-553 Memorandum of Conversation between Dulles, Pote Sarasin and K.P. Landon.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *USNA*, DS FW792.5MSP/5-653 Aide-memoire from US State Department to the Thai embassy (Secret), 6 May 1953.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *USNA*, DS 792.5/5-1953 Aide-memoire from the Royal Thai Embassy to the Secretary of State, 19 May 1953.

⁶⁴ *BPRO*, FO371/106898 FS1071/2 Whitteridge to F.O. no.173, 7 May 1953.

⁶⁵ *BPRO*, FO371/106886 FS1016/25 Sir O. Harvey, British embassy in Paris to F.O. no.167, 30 April 1953. French ambassador in Washington told State Department officials that it would be difficult to prevent the discussions getting out of hand in the Security Council and turning against France's position in Indochina and in Tunisia and Morocco. Moreover if, as was likely,

the USSR did veto action, there would be a drive to take the matter to the General Assembly and there it would be “practically impossible to control discussion”. He warned that “the reaction in France to such anti-French discussion would be ten times as violent as in the Tunisian and Moroccan cases, and with the nervous, delicate state of French opinion and the strong sentiment for withdrawal from Indochina, the results would be disastrous.” See *USNA*, *DS* 792.00/5-2253 Memorandum of Conversation subject: Thailand’s Appeal to SC regarding Threat to Thailand from Vietminh Invasion (Secret). Participants: Ambassador Bonnet and M. Millet from French embassy; Hickerson (UNA), Bonsal (PSA), Wainhouse (UNP) and W.P. Allen (EUR), and *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, pp.568 note 2. See also *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, pp.538-539: 751J.00/5-353 US ambassador in Paris (Dillon) to S.D. no.5766.

⁶⁶ *USNA*, *DS* 792.00/6-153 Memorandum from Robertson to Dulles.

⁶⁷ *USNA*, *DS* 792.00/5-2253 Memorandum of Conversation subject: Thailand’s Appeal to Security Council regarding Threat to Thailand from the Vietminh Invasion.

⁶⁸ *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, pp.588-589: 751G.00/6-153 Memorandum of Conversation between Dulles, Hickerson; 751J.00/6-153 Dulles to Stanton no.2297. After the fall of the Mayer Cabinet on 21 May 1953, there was no government in Paris until 28 June when a cabinet under Joseph Laniel was formed.

⁶⁹ *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, p.610 note 2: 751H.00/6-1653 Telegram no.6473 from Paris to S.D.

⁷⁰ *USNA*, *DS* 792.00/6-2253 Memorandum of Conversation, Participants: Pote Sarasin, Dulles, Wainhouse, and Landon. The Bermuda meeting of the heads of British, French, US governments was in fact held during 4-7 December 1953, but there was a tripartite Foreign Ministers’ meeting on 12 July 1953.

⁷¹ *FRUS*, 1952-1954, vol.XIII, p.639: 751G.00/7-653 Memorandum of Conversation, Participants: Dulles, Pote, Wainhouse, Landon.

⁷² D. Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indo-China* (London, Oxford University Press, 1961), p.262.

⁷³ Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.103 citing *Newsweek*, 26 July 1954.

⁷⁴ *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, p.867: INR-NIE FILES Special Estimates SE52, 16 November 1953.

⁷⁵ USNA, DS 792.00(W)/11-2853 Donovan to S.D. no.1063.

⁷⁶ USNA, DS 792.00(W)/12-1853 Parsons, American chargé d'affaires in Bangkok, to S.D. no.1237.

⁷⁷ Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *Minority Problems in Southeast Asia* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1955), p.224.

⁷⁸ TMFA, L&A NC1:2/42 Political Secretary to the Cabinet (Pun Chatikawanit) to Foreign Minister no. KT1103/2497, 21 May 1954.

⁷⁹ USNA, DS 792.5MSP/12-1653 Walter S. Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, to General Walter Bedell Smith, Under Secretary of State.

⁸⁰ DSB XXX, 25 January 1954, pp.107-11. For a discussion on this strategy consult Paul Peeters, *Massive Retaliation: The Policy and Its Critics* (Chicago, Henry Reguery Company, 1959), pp.16-33; Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (London, The Macmillan Press, 1981), pp.76-90.

⁸¹ Chester Bowles, "A Plea for another Great Debate", *New York Times*, 28 February 1954, p.24; Hans Morgenthau, "Is 'Instant Retaliation' the Answer?", *New Republic*, vol.130, no.13, 29 March 1954, pp.11-12.

⁸² *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., pp.412-429.

⁸³ John Foster Dulles, "Policy for Security and Peace" in *Foreign Affairs*, XXXII:3 (April 1954).

⁸⁴ USNA, DS 792.5/1-854 Bedell Smith to Donovan, 25 January 1954.

⁸⁵ Toye, *Laos*, p.89.

⁸⁶ Roger M. Smith, *Cambodia's Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, , 1965), p.51.

⁸⁷ Prince Souphanouvong entered Sam Neua with the Vietminh troops in April 1953 and he set up what he called a resistance government and began to take control of the population there. See Toye, *Laos*, p.85.

⁸⁸ Princeton University Library, *John Foster Dulles Papers* (henceforth cited as *Dulles Papers*), draft used by J.F. Dulles in presentation before Congressional leaders on 5 May 1954.

⁸⁹ Ibid., also Dulles' press release no.238, 7 May 1954.

⁹⁰ In October 1953, the Vietnam National Congress declared in Saigon that independence outside the French Union was the national aim.

⁹¹ *Dulles Papers*, draft used by J.F. Dulles in presentation before Congressional leaders on 5 May 1954.

⁹² Phillipe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, *End of a War: Indochina 1954* (London, Pall Mall Press, 1969), p.69.

⁹³ Ibid., p.74; *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, pp.1141-1144: 751G.00/3-2354 Memorandum by Dulles to Eisenhower.

⁹⁴ *DSB*, 12 April 1954, pp.539-542.

⁹⁵ *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., pp.434-443.

⁹⁶ *Dulles Papers*, Chronology of Actions on the Subject of Indochina Prior to the Geneva Meeting on Korea and Indochina in the Spring of 1954, memorandum from Robert G. Barnes for McCardle, 27 January 1956 (henceforth cited as Chronology); also *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, pp.1214-1217: Memorandum of Conversation, Participants: Dulles, British ambassador Makins, British minister R.H. Scott, Under Secretary Smith, MacArthur (C), Merchant (EUR), Drumright (FE); *FRUS* 1952-1954 vol.XIII, p.1227: Memorandum of Conversation, Participants: French ambassador Bonnet, Dulles, MacArthur, Bonbright.

⁹⁷ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change 1953-1956* (London, Heinemann, 1963), p.347; Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report: The Story of the Eisenhower Administration* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1961), p.122.

⁹⁸ *Dulles Papers*, Chronology. See also Sir Anthony Eden, *Full Circle* (London, Cassell & Company, 1960), p.93. See text of Eisenhower message for Churchill in *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, p.1238.

⁹⁹ *Bangkok Post*, 10 April 1954.

¹⁰⁰ *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, p.1308: 751G.00/4-1154 Memorandum of Conversation by Counselor (MacArthur), Participants, Dulles, Aldrich, MacArthur, Eden, Allen. See also *Dulles Papers*, Chronology, p.3; Eden, *Full Circle*, pp.95-96.

¹⁰¹ *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, p.1320: 790.5/4-1354 Dulles to S.D. no.Sector. (Top Secret).

¹⁰² BPRO, FO371/106886 FS1016/18/G Foreign Office Memorandum by R.H. Scott (Brief for the Minister for Cabinet meeting on 28 April), 27 April 1953. FO371/106890 FS10345/4 Whitteridge to F.O. no.72(1022/162/53), 13 May 1953. Eden, *Full Circle*, p.87.

¹⁰³ See *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, p.1322 note 1; also Dulles Papers, Chronology, p.3.

¹⁰⁴ The phrase used in the communiqué was the result of a compromise between the American-preferred version of “in an examination of the possibility of collective defense measures”, and the British-preferred version of “in an examination of establishing a system of collective defence”. *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol. XIII, p.1321: 790.5/4-1354 Dulles to S.D. (Secto.2); see also Eden, *Full Circle*, pp.97,98.

¹⁰⁵ Devillers and Lacouture, *End of a War*, p.89. Also Victor Bator, *Vietnam – A Diplomatic Tragedy: Origins of US Involvement* (London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1965), pp.67-70, 105-106.

¹⁰⁶ *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XIII, p.1362: 790.5/4-2254 Dulles to S.D. (Dulc.3); *Dulles Papers*, Draft used by J.F. Dulles in presentation before Congressional leaders on 5 May 1954. Dulles’s personal view was that Nehru had urged the British to suspend the action. Eden believed that in convening this meeting Dulles had taken steps to settle the question of membership in advance on his own terms. Eden, *Full Circle*, p.98.

¹⁰⁷ *Dulles Papers*, Memorandum of Conversation, participants: Dulles, Admiral Radford, R.B. Anderson (Deputy Secretary of Defence), Captain George Anderson, MacArthur, Bowie, Merchant at Dulles’ residence, 9 May 1954.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Dulles Papers*, Memorandum for the President from Secretary of State Dulles, 28 May 1954 subject: memorandum of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the defense of Southeast Asia in the event of loss of Indochina to the Communists.

¹¹⁰ *USNA*, DS 792.00/5-1054 Memorandum of Conversation, participants: Dulles, Thuaithep Devakul, Thai chargé d’affaires a.i., Murphy, Landon.

¹¹¹ *Siam Nikorn*, 12 May 1954.

¹¹² *FRUS* 1952-1954 vol.XVI, pp.801,808: Conference Files, Memorandum of Conversation on 14 May 1954 participated in by Pote, Smith and Bonsal, and Memorandum of Conversation on 15 May 1954 participated in by Prince Wan, Pote, Smith, Robertson.

¹¹³ *USNA*, *DS* 792.00(W)/5-2154 Donovan to S.D. no.2312.

¹¹⁴ *Bangkok Tribune*, 27 May 1954.

¹¹⁵ *FRUS* 1952-1954 vol.XVI, pp.978-981: Conference Files, Memorandum of Conversation on 30 May 1954 participated in by Pote, Smith and Robertson.

¹¹⁶ *FRUS* 1952-1954, vol.XVI, p.790: 320.2AB/5-1354 Dulles to the US Delegation in Geneva no.761; also p.808 Memorandum of Conversation on 15 May 1954 participated in by Smith, Robertson, Prince Wan, Pote; p.866: 396.1GE/5-2054 Smith to Dulles (Secto.268).

¹¹⁷ *TMFA*, *L&A*, UN File 1.3.1 Letter to the President of Security Council no.156/2497 from Thanat Khoman, Acting Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations, 29 May 1954.

¹¹⁸ *USNA*, *DS* 792.00/6-2454 Memorandum of Conversation between Pote, Key (Assistant Secretary for UN Affairs), Stein (UNP). See also Pote's statement to the Security Council on 16 June 1954, verbatim record of the 673rd Security Council Meeting S/PV.673 pp.4-6.

¹¹⁹ Statement by Prince Wan, Chairman of the Thai Delegation at the 9th Session of the General Assembly on 28 September 1954 in International Organizations Department, Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Statements of Chairman of Delegation of Thailand at the 9th-29th Sessions of the General Assembly (1954-1974)*, Bangkok, 1974.

¹²⁰ *USNA*, *DS* 792.00/6-2454 Memorandum of Conversation between Pote, Key (UNA), Stein (UNP).

¹²¹ See Pote's statement to the Security Council on 3 June 1953, *Verbatim Record of the 672nd Security Council Meeting S/PV 672*.

¹²² Director General of Public Relations Department, Kharb Kunjara, told the press on 26 May 1954 that the UN Observation Commission would investigate the truth of the allegation that China had sent troops to fight with the Vietminh which meant that the war could not be regarded as a civil

war or internal affairs. *Bangkok Tribune*, 27 May 1954.

¹²³ *Siam Nikorn*, 3 July 1954.

¹²⁴ Eden, *Full Circle*, pp.129,140; Colbert, *Southeast Asia*, p.263.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.132-33.

¹²⁶ *New York Times*, 29 June 1954 quoted in A Report by a Study Group of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Collective Defence in Southeast Asia: The Manila Treaty and its Implication*, 1956, p.3. Also see Eden, *Full Circle*, p.132.

¹²⁷ Eden, *Full Circle*, p.123.

¹²⁸ *Department of State Bulletin*, 2 August 1954, p.162.

¹²⁹ Allen W. Cameron, *Vietnam Crisis, a Documentary History vol.1, 1940-1956* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1971), p.121. See also Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, p.371.

¹³⁰ *FRUS* 1952-1954 vol.XVI, p.803: Conference Files, Memorandum of Conversation on 14 May 1954 between Pote, Smith, Bonsal.

¹³¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 7 August 1954.

¹³² Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, p.374.

¹³³ Toye, *Laos*, p.99.

¹³⁴ *USNA*, DS 792.00(W)/9-354 Howard L. Parsons, US chargé d'affaires a.i. to Thailand, to S.D. no.501. Also see Prince Wan's speech in 'The Signing of the South East Asia Collective Defence Treaty (Manila: Secretariat of the Manila Conference, 1954), pp.36-37.

¹³⁵ *TMFA*, L&A, UN File 1.3.2/8 Translation of Pridi's article "The Geneva Conference and Thailand's Future" published in *People's Daily (Jenmin Jihpao)* of 27 July 1954 as broadcast on Radio Peking on 30 July 1954. cf. Modelski "Thailand and China: From Avoidance to Hostility" in Halpern (ed.) *Policies toward China*, p.356.

¹³⁶ At Bandung in 1955 Chou En-lai assured Prince Wan that Pridi would not be allowed to broadcast again over Peking radio. See Russell H. Fifield, *The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia 1945-58* (New York, Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1958), p.264.

¹³⁷ *TMFA, L&A*, UN File 1.3.2/8 Confidential Memorandum from Prince Wan, Thai Foreign Minister, to the British, French and American delegations to the United Nations, 1 October 1954.

¹³⁸ See *TMFA, L&A* UN File no.8: Thailand's Appeal for a Peace Observation Commission, Memorandum for Thai delegation to the UN no.21582/2497, 14 September 1954. For example, this memorandum quoted an AP report from Taipei dated 12 August 1954, which in turn referred to the Tatao Press Agency news, that the Chinese Communists provided supplies for Pridi's Free Thai troops, the initial 5000 of which would be trained in Yunnan. Pridi would command the Free Thai Liberation Army. Another UP report from Taipei dated 26 August 1954 which appeared in the same memorandum again referred to the Tatao Press Agency news that a Chinese Communist training program for some 10,000 overseas Chinese volunteers to infiltrate into Thailand. See also in the same file, Additional Memorandum Regarding Threatening and Aggressive Communist Attitude toward Thailand dated 2 October 1954 from Pibul, Minister of Defence, to the Foreign Minister no. KH23156/2497. In this memorandum, information about Chinese troop assemblies in Yunnan was said to have been given by Air Force attaché of the Taiwan embassy to Commander-in-Chief of the Thai Air Force. Other source of information was an officer of Thai Central Intelligence Department at Canton and Hongkong [presumably a Chinese] who reported on 18 September 1954 that the Communist International had established an organization called "Le Rashia" for the purpose of carrying on military activities to occupy states and colonies in Asia, should there be a third world war.

¹³⁹ *TMFA, L&A*, UN File 1.3.2/8 Confidential Memorandum from Prince Wan to the British, French and American delegations to the United Nations, 1 October 1954.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *TMFA, L&A*, UN File 1.3.2/8 Memorandum of Conversation with Ramsbotham, by Thanat Khoman, member of the Thai delegation to the UN, on 15 October 1954; and unofficial memorandum given by Ramsbotham to Thanat on 20 October 1954.

¹⁴² Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.101.

¹⁴³ *Dulles Papers*, JFD Files Folder from Eisenhower Library, Telephone call to Livingston Merchant, 30 August 1954, 7:46 A.M.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ See text of Pacific Charter and Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty with Protocol in *UNTS* 1955, vol.209, treaty no. 1:2819, pp.23-37. For text of the North Atlantic Treaty see *UNTS* 1949, vol.34, treaty no. 1:541, pp.243-255.

¹⁴⁶ US, Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings, *The Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty*, Executive K, 83rd Congress, 2nd Session, 1954, Part 1, pp.20-21.

¹⁴⁷ *Dulles Papers*, press release no.509, 15 September 1954.

¹⁴⁸ Modelski, *SEATO: Six Studies*, pp.142-143.

¹⁴⁹ *USNA*, DS 792.00/4-1954 Memorandum on recent developments in connection with Thailand (Top Secret) by K.P. Landon.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ *USNA*, DS 792.5MSP/12-2453 Parsons to S.D. no.1280. Also *USNA*, DS 792.56/1-454 Memorandum of Conversation between Donovan, Bonsal (PSA), Lieutenant William Vanderheuval (aide to Donovan), Landon (Officer in charge, Thai & Malayan Affairs, PSA).

¹⁵² *USNA*, DS 792.5/7-1254 Letter from R.B. Anderson, Deputy Secretary of Defence to General Sarit Thanarat. *USNA*, DS 792.5MSP/7-1454 Walter B. Smith to American embassy in Bangkok no.94 (Secret).

¹⁵³ Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, p.106.

¹⁵⁴ *USNA*, DS 792.5/10-3154 Note titled "The Request of the Government of Thailand for Additional US Loan and Grant Aid" from Thai Ministry of Finance, 31 October 1954.

¹⁵⁵ *Bangkok Post*, 14 July 1954.

¹⁵⁶ *USNA*, DS 792.5MSP/10-1254 Parsons to S.D. no.195.

¹⁵⁷ *USNA*, DS 792.5MSP/10-2954 Dulles to American embassy in Bangkok no.1477.

¹⁵⁸ This type of armed forces support, as distinct from MDAP material and training aid, covered pay, allowances, uniforms, housing, food, fuel and

others. Reported Thai expenditure for this item alone in 1953 was \$72.1 million and the estimate for 1954 was \$77.7 million. See *USNA, DS 792.5MSP/11-254* Parsons to S.D. no.972.

¹⁵⁹ *USNA, DS 792.5/12-154* Memorandum from Raymond T. Moyer to Harold E. Stassen, Director of Foreign Operations Administration.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *USNA, DS 792.5/12-454* Memorandum of Conversation on 4 December 1954. Participants: Stassen, Moyer, Young, Landon, Loren, Pote Sarasin, General Phao Sriyanon.

¹⁶² *BPRO FO371/106888 FS1022/5* Whitteridge to F.O. no.134/1044/6/53, 23 August 1953.

¹⁶³ Prince Wan's opening speech in *The Signing of the South East Asia Collective Defence Treaty* (Manila: Secretariat of the Manila Conference, 1954), p.36.

CHAPTER 7

¹ *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol.XVI p.964: 396.1GE/5-2854 Dulles to the US delegation in Geneva (Tosec.285).

² *Dulles Papers* Chronology of Actions on the Subject of Indochina prior to the Geneva Meeting on Korea and Indochina in the Spring of 1954, Memorandum from Robert G. Barnes for McCardle, 27 January 1956; see also Eden, *Full Circle*, p.102.

³ See Dulles' attitude in his debate with Admiral Radford, pp.406-407.

⁴ See Prince Wan's opening speech in *The Signing of the South East Asia Collective Defence Treaty*, p.36.

⁵ Donald E. Nuechterlein, *Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1965), p.105.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.105.

⁷ Interview with Pote Sarasin, Bangkok, 4 August 1982. In the interview, Pote tried to separate the issue of American aid and the decision to recognize Bao Dai, attributing Pibul's decision to a promise given earlier to the French ambassador.

⁸ Nuechterlein, *Thailand and the Struggle*, p.107.

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APICHART CHINWANNO

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