

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

ANGLO-THAI RELATIONS, 1945-1954

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
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by

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**TEXT BOUND CLOSE TO  
THE SPINE IN THE  
ORIGINAL THESIS**

To my wife, Rahilah,  
and my children,

Nik Nur Adnin,  
Nik Nur Husna,  
Nik Muhammad Adham, and  
Nik Muhammad Zafir.

15 OCT 1987

## SUMMARY

Summary of thesis submitted for Ph.D degree

by Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud

on

Anglo-Thai Relations, 1945-1954

The aim of this thesis is to examine the Anglo-Thai relations during the period between 1945-1954, with special reference to the diplomatic, political and security aspects. This thesis begins with the discussion on the Anglo-Thai peace negotiations for the settlement of war between the two countries leading to the signing of the Anglo-Thai Formal Agreement on January 1, 1946. I end the thesis at 1954 because, by the end of the year, Thailand had succeeded in fashioning itself as the bastion of Western defence in Southeast Asia. Chapter Two and Three examine the Anglo-Thai relations before and after the November coup of 1947 and the subsequent return of Pibul Songgram to office in April 1948. As always the case in international politics, after an unusual change of government, the question of recognition will be discussed in details. The subsequent chapters deal with the Malayan-Thai border relations. Chapter Four and Five examine the development of the Malay unrest in South Thailand in the context

of the Anglo-Thai relations. The outbreak of the Communist insurgency in Malaya in mid-1948 had further complicated the situation along the Malayan-Thai border. Chapter Six examines early border collaboration to suppress the Malayan Communists along their common border. Chapter Seven examines the practicalities of the Anglo-Thai Border collaboration with special reference to the Malayan-Thai Police Border Agreement of September 1949. Chapter Seven and Eight focus on Indochina crisis and the Anglo-Thai response to the Viet Minh invasion of Laos and the Thai's appeal to the Security Council. The last chapter deals with the formation of SEATO. In her search for security against Communists threat, Thailand joined SEATO in September 1954. This thesis concludes with a summing up on the Anglo-Thai relations during the 1945-1954 period. This work is based mainly on the British Colonial Office, Foreign Office and the US State Department Records and personal papers of Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen, Tengku Abdul Jalal and Miss Barbara Whittingham-Jones.

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complicated the situation along the Malayan-Thai border. Chapter Six examines early border collaboration to suppress the Malayan Communists along their common border. Chapter Seven examines the practicalities of the Anglo-Thai Border collaboration with special reference to the Malayan-Thai Police Border Agreement of September 1949. Chapter Eight focuses on the Anglo-Thai response to the Vietminh threat and Thailand's appeal to the Security Council. The last chapter deals with the formation of SEATO. In her search for security against the Communist threat, Thailand joined SEATO in September 1954. This thesis concludes with a summing up on the Anglo-Thai relations during the 1945-1954 period. This work is based mainly on the British Colonial Office, Foreign Office and the US State Department Records and personal papers of Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen, Tengku Abdul Jalal and Miss Barbara Whittingham-Jones.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

API	Angkatan Pemuda Insaf
CO	Colonial Office
FARELF	Far East Land Forces
FO	Foreign Office
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GEMPAR	Gabongan Melayu Pattani Raya
JIRA	Journal of Islamic Research Academy
JMBRAS	Journal of the Malayan (Malaysian) Branch Asiatic Society
JSEAH	Journal of Southeast Asian History
JSEAS	Journal of Southeast Asian Studies
JSS	Journal of the Siam Society
JTRAS	Journal of Thailand Research Society
MBRAS	Malayan (Malaysian) Branch Royal Asiatic Society
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MSS	Malayan Security Service
MNP	Malay Nationalist Party
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OSS	Overseas Secret Service
P.O.C	Peace Observation Commission
SEAC	Southeast Asia Command
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
SMU	Singapore Malay Union
UMNO	United Malay National Organisation
UN	United Nations

## CHAPTER ONE

### ANGLO-THAI PEACE SETTLEMENT AND THE RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

IT has been said that British relations with Thailand began in the 17th century when the English East India Company established their factories in Ayuthia and Pattani. However, it was in 1855 when the Bowring Treaty was signed that official diplomatic relations were fully established.<sup>1</sup> Since then, until the outbreak of the Pacific War, Britain was the major Western power which exercised most influence over Thailand by virtue of her possession of Burma and Malaya, and her dominant naval and commercial power in the region. About 80% of capital invested in Thailand was British. The British Commonwealth became Thailand's best customer for her exports of rice, tin, rubber and teak besides being the principal supplier of various kinds of manufactured goods. About 70% of the tin output was worked by British companies. Up to 1932 British citizens formed the largest group of foreign advisers in the Thai Government service. Large numbers of Thai students went to the United Kingdom and other parts of the British Commonwealth countries for education.

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1. M.L. Manich Jumsai, History of Anglo-Thai Relations, Chalermint, Bangkok, 1970.

The emergence of Japan as a new emergent power in the Far East in the 1930s threatened the British dominant influence in Thailand. Japan's steady rise to prosperity and power impressed young Thai leaders, and the growing Thai nationalism in the late 1930s fostered pro-Japanese attitudes.<sup>2</sup> The Japanese slogan 'Asia for the Asiatics' coincided with the desire to keep Thailand for the Thai and to eliminate foreign influence. Therefore, the 1930s saw a trend towards closer relations in the areas of commerce, communications and cultural affairs between Thailand and Japan. Britain watched the new Thai-Japanese relations with increasing concern. Clearly it was the growing Japanese threat to their existing colonies in Southeast Asia which was the main source of anxiety to the British as well as to the French. Likewise they were worried that Thailand under the increasingly militaristic rule of Pibul Songgram might conclude a military alliance with Japan to preclude a joint attack on their territories in Southeast Asia.<sup>3</sup> Hence, when Britain and France were occupied with the German threat in Europe, they gladly agreed to a Thai proposal to conclude non-aggression pacts. The pact was

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2. Sir Josiah Crosby, Siam: The Crossroads, Hollis and Carter, London, 1945.

3. Major-General Twiss, the General Officer Commanding in Burma, to Defence Department, 3 April 1938, FO 371/22215 (F6172/2213/40); See also minute by M.J.R. Talbot in Foreign Office minutes, 21 June 1939, FO 371/22215 (F6310/2213/40).

concluded with Britain and France on 12 June 1940.<sup>4</sup> It was hoped that the pact would not only contribute towards regional stability but also deter Thailand from entering into military alliance with Japan.<sup>5</sup>

But the sudden reverses the Allied Forces suffered in Europe against the Germans and the collapse of France in the summer of 1940 drastically affected British hopes for regional stability in Southeast Asia and a means of checking the Japanese advance. Subsequently, Pibul Songgram himself succumbed to Japanese political, economic and military pressure on December 8, 1941. Thailand's submission to Japan on December 8, 1941 was originally regarded by Britain as an act under duress and she was thus content to consider Thailand as a territory under enemy

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4. The Non-Aggression Pacts were signed between Britain and Thailand and France in Bangkok on 12 June 1940. These agreements, which were valid for five years and were subject to denunciation thereafter by one year's notice on either side, provided for the reciprocal respect by each country of the other's territorial integrity. It was further laid down that, if one country became involved in war with a third party, the other would refrain from affording aid or assistance to such third party.
  5. This was part of the message sent by British Premier Mr. Winston Churchill to Pibul Songgram on the successful conclusion of the Non-Aggression Pact. Foreign Office-Bangkok, 13 June 1940, FO 371/24751 (F3395/19/40).

occupation.<sup>6</sup> This position, however, was altered when the Thai Government hastily declared war upon Britain and the United States on January 25, 1942.<sup>7</sup> British banks, companies and other assets in Thailand were sequestered or in some cases handed straight over to the Japanese. From the British point of view, Thailand had not only violated the Non-Aggression Pact of 1940 but had breached earlier treaties between the two countries which recognised the sovereignty and integrity of the British territories.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in accordance with international law and regulations, on February 2, 1942 Britain recognised Thailand's

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6. Despite the Japanese-Thai military alliance on 12 December 1941, Britain refrained from declaring war against Thailand. There were two main reasons for this attitude. Firstly, she believed that the majority of the Thai people were anti-Japanese, if not pro-Allies, and were 'likely to become increasingly anti-Japanese as the Japanese proceed to apply their usual arrogant methods, and to infringe their agreement to respect the sovereignty of Siam'. Secondly, she felt that a declaration of war might change that trend and would encourage the Thai to collaborate with Japan. See, British Embassy to the Department of State, 24 December 1941, FRUS, 1941, Vol. 5.
  7. Foreign Office Memorandum, 19 December 1944, FO 371/46544 (F6089/296/40).
  8. In return for Thai collaboration, the Japanese had agreed to give Thailand the Northern Malay States (Kelantan, Kedah, Trengganu and Perlis) and the Shan States (Keng Tung and Mongpan). In accepting this promise and readily declaring war on Britain, Thailand had violated the Non-Aggression Pact which had stipulated, in Article 5, the sovereignty and integrity of the British territories. Furthermore, the Anglo-Thai Agreement of 1909 had firmly stated that the Northern Malay States belonged to the British. See, Donald E. Nuechterlein, Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia, Cornell University Press, New York, 1965, pp. 73-74.

declaration of war.<sup>9</sup> The United States, with long-term interests in mind, refused to do so, being satisfied to treat Thailand as an enemy-occupied country.<sup>10</sup> Compared with Britain, the United States had small economic interests in Thailand and its broader concerns about the balance of power in East Asia were not directly threatened by Thai collaboration with Japan. This was the first and fundamental divergence of view between Britain and the United States which was profoundly to affect the post-war settlement negotiations between Britain and Thailand.

The state of war between Britain and Thailand had a tremendous effect on the reaction towards Thailand of British foreign policy makers during and after the war. During the war, the British Government abstained from making any political commitments towards Thailand which would affect its interests there. The Foreign Office, for instance, did not recognise the 'Free Thai Movement' as the representative of Thailand, fearing that this would constitute a political blunder affecting British future planning for Thailand.<sup>11</sup> When the Foreign Office

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9. See, Far Eastern Committee (44), 21 December 1944. FO 371/41848 (F6092/1599/40).

10. James V. Martin, 'Thai-American Relations in World War II', The Journal of Asian Studies. Vol. 22, 1963, p. 461.

11. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: Proposed S.O.E. Operations in Siam, 9 September 1944. FO 371/41845 (F4285/23/40).



was requested by Lord Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander of Southeast Asia Command (SEAC), to formulate a general statement for Thailand as issued by the Chinese and the United States Governments which guaranteed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Thailand,<sup>12</sup> the Foreign Office only clarified a general statement for Thailand. It set forth the argument that Thailand had 'betrayed' its friendship with Britain, had collaborated with the Japanese and that 'the Siamese people would have to pay a price for the acts of their government but that if they cooperated with the British they might expect Britain to support the emergence of an independent Siam after the war.'<sup>13</sup> The State Department retorted that the statement would not be helpful in giving encouragement to the Thai people to resist the Japanese because it failed to give any indication that Thailand would be continued as an independent country.<sup>14</sup> At first the Foreign Office was prepared to modify the statement but was overruled by the War Cabinet. Winston Churchill drew the Foreign Office attention to the British post-hostilities plan that 'it might be found necessary after the war to consider some sort of Protectorate over the Kra

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12. See Report of the Far Eastern Committee, dated 14 July 1945, section L (c), on attitude of the US towards Thailand. FO 371/46545 (F4298/296/40).

13. British Embassy to the Deputy Director of Far Eastern Affairs, 26 February 1944. FRUS, 1944, Vol. 5.

14. Washington-Foreign Office, 22 March 1944. FO 371/46560 (F4186/23/40).

Peninsula area, including Singgora, in the interests of the future security of Singapore.<sup>15</sup>

Anglo-American divergencies on Thailand were of little practical consequence prior to mid-1944. The divergencies on Thailand became a matter of real concern with the favourable folding of the military situation in Southeast Asia, accompanied by the downfall of the collaborationist Pibul regime in July 1944 and its replacement by a government dominated by the Regent, Pridi Banamyong.<sup>16</sup> Pridi established contacts with the Allied powers through his Free Thai Movement and informed them of his preparations to assist the Allies in their fight against the Japanese. At the same time, Seni Pramoj, in the United States, intensified his propaganda campaign to gain Allied sympathy and support.

The British 'passive' attitude towards the changing situation in Thailand was naturally regarded by the United States as indicating that Britain had definite designs upon Thailand in the post-war period. The United States' suspicion was reinforced by Britain's own attitude. For example, the Foreign Office, apart from not being able to issue its general statement on Thailand, was unreceptive

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15. FRUS, 1944, Vol. 5. p. 1314.

16. Herbert A. Fine, 'The Liquidation of World War II in Thailand', Pacific Historical Review, February 1965. p. 67.

to the United States proposal that a 'Free Siamese Liberation Committee' be established on Allied soil. In contrast to the United States policy, the British refused to unfreeze Thai funds in London for use by the Free Thai Movement.

On August 18, 1944, the Foreign Office received a letter from John G. Winant, the United States Ambassador in London, demanding a confidential statement of British policy towards Thailand. Winant expressed his regret for the British attitude.<sup>17</sup> Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, tried to placate the United States suspicions of the British attitude towards Thailand by declaring that the British were no less favourable than the United States and China to the idea of a free and independent Thailand after the war but subject only to its acceptance of such special arrangements for security or economic collaboration as might be judged necessary within an international system.<sup>18</sup> On territorial integrity, Eden said that Britain was not thinking of territorial expansion but this did not mean that Thailand would be allowed to retain 'the ill-gotten gains which she has accepted from the Japanese at the expense of Malaya, of Burma and of French Indochina.' On the Kra Isthmus, he emphasised

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17. Winant-Eden, 18 August 1944. FO 371/41845 (F5550/23/40).

18. Eden-Winant, 4 September 1944. *ibid.*

the need for some special strategic arrangement within the framework of an international security system.

On October 21, 1944, Winant stressed the need for a frank exchange of views between the two governments in order to achieve a coordination of policy.<sup>19</sup> He demanded that Eden clarify precisely what was intended by those reservations. Eden explained that the existence of differences between the two governments were due to their different approach to restoring Thailand as 'a free, sovereign and independent country'.<sup>20</sup> He said:

'To us Siam is an enemy who must 'work her passage' before she can rehabilitate herself; whereas the United States Government regards her, in spite of her declaration of war, merely as an enemy-occupied territory.'<sup>21</sup>

On the question of reservations, it was quite difficult for the British Government to clarify these in detail as there were many unknown factors as regards the future. Nevertheless, Eden stressed that it was only 'as a matter of prudence, even in the case of those who are but the satellites of our enemies, to reserve the right to stipulate that as a condition of their ultimate freedom, sovereignty and independence, they should accept such special arrangements for security or economic collaboration

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19. Winant-Eden, 21 October 1944. *ibid.*

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

as may be judged necessary to the functioning of the post-war international system.'

As regards the special reservation affecting the Kra Isthmus, Eden considered it to be decided and recommended by the respective Allied military expert. However, he stressed that the Kra Isthmus had played an important part in the Japanese plans for the capture of Singapore, and as such 'it will have to figure in whatever arrangements may be made for the future security of Southeast Asia, and particular for the defence of Singapore.'

When, in late April 1945, the War Cabinet directed the Far Eastern Committee to frame concrete policy, the Committee set up a Working Party. The result of its efforts was the 'Draft Conditions for Acceptance by Siam' dated May 31, 1945.<sup>22</sup> The report noted that, although the Pibul Cabinet's declaration of war had been issued under Japanese duress and neither the United States nor China regarded itself as at war with Thailand, this did not prevent the British government from securing a just redress for damage done to British interests by that collaboration with Japan. The Working Party proposed immediate decisions on three most urgent questions: a charge of free rice from

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22. 'Draft Conditions for Acceptance by Siam', dated 31 May 1945'. FO 371/46545 (F4298/296/40).

Thailand; a supply of Thai currency required for the pay of Allied troops in Thailand; and a grant of special rights to Britain with regard to defence matters, both in time of peace and in the event of war.

The rice was a top priority. Britain had to acquire the maximum quantity of rice from Thailand at the earliest possible date in order to relieve her colonies liberated from the Japanese. The best course was to invoke the analogy of mutual aid: the 1.5 million tons of rice to be demanded was to be viewed as Thailand's contribution towards the Allied war effort. The requirement of cash to pay Allied troops in Thailand was essential because the Allies did not wish to provide the services free of costs. Thailand was also expected to provide local supplies and services for the Allied armed forces. New defence arrangements were seen as necessary to prevent a repetition of the military disasters of 1941-42.

The Working Party's recommendations were before the Far Eastern Committee by the end of May, and the Far Eastern Committee concluded its report 'Policy towards Siam' in mid-July.<sup>23</sup> The Far Eastern Committee recommended two separate forms of conditions to be imposed on Thailand, a military agreement signed by the Supreme Allied

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23. 'Policy towards Siam' FE(45) 29 Final, 14 July 1945. FO 371/46545 (F4542/296/40).

Commander, Southeast Asia and a Political Agreement signed by the British representative.

Thus, by the time the Japanese surrendered in mid-August 1945, the British had, although rather late, formulated a well-defined policy to be adopted towards Thailand.

### **The Anglo-Thai Peace Treaty Negotiations and the United States Intervention**

The Japanese surrendered on August 14, 1945. Britain and Thailand, however, were still, technically, at war. On August 16, 1945, Pridi Banomyong, as Regent of Thailand, issued a proclamation in the Thai National Assembly that the declaration of war upon Britain and the United States was null and void, and signifying willingness to return the British territories and pay compensation for damages incurred by the citizens of those countries.<sup>24</sup> As a mark of repudiation of all commitments with Japan, Khuang Aphaiwong and his wartime cabinet resigned on August 17 and was replaced by Thawee Bunyakee. On September 17, 1945, Seni Pramoj, the Thai Minister in Washington and the leader of the Free Thai Movement, was appointed as the new Prime Minister to undertake negotiations with the Allied powers.

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24. Siam: Summary of Regent's broadcast, 16 August 1945. FO 371/46578 (F5521/518/40).

Although Pridi's declaration was welcomed by the British Labour Government, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Ernest Bevin made it clear that British policy towards Thailand would depend on Thailand's future action, namely the outcome of negotiations with Britain for a peace treaty.<sup>25</sup> Ernest Bevin's statement was elaborated in the proposed political and military agreements which were to become the basis for negotiations between Thailand and Britain. The proposed political agreement, which was purely a British concern, included Thai measures of repudiation and restitution and steps of post-war cooperation in the economic and strategic fields. The proposed military agreement was mainly concerned with Allied measures and called for the Thai to help in disarming the Japanese and in turning them over to Allied authorities. The agreement further called for the release of all Allied prisoners of war and internees, the acceptance of military control over Thailand and of an Allied military mission. Thailand was to make a free contribution of 1.5m tons of rice, and to accept Allied

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25. Ernest Bevin, in his speech in the House of Commons on 20 August 1945, spelt out that the British policy towards Thailand would depend on the way in which the Thai met the requirements of the British troops that were about to enter their country, and extent of their contribution to the restoration of peace, good order and economic rehabilitation in Southeast Asia. Dominion Office-Dominion Governments, 29 August 1945. FO 371/46547 (F5947/296/40).



controls over exports of tin, rubber and teak.<sup>26</sup>

Four days after the Pacific War, the Foreign Office authorised M.E. Dening, Political Adviser to Lord Mountbatten, to present the military terms to the Thai Government, and that simultaneously he should present the political terms with the military terms as an annex on behalf of the British Government. Britain expected the terms contained in the political agreement, called the Heads of Agreement, to be preliminary conditions for Thailand to fulfil in return for the liquidation of war with Britain. The future attitude of the British government toward Thailand would depend on the degree of Thailand's cooperation in redressing past wrongs and in ensuring the security of the region for the future. On the morning of September 4, Dening handed the agreement to the Thai authorities.

However, before any formal Anglo-Thai peace negotiations took place, the British communicated to the State Department the procedures it planned to follow.<sup>27</sup> As far as the proposed military agreement was concerned, the United States shared responsibility for this since it was part of an Allied effort.

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26. The British Embassy to the Department of State, 20 August 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol. 6.

27. Ibid.

In its first comment on the draft agreement, the State Department had in fact, reminded the Foreign Office that such settlement would not conflict with the viewpoints, interests or policies of the United States, but would on the other hand, contribute to Anglo-American unity of action in the Far East.<sup>28</sup> The Department stressed that:

"Thailand is the only country within the Theatre of a combined Anglo-American command with one of the governments represented in the command at war, while the other government is not. It is important therefore that unusual care be exercised by that command in matters which would involve the relationship of those governments with Thailand."<sup>29</sup>

Whatever action the British Government wanted to take, the State Department was confident that it would not embarrass the United States Government. It emphasised that the Thai Government had given every indication of its determination to make restitution for the past and to cooperate with the United States in the future and so meet the basic objectives of the British Government.

The State Department also demanded clarification on certain clauses in the proposed agreements which seemed to be vague and dubious in intent. The Department urged the Foreign Office to clarify clause D5 regarding the international arrangements for the supply of tin and

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28. Washington-Foreign Office, 1 September 1945.  
FO 371/46548 (F6195/296/40).

29. Ibid.

rubber, and hoped that these would be effected under the auspices, or with the approval of, the United Nations or the Economic and Social Council. It hoped that such a commitment would not be made a condition for British recognition of the sovereignty and independence of Thailand. The Department also felt misgivings over the implications of clauses D2 and D3 which envisaged that, if Thai citizens wished to reserve economic, commercial or professional pursuits to their own nationals, they would need British consent so far as British interests were concerned. The Department felt that the British required only non-discriminatory treatment for British nationals, since demands beyond this would infringe Thai sovereignty and economic independence. The Department concurred that Thailand should pay compensation for losses or damage for which she was directly responsible, but urged that Thailand should not be required to pay compensation until the question of reparation was decided. A requirement that Thailand should make compensation at that juncture might seriously intensify the economic ills of the country, given the fact that Thailand was suffering from serious financial and economic problems arising from hundreds of millions of bahts loaned to Japan during the war.<sup>30</sup>

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30. According to Blanchard, Thailand was required to supply the Japanese with baht notes to exchange for yen credits. Under this system enormous sums - totalling 1.5 billion bahts - were delivered to the Japanese from 1942 to 1945. See, Wendell Blanchard, Thailand, Human Relations Area Files Press, New Haven, 1958. p. 267.

On the proposed military agreement, the State Department reiterated that this should be limited to matters of Allied concern against the common enemy and requested that South East Asia Command should not take any action tending to compromise the position held by the United States that Thailand was not an enemy but a country to be liberated from the enemy.

On the rice levy, the Department expressed its concurrence in the tripartite agreement by Britain, the United States and Thailand to stimulate the production and maximise the export of Thai rice through an Anglo-American commission. The Department, however, asserted that the rice levy was unjust in view of Thai readiness to join the war against Japan and the fact that their deferment of such an action was at the request of the Supreme Allied Command and the United States government. It noted additionally that the size of the proposed levy might exceed the amount of Thai rice available for export, that the levy would be prejudicial to American interests in Thailand and that the United States government would not feel free to share the proceeds of the levy.

The Foreign Office made a sharp rejoinder on 5 September that the reason one of the governments in Southeast Asia Command was at war with Thailand, while the other was not, was solely because the United States had

chosen to ignore Thailand's declaration of war.<sup>31</sup> While not questioning that decision, the British government could not agree that it entitled the United States government to ask that other governments who were in a state of war with Thailand should forego their rights or mitigate the conditions upon which they were prepared to liquidate the state of war. On the contrary, the British government was entitled to ask that the United States would not take any action which would embarrass them or compromise their position as a belligerent ally. They were therefore unable to agree that the actions of the Supreme Commander should be limited to matters of concern affecting the war against Japan.

The British Government would give due weight to the Thai resistance movement but the state of war between Britain and Thailand remained to be liquidated and Thailand's association with Japan left many practical questions for settlement. The British government reiterated that their attitude towards Thailand would depend on the way Thailand met their requirements. The British Government did not believe that the conditions demanded might constitute an infringement of Thai sovereignty or were in a spirit of retaliation for the injury to Allied interests by Thailand's association with

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31. Foreign Office-Washington, 5 September 1945.  
FO 371/46546 (F6195/296/40).

Japan. But the British Government could scarcely accept a position in which Thailand should profit from that association, or, in such matters as the export of her commodities during the liberation period, from the needs of countries which had suffered from Japanese aggression. It was British policy to protect the interests of other Allied powers until those powers were in a position to arrive at their own settlement with Thailand.

Although the British expressed their desire to see the United States' views accommodated in conformity with those expressed in the State Department's aide-mémoire, they pointed out that Thailand, alone among the warring nations, had accumulated a very large surplus of an essential commodity and, if permitted to dispose of its stocks at the high prevailing prices, would come out of the war in a far better financial position than those who had offered greater resistance to the aggressors. The British maintained that a stockpile of 1.5m tons of rice already existed in Thailand. On the matter of compensation, they did not agree that claims should be postponed until the general reparations question relating to Japan was decided. They also gave assurances that they sought no exclusive privileges for British commercial interests.

As Lord Mountbatten had to move Allied troops into Thailand for the purpose of disarming and disposing of the Japanese forces in Thailand and to relieve Allied prisoners

of war and internees, he found it urgently necessary to have some discussions with the Thai in order to ensure their smooth operations. The Thai complied and early in September the Thai military representatives headed by Lt. General Sakdi Senanarong arrived in Kandy, Ceylon, to negotiate with Lord Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander, for an interim military agreement.<sup>32</sup> This interim military agreement was similar to the proposed Military Annex to the Heads of Agreement which covered almost every aspect apart from the political one to liquidate the state of war between Britain and Thailand.

On September 4, Dening handed the interim military agreement to a member of Thai delegation. The Thais later found out that General Senanarong's credentials did not authorise him to sign such an agreement.<sup>33</sup> As a compromise, and so to save Thai face, Lord Mountbatten suggested to Dening, in consultation with a member of the Thai delegation, a division of the proposed agreement into two. One half concerned military matters which General Senanarong was empowered to sign, and the other half covered the annex on rice procurement and various other economic matters. These were known as Military Agreement No. 1 and No. 2 respectively. Before these latter

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32. Supreme Allied Command, Southeast Asia (SEAC) - Foreign Office, 5 September 1945. FO 371/46546 (F6646/296/40).

33. Ibid.

provisions were agreed, Lord Mountbatten wanted both drafts to be taken back to Bangkok for the approval of Pridi and the government. Lord Mountbatten sent a message to Pridi assuring him that what the Thais were being asked to sign in Kandy was simply an interim measure and Allied forces would only stay in Thailand long enough to relieve the Allied prisoners of war and to disarm the Japanese troops.<sup>34</sup>

Pridi was prepared to sign the agreement. He also did not seem to be alarmed at the economic provisions in the agreement. On his recommendation, the Thai Assembly approved the two agreements on September 5 but with a rider that it was forced upon them by the British and not of their free will.<sup>35</sup> Thus the signal of acceptance was sent to Kandy.

Meanwhile, some members of the Thai military delegation met the American representative of the OSS, the American organisation set up to carry out clandestine operations in enemy occupied countries, alleging that the British were imposing terms which infringed Thailand's

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34. Denning-Sterndale Bennett, 7 September 1945.  
FO 371/46550 (F6867/296/40).

35. Ibid.



political and economic independence.<sup>36</sup> As soon as OSS cabled to Washington the terms of the draft agreement, as drafted by Dening, an international furore was unleashed. Under instruction from Washington, the US Ambassador in London, Winant, immediately went to see the British Prime Minister, Attlee on September 5 to make representations to stop Mountbatten from such an agreement. However, the purely military agreement could be signed, if necessary, after a few alterations were made and agreed upon. Attlee told the Americans that orders were already on their way to Kandy for Mountbatten to conclude only the first part of the agreement dealing purely with military matters.<sup>37</sup>

On September 8, 1945, a revised version of the Interim Military Agreement No. 1 was signed in Kandy. Essentially, this agreement provided for the entry of Allied troops into Thailand for the purpose of disarming and concentrating, in cooperation with the Thais, the Japanese troops in Thailand and to succour and relieve Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees.<sup>38</sup>

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36. Thawee Bunyakee's account in Jayanta K. Ray, Portraits of Thai Politics, Oriental Longman Ltd., New Delhi, 1972. p. 109; Direck Jayanama, Siam and World War II, The Social Science Association of Thailand Press, Bangkok, 1967. pp. 494-495.

37. Dening-Foreign Office, 7 September 1945. FO 371/46548 (F6415/296/40).

38. For text of agreement, See Direck Jayanama, op cit. pp. 296-297.

After the signing of the Interim Military agreement, arrangements were made for the Anglo-Thai talks on the liquidation of war between the two countries. On September 22, the British representatives asked the Seni Pramoj Government to send another delegation to Kandy to negotiate the settlement of war between the two countries. The Thai delegation was headed by Prince Vivat, the Adviser to the Prime Minister's Office as well as the Ministry of Finance.<sup>39</sup>

The preliminary meeting was held on September 25.<sup>40</sup> After welcoming the Thai delegation and outlining the situation which had led the British to draw up the Heads of Agreement and Annex, Denning touched on the subject of rice. Denning pointed out that the voluntary offer of 1.5m tons of rice should be regarded as 'a token of goodwill' or as a Thai financial contribution to the Allied war efforts. This offer could permit the British to delete the clause which stipulated the levy of an equal amount of rice from the agreement. Prince Vivat confirmed that the Thai government was willing to make a free gift

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39. Ibid., p. 170.

40. Denning-Foreign Office, 25 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7480/296/40).

of rice.<sup>41</sup> As regards the peace settlement procedure, Denning pointed that the relations between the two countries would be restored by an exchange of letters between the plenipotentiaries. Denning then handed the Heads of Agreement and Annex to the Thais. Denning also insisted that his were bilateral negotiations to which the United States was not a party, though it had seen the terms and Charles Yost, the U.S. Chargé d'affaires, might indicate it did not agree with all of them.

Prince Vivat replied that he came to Kandy solely to conclude an agreement with the British. Prince Vivat then informed Denning that he would study the Heads of Agreement and Annex before making any comments on them. In his telegram to the Foreign Office, Denning expressed his confidence that were the Americans not to interfere, the Thais would sign the agreement.<sup>42</sup>

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41. It should be noted that the promise to offer the Allies 1.5m tons of rice was made by Seni Pramoj, the Thai Prime Minister, during his talks with Sterndale Bennett at the Foreign Office on 3 September 1945. Bennett minuted that Seni Pramoj remarked: 'that there was a stockpile in Siam at present of about one-and-a-half million tons.' F.O. minutes, September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F6285/296/40). See also, Jayanta K. Ray, op. cit., p. 169.

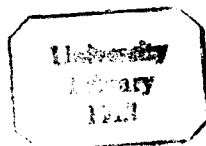
42. Denning-Foreign Office, 25 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7480/296/40).

Next day, Prince Vivat saw Dening alone during which a number of questions were raised and a number of changes of form were proposed.<sup>43</sup> He wanted the Kra canal clause linked with the clause on post-war security rather than in a separate undertaking and that the wording of the clause requiring the Thais to prohibit the exports of rice, tin, rubber and teak, except at the discretion of the Allied Combined Board, until the world scarcity was declared at an end by the United Nations, should be slightly altered, because he read it as prohibiting the exports of Thailand's main articles. Dening said that clause 15, which was on rice, was not designed to destroy Thailand's trade, but merely to control vital commodities. The Prince also enquired why the word 'Allied' was used in the annex if it were a British agreement. The terms, Dening explained, were what Britain considered a minimum requirement to end the state of war but the Command was an Allied one. Prince Vivat enquired what was to prevent another ally - China - demanding another military agreement. Dening was unable to give a definite reply but assured Prince Vivat that Thailand was within the SEAC theatre.<sup>44</sup>

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43. Dening-Foreign Office, 26 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7505/296/40).

44. Ibid.



On September 27 Prince Vivat handed to Dening the redraft of the clauses which he proposed amending during the meeting.<sup>45</sup> This included a new version of section C of the Heads of Agreement, which included a phrase indicating that Britain would sponsor Thailand's entry into the United Nations that Dening thought could not be part of the agreement. It also linked the undertaking over Kra to the other clauses so that it applied only to the period before Thailand entered the United Nations. The Thais also wanted some reassurance in the Preamble to the Annex indicating that prolonged occupation was not intended.

At the second plenary session on 28 September, Dening explained that the state of war should be terminated on the conclusion of a formal agreement embodying the terms of the Heads of Agreement and Annex, and not on the exchange of letters as he mentioned in the previous meeting.<sup>46</sup> Dening then pointed out that the credentials presented by Prince Vivat appeared to authorise the Thai plenipotentiaries to negotiate with him as 'representative of British Military Authorities'. Dening further pointed out that the credentials pledged the Regent to approve what the plenipotentiaries signed only 'if agreeable' and in his opinion they did not really have the same full powers

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45. Dening-Foreign Office, 27 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7550/296/40).

46. Dening-Foreign Office, 28 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7630/296/40).

as he did. Prince Vivat assured Denning that it had not been the intention of the Regent to limit the powers of the plenipotentiaries and that he would draft suitable alternative credentials and refer them to Bangkok for approval. The rest of the meeting was spent on detailed discussion of the Heads of Agreement and Annex. The issue of compensation for damage to British property was also raised. The parties discussed clause 13 on the military mission, which Prince Vivat thought had no *raison d'être* following the Japanese surrender. Denning said that a redraft might be considered. It was also agreed that a deletion of clause 16(A) on the delivery of rice would depend upon a voluntary offer being made by the Thai Government in the required terms.

Denning felt that the Thais were anxious to save face as far as possible for internal reasons and in so far as this was compatible with British requirements he recommended that it should be allowed. Furthermore, Denning also felt that while the Thais were anxious to get off as light as possible, there was apparently no marked reaction among the Delegation on the Heads of Agreement and Annex. On the other hand, Denning was certain of obstruction from the Thais in general, particularly Seni Pramoj as the Prime Minister. He warned the Foreign Office that Seni seemed to think 'that next to nothing is required to get Siam out of her predicament. In this he may be encouraged by O.S.S. whose general conduct seems to conform very little with

American policy ...'.<sup>47</sup>

During the interval, further attempts to expedite the matter by Dening apparently failed. Dening was suspicious that the Thai Government was really holding out against the British agreement. As Dening reported on 3 October, 'the longer the delay the more the Siamese will be encouraged to think that they can get off even more lightly than heads of agreement suggest'.<sup>48</sup> It was 'open gossip' in Bangkok that the United States had prevented the signature of Mountbatten's second military agreement. 'This I am told has encouraged the Siamese to believe that if they hold out they can count upon American support. Even more are they likely to hold out on negotiations with the French.'<sup>49</sup>

Dening found Thai procrastination intolerable and began to show his impatience when he suggested to the Foreign Office that a threat should be made to the Thai delegation that he would break off negotiations unless he received satisfaction over the matter of credentials within a stated time.

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47. Dening-Foreign Office, 3 October 1945. FO 371/46552 (F8127/296/40).

48. Dening-Foreign Office, 3 October 1945. FO 371/46552 (F8752/296/40).

49. Ibid.

The Foreign Office was more realistic. A.C.S. Adams thought that the Thais were not using delaying tactics. The main problem was that the Regent could not grant full powers and it appeared that the kind of treaty involved required the approval of the National Assembly.<sup>50</sup> The best course was for Dening to recognise the constitutional difficulty and if tactfully handled, he would be able to win the goodwill of the mission. But, warned Adams, 'if handled not so tactfully, they would simply dig in their toes, sulk and play for time'.<sup>51</sup> This advice was adopted by the Foreign Office. Dening was duly told that constitutional forms should be completed before actual signature.

This suspicion by Dening was in fact not entirely groundless for the Thais were in fact well aware of the differences between the British and the United States over this agreement. The Anglo-American differences were exploited by the Thais, to mitigate any heavy demands made by the British.<sup>52</sup>

During the suspension of the Kandy talks, the dialogue between London and Washington was continually

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50. Minute by A.C.S. Adams on ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. Foreign Office-State Department, 27 September 1945. FO 371/46550 (F7249/296/40).



developed in order to reach a final understanding concerning Thailand. The central themes of the discussions were focussed on the questions of post-war strategic cooperation and economic control of the country.

On September 26, the State Department commented on the proposed clause C1, committing the Thais to recognising the importance of Thailand to the security of Southeast Asia, which it regarded as sounding like a 'protectorate' and might be interpreted as an advance commitment by Thailand to accept the steps which the United States opposed.<sup>53</sup> In its place, the State Department proposed that the clause should be substituted by a proviso that Bangkok should agree to cooperate in relevant international security arrangements under the United Nations. These comments were accordingly referred by the Foreign Office to the British Chiefs of Staff for further consideration. On October 3, the British Chiefs of Staff pronounced their decision to leave unaltered the clause requiring the Thais to recognise their country's importance in the defence of Southeast Asia and the security of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.<sup>54</sup> But it was agreed to omit from the Annex the clause requiring the Thais to agree to the setting up of a military mission.

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53. Washington-Foreign Office, 26 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7505/296/40).

54. Foreign Office-Washington, 5 October 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7504/296/40).

The Foreign Office accordingly explained to the State Department on October 5 the object of C1, which was to make it easier to negotiate a regional scheme of defence in any world organisation by warning Thailand that they would in future be expected to play their part in defence schemes in the area specified.<sup>55</sup> The British were ready to accept the State Department's suggestion as a corollary to, but not in place of, C1. In view of the special concern of the British with the security of Malaya and Burma the British government thought it important to have on record that recognition by the Thai Government of the importance to defend these territories and sea routes. The C1 clause would be retained but C2 would be replaced by a new clause requiring Thailand to collaborate in all international arrangements approved by the United Nations Organisation.

In addition to the question of the postwar strategic cooperation of Thailand, which occupied the main part of the London-Washington dialogue, the issues of economic control, reparations and the rice levy remained important topics throughout October and November 1945.

The State Department, in its aide-mémoire on October 5, agreed with the proposed procedures relating to the procurement of Thai rice and suggested that the Tripartite Rice Agreement should be concluded at the

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55. Ibid.

earliest possible moment.<sup>56</sup> However, the State Department felt that a slight modification was required on the language of the clause which required the Thais to control their financial institutions and transactions as required by the Allies for so long as necessary for the conclusion of all financial and economic matters arising out of the war. This would give the Allies complete control over the specified aspects of the Thai economy until such matters were settled. It was also not satisfied with the British explanation of the intention of the clause requiring the Thais not to enforce measures excluding the British commercial interests or British professional men from participating in the Thai economy. It believed that no independent sovereign country should be subject to unilateral control by another Government over its power to determine conditions relating to its economy and trade. It required the British to reconsider this clause so that the economic, commercial and professional relations between Britain and Thailand might be founded on the principle of mutuality.

On October 25, the State Department reiterated to the Foreign Office its disapproval of the rice levy and its perturbation that the size of the levy was being maintained at 1.5m tons.<sup>57</sup> The full levy would be burdensome on the

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56. Ibid.

57. Washington-Foreign Office, 25 October 1945.  
FO 371/46551 (F9034/296/40).

Thai economy and would adversely affect the interests of other nations in Thailand. The Department therefore requested British acceptance of the figure of 78,000 tons or that they leave the determination of the exact amount of rice accumulated in Thailand to the rice commission.

The Department was also concerned with the war damage claim situation. It pointed out that it was American policy that no nation be compelled to pay a volume of reparations which, without external aid, would impair its civilian economy. It noted further that the United States was directly concerned with preservation for the Thai people of an adequate standard of living and opportunity for economic progress without dependence on foreign governments for financial aid, and that prompt, orderly stabilization of the Thai economy was essential for stability throughout Southeast Asia.

The State Department was doubtful that Thailand could meet all claims for compensation. It was also suggested that the rice levy be recognised as constituting reparations in kind.

On November 12, the Foreign Office replied that, under the proposed plans, the rice levy would only come from accumulated stocks and that it did not constitute reparations but rather a special measure of

reconcilement'.<sup>58</sup> The British stated that an Allied Claims Commission was unnecessary. Furthermore, it was inappropriate for any state not at war with a country to be associated in determining its capacity to pay reparations or in deciding the equitable distribution of claims.

Toward the end of November 1945, the dialogue between London and Washington developed into a strongly worded confrontation. Perturbed at the uncompromising British attitude, the State Department made a more powerful response in its communication to London on November 29.<sup>59</sup> The State Department expressed deep concern at the British view that the British Government had precedence in determining Thai capacity to pay compensation for damage to Allied property and that the claim of the United States and other Allies not at war with Thailand must be subordinated to those of belligerent countries. It stressed that Thailand was in an Allied theatre, under combined Anglo-American command, which meant that the United States was on the same footing as Britain. It also dismissed the Foreign Office proposal that the rice levy was not reparations but a special measure of reconcilement. It reiterated that the rice levy would affect the economy of Thailand and its ability to pay Allied claims. The State Department urged

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58. British Embassy-Department of State, 12 November 1945. FRUS 1945, vol. 6.

59. Washington-Foreign Office, 29 November 1945. FO 371/46570 (F10489/1349/40).

the Foreign Office to consider the position of the United States to be equal to that of Britain in determining the Allied claims question and the capacity of Thailand to satisfy them.

In addition to this aide-mémoire, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson also discussed the matter with British Ambassador Lord Halifax. In his discussion with the British Ambassador, Acheson expressed American intention to begin the resumption of diplomatic relations with Thailand to which Washington attached a great deal of importance. The State Department had already postponed this action until December 1, and would not defer it beyond that date. Nevertheless, Washington would not wish to take action without affording the British Government opportunity to respond to American questions in the November 29 aide-mémoire.<sup>60</sup>

The Foreign Office agreed to give the United States an equal footing in an Allied Claims Commission and was ready to reconsider the questions of rice contribution and Allied claims with the United States. It also stated that the rice contribution would not be used to settle claims against Thailand. Finally, the British hoped that the United States would now agree that the two suggestions

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60. Ibid.

contained in the Aide-Mémoire of 29 November had been met.

The State Department, however, continued to remain dissatisfied and continued to press for the exclusion of the rice levy or agreement to an impartial determination of the amount of surplus stocks in Thailand.<sup>61</sup> The Department also would not acquiesce in clause C1, maintaining it still had the appearance of a protectorate. It had also warned that, if the British failed to consider its proposals, the United States would establish diplomatic relations with Thailand prior to the Anglo-Thai termination of war. It also suggested that the delay in the negotiations might be attributed to the Thai knowledge that the United States objected to some of the terms. If the British Government could meet the American points, an early conclusion might be prompted by Dening indicating that the United States had no further comments. At the same time he could convey to the Thais the same British assurance as to 'application and intent' as made to the United States.

When the British Government called for resumption of the Anglo-Thai negotiations at the new headquarters of Southeast Asia Command in Singapore in early December 1945, the negotiators of both parties were well prepared. Dening was aware that some factors had weighed against Britain

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61. Washington-Foreign Office, 30 November 1945.  
FO 371/46554 (F10985/296/40).

from the outset. The generally favourable attitude of the United States towards Thailand and the recent American intervention to prevent Thailand from signing the original military agreement with the Supreme Commander put the British at a considerable disadvantage. Also, the fact that the terms had not been presented to Thailand until the war ended and the fact that the British forces entered Thailand before agreement was reached led to the necessity of treating the Thai government, for military purposes, as a friendly ally and put London in a rather awkward situation.

The lapse of time since negotiations had started in Kandy and then been suspended further strengthened the Thai position and their hopes to be able to hold out for better terms. Furthermore, with the stationing of the American advisers in Bangkok, Dening became suspicious. When rumours of harsh British terms were being widely circulated, he assumed that the situation was 'encouraged by the American in Bangkok'.<sup>62</sup>

With the lapse of time, too, the Thais had become aware of the world need for rice and the strength of their position. 'If the Siamese were to encourage the strikes and non-delivery' already affecting the trade, 'we could not successfully counter such tactics. Failure on our part

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62. Dening-Foreign Office, 30 November 1945. FO 371/46554 (F10985/296/40).



on the other hand to relieve the distress would affect our entire position in South East Asia.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, probably to achieve Anglo-American unity in the Far East and to avoid any unnecessary delays, the British agreed to revise some of the terms of the agreement. On 18 December, 1945 it informed the State Department that the amount of the rice levy would be determined by the proposed United States-United Kingdom Commission.<sup>64</sup> On 21 December, the Foreign Office agreed to link Clauses C1 and C2.<sup>65</sup> This removed the last American major objection. The State Department therefore instructed Yost to inform the Thai Government of the American wish now to withdraw the recommendation for delay in signing the agreement with Britain.

With the State Department's concurrence, on January 1, 1946 the letters to give effect to the Heads of Agreement and Annex were duly exchanged between Denning and Prince Vivat. Immediately afterwards a formal agreement terminating the state of war between Britain and Thailand was concluded between the Plenipotentiaries.<sup>66</sup> Among the

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63. Ibid.

64. Dominion Office-Dominion Governments, 20 December 1945. FO 371/46554 (F9926/296/40).

65. Dominion Office-Dominion Governments, 21 December 1945. ibid.

66. For Text, see Direck Jayanama, op. cit. pp. 286-291.

major points of the treaty were that Thailand would return the Malay and Burmese territories acquired during the war, would turn over free one and a half million tons of rice to United Kingdom, would not build a canal across the Kra Isthmus without British approval, and would sell rubber, tin, rice and tea in accordance with prices fixed by International Committee. In return, Britain and India agreed to support Thailand's membership in the United Nations.

With the signing of the Formal Agreement on January 1, 1946, the diplomatic relations between Britain and Thailand were resumed again after being temporarily interrupted by the Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia. With the state of war now officially terminated, Hugh R. Bird presented his credentials and became British Chargé d'affaires to post-war Thailand. In early March 1946, Geoffrey H. Thompson was appointed as British Minister. To the Thais, although there were still unsolved questions as to how the government would meet requirements of the rice levy and the reparations claimed by the Allies, the conclusion of the peace treaty was a great relief.

The British forces were completely withdrawn from Thailand by mid-November 1946. The Allied military agreement signed at Kandy on September 8, 1945 was finally

cancelled on December 1, 1946.<sup>67</sup> The same day the headquarters of Supreme Command Southeast Asia was also abolished. The Anglo-Thai agreement of January 1, 1946 was, in May 1946, revised and updated, since Thailand had completely fulfilled the obligations as required by the terms of the agreement. Finally, the Peace Treaty was cancelled in January 1954 by an exchange of notes by the two governments. This brought the Anglo-Thai relations back to complete normality.

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67. SACSEA-Foreign Office, 26 January 1947. FO 371/54362 (F17186/4/40).

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE RETURN OF PIBUL SONGGRAM AND THE NOVEMBER 1947 COUP

THE three years after the cessation of warfare had seen kaleidoscopic changes of Government in Thailand. The end of the war saw the return of civilians to the political arena. However, the struggle for power among the civilian politicians, amidst economic and political problems, had caused disillusionment among the public towards the civilian leadership. The mystery of King Ananda's death in June 1946 added further fuel to the problem. This scenario set the environment for the return of Pibul Songgram, the ex-Dictator, and the military to political leadership in the November 1947 coup. The fall of the Pridi/Thamrong Regime and the return of Pibul Songgram and the Military to power brought the question of recognition to the front. This chapter will examine the circumstances leading to the return of Pibul Songgram and the November 1947 coup and the British response towards it in the context of the Anglo-Thai relations.

#### BACKGROUND

The June 1932 coup by a small group of civilians and military officers which brought about the end of royal

absolute rule in Thailand also marked the beginning of the involvement of the military in politics.<sup>1</sup> However, it was the premiership of Pibul Songgram (1938-1944) which saw the establishment of complete military rule in Thailand. When the war broke out in December 1941, Pibul sided with the Japanese and declared war on Britain and the United States.<sup>2</sup>

However, by the middle of 1944 it was apparent to the Thais that the Japanese would lose the war. Most of the Thai leaders realized that with Japan losing the war, Pibul's leadership would not facilitate rapprochement with the Allies and that if Thailand was to survive a punitive post-war settlement, a new leadership was imperative. Pridi Banamyong, the Regent, and Khuang Aphaiwong, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, engineered Pibul's downfall by influencing the Parliament on June 24, 1944 against approving Pibul's bill to remove the capital to Petchabun.

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1. For a detailed study on the 1932 coup see, Thawatt Mekarapong, History of the Thai Revolution: A Study in Political Behavior, Chalermint, Bangkok, 1972; Nicholas Tarling, 'King Prajahipok and the Apple Cart: British Attitudes Towards the 1932 Revolution', JSS, Vol. 64(2) July 1976. pp. 1-38; Benjamin A. Batson, The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1984; Thak Chaloentiarana, Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism, Social Science Association of Thailand, Thai Khadi Institute, Thammasat University, Bangkok, 1979.
  2. Josiah Crosby, Siam: The Crossroads, Hollis and Carter, London, 1945; Direck Jayanama, Siam and World War II, The Social Science Association of Thailand Press, Bangkok, 1967.

Due primarily to his lack of support from within his own faction and the changing tide of the war, Pibul resigned on July 26, 1944.<sup>3</sup> Thus, his resignation saw the temporary withdrawal of Pibul and his military clique in politics.

Khuang was given the chance to form a new government. When the war ended, Khuang decided that he should also resign to make room for a person who could deal effectively with the Allies. The most obvious choice was Seni Pramoj, Thai Minister in Washington during the war and an organiser of the Free Thai Movement. Given his excellent American connections Seni was a good choice for the Prime Minister to negotiate with the Allies on a peace settlement.

In September 1945, therefore, a new Administration was formed under Seni Pramoj. Seni entered his premiership with the hope that he could negotiate the best possible terms with the British. On January 6, 1946, he resigned immediately after Thailand reached agreement with the British on the lines indicated in the previous chapter. The general election was held after his resignation.

At this juncture, Pridi seems to have had second thoughts on his relationship with Khuang, who as Prime Minister had proved no man's pawn and was developing into a

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3. Thak, op.cit. p. 7.

political leader in his own right. Thus, after the election of January 1946, Pridi backed Direck Jayanama for the premiership. But Khuang was able to garner enough support from MP's, both elected and appointed, to give him encouragement to form a government. The rise of Khuang caused great concern to the members of the radical faction and to Pridi Banamyong, the Senior Statesman, because it showed the growing popularity of the conservative faction. This trend sparked an implicit contest between Pridi, as Regent, and Khuang, as Premier. On March 17, 1946, ThongBhuripat, one of the radical leaders in the parliament, proposed a bill requesting that the government enforce fixed price controls on various commodities.<sup>4</sup> Khuang opposed the bill on the grounds that the government lacked the machinery and personnel for effectively administering such an enterprise, and that, if it was immediately started, the enterprise would merely give additional scope for corruption among government employees. Such corruption would also cause hardship to the Thai people. Parliament nevertheless passed the bill by a slim majority, and, as a result, Khuang resigned on March 19, 1946. Afterward, Khuang and Seni and their supporters organized themselves into an opposition party, the Democratic Party (Prachatiphat), a conservative and pro-monarchist group which proceeded to oppose the close political alliance of the radical faction of the

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4. Ibid., p. 8.

Cooperative Party and Pridi's Constitutional Front.

At first, Pridi apparently did not want to give up his position of regent, but after considering various alternatives, he decided to assume the premiership. He formed his cabinet on March 24, 1946, amidst rising organised opposition. The members of his cabinet were recruited mainly from his own liberal faction. Pridi also proceeded to promulgate a new constitution on May 10, 1946. The new constitution called for a bicameral system - a House of Representatives and a Senate. A bicameral legislature was adopted giving the power of appointment of the members of the Senate to the House of Representatives. The new constitution also allowed for the establishment of political parties. As a result of the new general election held after the promulgation of the new constitution in May, Pridi's clique gained a substantial majority in the House of Representatives.

When the newly constituted parliament met on June 1, 1946, it accepted Pridi's resignation, only to appoint him Premier on June 8. The mystery of the King's death on June 9, 1946 did harm to Pridi and his party.<sup>5</sup> The government's preliminary investigation suggested that the

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5. The death of King Ananda remains the most tragic mystery in modern Thai history. Various books on the affairs have appeared in Thai. The only book in English language was written by Kruger. See, R. Kruger, Devil's Discus, London, 1964.



death could have been an accident, for the shot was fired in the King's chamber and the pistol was still in the King's hands. Assassination and suicide were ruled out. However, this did not deter hostile discussion by the press and members of the Democrat Party. The public sensed that Pridi's government was attempting to keep the matter quiet by suppressing evidence and by advocating the idea that the whole thing was an accident. Pridi's credibility as protector of the throne thus came into question and his government was later forced to use repressive measures to quell rumours of his involvement. On July 2, 1946 a state of emergency was declared. Censorship was imposed on the press and those who openly discussed the possibility of Pridi's involvement in the King's death were arrested.<sup>6</sup> These suppressive measures only served to incite greater bitterness, and within a short time rumours emerged that a conspiracy was being organised to overthrow the government.<sup>7</sup>

Pridi's popularity among the public rapidly declined. In an attempt to preserve his political influence, Pridi resigned from the Premiership complaining of poor health. Rear-Admiral Luang Thamrong, one of Pridi's wartime aides, took over and became Pridi's frontman. The administration continued to be composed of

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6. HQ British Troops Siam Weekly Intelligence Summary no. 20 up to 12 July 1946 in Bangkok-Foreign Office 15 July 1946, FO 371/54399 (F10914/21/40).

7. Ibid.

Free Thais who were not noted for efficiency or in some cases honesty. As, however, the Free Thais had effective control of the electoral machinery, there was no prospect that they would be ousted by constitutional means.

The Thamrong administration could not ameliorate the internal political difficulty which stemmed from the rumours of foul play in the death of the king. Apart from the mystery of the King's death, the problems were further compounded by the inefficiency and widespread corruption among the rank and file of government officials. This latter problem derived directly from the inflation produced by the war. The value of the baht in 1946 was about one-twelfth of the baht in 1940. Low and fixed government salaries, coupled with the high prices, led to large scale corruption in governmental circles. Shortages of export and import merchandise, caused by the curtailment of production during the war and the government's implementation of fixed price controls after the war, worsened the situation by causing widespread smuggling and blackmarkets. As a result of these activities, government revenue was decreased. Pridi and Thamrong personally remained above any charge of corruption, but they could not take any action against corrupt persons who were personally loyal to them. The return of the ceded provinces given to Thailand, under the Japanese patronage, to the French formed yet another complaint against the Government.

Given all these difficulties one is not surprised that the people became disillusioned with their civilian government. This loss of confidence set the scene for the return of Pibul and his military clique to Thai politics, which they accomplished in their November 1947 coup.

### The Return of Pibul Songgram to Political Life

The departure late in 1946 of the last British occupation forces gave the signal for the return of Pibul Songgram to political life. Pibul Songgram, who had retired from office in July 1944, had been put on trial under the War Crimes Act for his share in bringing Thailand into the war on behalf of Japan. But in March 1946 he was freed by the High Court on the grounds that the Act could not be applied retrospectively and was hence unconstitutional. Since then he had vowed that he had had enough of politics and wished to lead a quiet life.

However, a year later, in an interview with the local press, Pibul indicated his intention to re-enter politics allegedly to clear his name and to promote the democratic ideals of 1932.<sup>8</sup> This dramatic statement, which became headline news and caused feverish political turmoil, was preceded by considerable publicity given to the visit

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8. Bangkok-Foreign Office, 26 March 1946, FO 371/54449 (F4663/1340/40).

of Captain Parsons, who sought an interview with Pibul in connection with Tojo's trial as a war criminal.<sup>9</sup> It is also possible that Pibul felt, following President Truman's 'block communism' speech, that the moment was opportune both for that reason and because the fear of communism was strong within the ranks of the army and the opposition party. He perhaps felt that the rightist policy which he would pursue and which would form a major plank of his political platform would appeal both to elements in Thailand who feared the growth of communism in that country and to the United States.

He proceeded to form a political party called Tharmatipat (Right is Might), whose members mainly consisted of discontented military officers who resented the loss of power and prestige involved in their subordination to a Free Siamese Government.<sup>10</sup> Party policies stressed the preservation of the Chakri dynasty, free elections, freedom of the press, extension of democratic principles and cooperation with the United Nations.

The prospect of Pibul's return to power had caused

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9. Bangkok-Foreign Office, 30 April 1946, FO 371/54449 (F663/1340/40).

10. Thak, op.cit., p. 30; 'Survey of International Affairs, 1947-48', Royal Institute of International Affairs (1947/1948), Oxford University Press, London, 1952, p. 362.

much concern to the British. The British still did not forget his role during the war. From the Foreign Office point of view, the return of Pibul Songgram to power would presumably mean a return to an ultra-nationalist totalitarian regime which would have unfortunate repercussions on British interests in Thailand and Southeast Asia as a whole. It was feared that his return would affect the British war claims settlement against Thailand, disrupt the rice procurement scheme and harm other British economic and strategic interests in Thailand and Southeast Asia.<sup>11</sup>

In his letter of April 6, 1947 to Ernest Bevin, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Geoffrey F. Thompson, the British Minister in Bangkok, believed that the prospect of Pibul's return was by no means unlikely.<sup>12</sup> He felt that the ex-dictator was seeking to capitalise on prevailing discontent. He was in no doubt that the people as a whole preferred that Pibul should not return to political life but 'the very fear of him that still endures in influential (including Royalist) circles here, tends to militate against any effective lead to the public to resist his ambition.'

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11. Minute by C.M. Anderson, 31 March 1947, on Thompson-Foreign Office, 28 March 1947, FO 371/63910 (F4344/1565/40).

12. Thompson-Bevin, 6 April 1947, FO 371/63910 (F5168/1565/40).

He added:

`Nor should it be forgotten that Pibul is a man of considerable personal charm and that he is at present exercising this to the full on the many visitors he encourages to call upon him. It is significant that a local editor, who was imprisoned for several years by Pibul, has just stated publicly that he succumbed to the ex-dictator's fascination in a recent interview of half an hour. Furthermore, it has been painfully noticable of late that all too many were disposed to trim their sails to what they thought might shortly become the prevailing political wind. Here is an unpleasant symptom that causes me lively concern.'<sup>13</sup>

He believed that Pibul's main support came from the military who, as was often the case in South America, were capable of almost any imbecility. There was a general feeling that the ex-dictator was seeking to capitalise on prevailing discontent by abuse of the administration in the hope that he might make a 'come back' with the support of the Democrats and the military. Thompson was convinced that Washington 'holds the key to the present enigma'. He hoped the two Governments would make their attitude plain with regard to Pibul's return to political life.

Meanwhile, Thompson discussed the matter with Edwin F. Stanton, the United States Ambassador in Bangkok. Thompson enquired whether in fact the United States Government, perhaps taking into consideration 'Pibul's anti-communist views, were inclined to draw a veil over the

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13. Ibid.

past'.<sup>14</sup> On this Stanton replied emphatically in the negative. Both of them agreed that nothing could be worse for Thailand's reputation abroad than any re-emergence of the Marshal at that time. Stanton hoped that a coalition government might emerge between Thamrong and the Democrats following the re-assembly of the legislature on May 10, 1947.

On March 11, Thompson went to see the Thai Prime Minister, Thamrong, and also Pridi Banamyong, to express his concern over Pibul's activities and warned him about the serious view that British Government would take of the return of Pibul to power.<sup>15</sup> Both of them assured Thompson that there was no way for Pibul to return to power through constitutional means since a majority of the members of the legislative assembly were government supporters. They agreed that Pibul enjoyed support in the Army but they believed Thamrong could rely on the loyalty of General Luang Adul Detcharat, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.<sup>16</sup> Pridi reiterated his assurance that whether in

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14. Thompson-Foreign Office, 22 March 1947, FO 371/63910 (F4065/1565/40).

15. Thompson-Foreign Office, 26 March 1947, FO 371/63910(F4204/1565/40); Thompson-Foreign Office, 27 March 1947, FO 371/63910 (F4325/1565/40).

16. General Adul Detcharat was a close associate of Pridi Banamyong. He was both the Chief of the National Police and Head of the Free Thai Movement Armed Units during the Second World War. When Pridi became Prime Minister after the war, Adul took over Pibul's position as Army Chief.

or out of political life he would remain 'a friend of England' and would always be at Britain's disposal for such assistance as he could render.<sup>17</sup>

Despite these assurances, Thompson took no chances. On April 1, the British Information Service in Bangkok issued a statement to the press which, while emphasizing that the British Information Service could not comment on Thai political affairs, nevertheless stated:

'It is not forgotten how under the leadership of the ex-dictator Siam declared war on British and American democracies.'<sup>18</sup>

The Bangkok Post, the American-owned newspaper, considered it was 'a timely warning', while Liberty described it as 'pregnant with meaning'.<sup>19</sup> Thompson hoped that the statement would give a salutary check to Pibul's activities.

Edwin F. Stanton, his U.S. colleague also had spoken to the Prime Minister in similar terms and in fact was instrumental in the publication on March 25 of an outspoken editorial in the Bangkok Post which described Pibul as a 'quisling' of World War Two.<sup>20</sup> It considered the

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17. Thompson-Foreign Office, 26 March 1947, FO 371/63910 (F4204/1565/40).

18. Thompson-Foreign Affairs, 1 April 1947, FO 371/63910 (F4523/1565/40).

19. Bangkok Post, 25 March 1947; Liberty, 25 March 1947.

20. Bangkok Post, 25 March 1947.



return of Pibul as 'a menace to the welfare of this country'.

The British Foreign Office took the matter very seriously. C.M. Anderson, officer in charge of Thailand affairs at the Foreign Office, suggested that the Foreign Office should approve the line which had been taken by Thompson.<sup>21</sup> W.D. Allen, Head of Southeast Asia Department, agreed. In his minute to Sir O. Sargent, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, Allen argued that the prospect of Pibul's return was very disturbing to the British in view of his former ultra-nationalist policy which discriminated against all foreign enterprise.<sup>22</sup> The risk might be greater, particularly if the Senior Statesman, Pridi, owing to the weakening of his position through his association in the public mind with the death of the late King, retired from public life as he was threatening to do.<sup>23</sup> The present Prime Minister, Thamrong and the other political figures in Thailand were all smaller and less effective men to deal with Pibul.

Allen suggested that some more formal approach

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21. Minute by C.M. Anderson, 31 March 1947, on Thompson-Foreign Office, 28 March 1947, FO 371/63910 (F4344/1565/40).

22. Minute by W.D. Allen, 1 April 1947, on Thompson-Foreign Office, 28 March 1947, FO 371/63910 (F4344/1565/40).

23. ibid.

should be made by both the British and the United States Ambassadors in Bangkok to the Thai Government. In addition, he suggested that some publicity to their views should also be given, both by question and answer in Parliament, by guidance to the News Department and perhaps by inspiring one or two good articles in the Press. Sir O. Sargent agreed to the suggestion.

On April 4, Thompson was informed of the Foreign Office attitude.<sup>24</sup> On April 5, the Foreign Office instructed its Ambassador in Washington, Lord Inverchapel, to enquire from the State Department what steps they considered necessary or desirable to discourage Pibul and his followers from attempting to seize power.<sup>25</sup> He was also to indicate that the British Government disapproved the return of Pibul to politics either in the form of inspired publicity or an official statement in a reply to a suggested question, or alternatively, by instructing their respective Ambassadors at Bangkok to address an official communication to the Thai Government.

On April 9, Lord Inverchapel informed the Foreign Office of the result of his enquiry to the State

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24. Foreign Office-Thompson, 4 April 1947, FO 371/63910 (F4527/1565/40).

25. Foreign Office-Lord Inverchapel, 5 April 1947, FO 371/63910 (F4427/1565/40).

Department.<sup>26</sup> A.F. Moffat, the Head of the Southeast Asia Division, had replied that Stanton had already been instructed to see Pridi and to say that the United States Government was extremely concerned over the deterioration of political conditions in Thailand. Stanton also was instructed to tell Pridi that Pibul was regarded very unfavourably by the United States Government because of his fascist inclinations. Stanton was also asked to enquire from Pridi what plan he had in mind for reshaping the cabinet and for restoring confidence.

Although there was a report that Pibul had decided not to stage a come back at the moment, Moffat was not yet convinced that he had completely withdrawn from political power-seeking, nor did he discount the possibility that Pibul had been used as smoke screen for General Adul Detcharat.<sup>27</sup> The intrigue by which Adul might emerge as Prime Minister with the connivance or blessing of Pridi was not yet clear, but Moffat hoped that Stanton would be able to discover whether things were likely to move that way. At the moment the State Department did not wish to address an official communication to the Thai Government. They thought counsel was still most effective if privately given to the Senior Statesman Pridi, and since Stanton had

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26. Lord Inverchapel-Foreign Office, 9 April 1947, FO 371/63910 (F4829/1565/40).

27. Ibid.

already been instructed to speak to Pridi they desired to wait for his report before taking any further action.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office received a telegram from Thompson which advised them that Stanton had recommended to the State Department that both of them should write personal letters to the Thai Prime Minister drawing attention to the unfortunate effect on Thailand's relations with America and Britain of any re-entry of Pibul into politics at that time.<sup>28</sup> Thompson agreed with that advice. So far, he said, such action as they had taken had been on their personal initiative and they felt that it was necessary to reinforce this measure by a communication that would reflect the views of their two Governments.

In the event that Stanton and Thompson were instructed to address the Prime Minister as proposed, it might be assumed that their demarche would become known publicly. Thompson assured the Foreign Office that there was no harm in this. At an appropriate moment the nature of their representation might be divulged at a press conference in London and Washington. If the Foreign Office agreed to the proposed course, Thompson suggested it should do so before the reassembly of the Thai Legislative on May 10.

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28. Thompson-Foreign Office, 9 April 1947, FO 371/63910 ( F4830/1565/40).

In the Foreign Office, Anderson strongly supported the proposed joint Anglo-American approach by personal letter to Thamrong.<sup>29</sup> Since they had been informed that the Senior Statesman was retiring from public life, oral representation to him was not sufficient. Anderson suggested that the Foreign Office should telegram Washington suggesting that they were prepared to instruct Thompson to make a joint representation with his US colleague on the lines suggested. He argued that so far the Thai Government had not been told officially by their respective Ambassadors on instructions from their Home Governments, what their views were concerning the eventual return to power of Pibul. They might be inclined to regard the opinions so far expressed by the British and American Ministers as representing their personal standpoint. A strong official statement having the backing of the two Governments at that stage might save them a lot of trouble later.

Anderson pointed out that British business interests in Thailand were very much perturbed at the possibility of a change of regime. Apart from representations made by the tin companies, he also had enquiries from the head offices of other businesses proposing to adopt a 'go slow' policy until the political

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29. Minute by C.M. Anderson, 11 April 1947, on FO 371/63910 (F4830/1565/40).

situation clarified. Such a policy would retard the rehabilitation of Thailand and would damage the development of British export trade and of established interests. Furthermore, Anderson believed a joint Anglo-American statement would help the Thai politicians and public to take a more realistic view of the situation, thereby promoting political stability which would enable normal trade to be resumed.

On April 12, the Foreign Office instructed the British Embassy in Washington to inform the State Department that the British Government was strongly in favour of the course as proposed by Stanton. The Foreign Office was prepared to authorise Thompson to take similar action. Unfortunately, the State Department was not in favour of giving the Thai Prime Minister a written communication as proposed. Moffat told Hubert A. Graves, British Counsellor in Washington, that he feared Pibul and his supporters might quote any written communication to show that the Western Powers were still using the old form of pressure.<sup>30</sup> However, if Stanton was allowed to send a written communication to the Thai Prime Minister as a last resort, Moffat asked Graves what would be the procedure if Pibul did nevertheless come into power. Graves replied that Thompson had good reason to suppose that Pibul might

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30. Foreign Office-Lord Inverchapel, 12 April 1947, FO 371/63910 (F4830/1565/40).

make a bold bid for power unless it were made clear beyond doubt that their respective Government would view the reemergence of the ex-dictator with strong disfavour. The time to act was now, and if they both gave the same advice firmly and frankly there was surely little danger that Pibul would care to challenge them.

Moffat then added that he judged Pibul would not himself try for the Premiership. He might however work in favour of Aphaiwong, or perhaps Adul, with a promise from either of an important portfolio. Moffat said that there were differences of opinion in the US State Department and he promised to discuss the whole subject again, with full weight being given to the British Government's request.

In view of the State Department's view, Anderson agreed to retreat from his position. He agreed with Moffat that they should avoid giving the Thai Government a written document which might prove awkward for them later.<sup>31</sup>

On April 22, Anderson had an informal discussion with Drumright, of the United States Embassy in London.<sup>32</sup> The latter inquired in regard to the situation in Thailand

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31. Minute by C.M. Anderson, 21 April 1947 on Lord Inverchapel-Foreign Office, 10 April 1947. FO 371/63910 (F5401/1565/40).

32. Ibid

and specifically in regard to the potentialities of a coup by Pibul Songgram. Anderson replied that, on the basis of communications from the British Ambassador in Bangkok, the situation in Thailand was still replete with fateful possibilities. Although Pibul was now reported to have gone 'up-country' and matters were quiescent for the moment, the possibilities of a Pibul coup were by no means extinguished. Anderson then explained that virtually all Thais, both in and out of the Government, feared Pibul, and that most of the politicians and office holders in Thailand had been 'sitting on the fence'. In other words, those people were prepared for Pibul's return to power, if he wished to make the effort, and if he succeeded they would fall into step in order to maintain their positions. Moreover, said Anderson, Pibul had a certain popularity with the people, who were inclined to contrast present day conditions unfavourably with those that obtained when Pibul was at the height of his power. But Pibul's main pillar of support was the army which was sufficiently powerful to place him in power at any time. The navy and the air force, however, were not so favourably inclined toward Pibul.

Anderson said that the American and the British Ambassadors at Bangkok had taken such a serious view of the possibility of Pibul's return to power that they had recommended to their respective governments the advisability of sending separate letters to the Thai Prime



Minister expressing concern over such an outcome. Anderson went on to say that the Foreign Office had subsequently instructed the British Embassy in Washington to enter into consultation with the State Department on the advisability of taking such action. In as much as the Department had reacted unfavourably to the suggested action of the two Ambassadors in Bangkok, the Foreign Office had taken no further action in the matter which was still under consideration.

Drumright inquired whether the Foreign Office had given consideration to the advisability of publicizing the situation in Thailand, with particular reference to the alleged plotting of Pibul to return to power. Anderson replied that the matter of giving publicity to the issue had been examined, but that the Foreign Office was reluctant to act along those lines for fear that it would be attacked by British elements who had all along inveighed against the 'weakness' of British policy toward Thailand.

Drumright then expressed his personal view that it seemed highly desirable that the Thai situation be fully ventilated in the American and British press. If the American and British were fully informed of Pibul's past history and his present reported intentions, the reaction would probably be so strong and adverse that it could not but be taken account of in the proper quarters in Bangkok. If necessary, Drumright continued, certain newspapers in

the United States and Britain should be given the facts of the situation in Thailand and inspired to publish leading articles on the subject. In this way, Drumright went on, the United States and United Kingdom Governments could avoid charges of intervention in the internal affairs of Thailand and could probably put more real and effective pressure on the Thais than could be accomplished by the sending of unpublished notes to the Thai Government which, in any event, was perhaps powerless to prevent Pibul's accession to power if he and his henchmen chose to engineer a coup.

Anderson said that he was inclined to agree that publicity was perhaps the best way of exercising influence on the Thai situation, and that he would press for further consideration by the Foreign Office of this approach to the problem. Anderson added that if the Foreign Office decided to publicize the Thai situation, it might be done through a special article, possibly followed by an editorial in a leading London newspaper such as The Times; or possibly through Parliamentary interpellation. In either event, Anderson concluded, news of it would be certain to reach Bangkok and might have a salutary effect.

However, before making any decision, G.C. Whitteridge of the Foreign Office thought it would be better if the Foreign Office awaited Thompson's view on the

matter.<sup>33</sup>

On April 22, Thompson confirmed that Stanton had been instructed to follow a policy of 'watchful waiting', though ready to act in the event of some crisis.<sup>34</sup> There had also been a marked decrease in pro-Pibul publicity and activity during the last ten days. He believed that this might be attributed to the ex-dictator's realisation of his unpopularity with the Western powers following oral representation made by the the British and American Ambassadors to the Thai Government and a British Information Service statement as well as President Truman's remark about political stability and democratic government when the Thai Ambassador presented his credentials in Washington.

Commenting on Moffat's observations about the possibility of Pibul coming back under the aegis of Khuang, Thompson said it was an extremely interesting view. Thompson pointed out that it was the darling ambition of the Americans that the Democrats headed by Khuang Aphaiwong and Seni Pramoj should form a government. But their party

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33. Minute by G.C. Whitteridge , 22 April 1947, ibid.

34. Thompson-Foreign Office, 22 April 1947, FO 371/63910 (F5618/1565/40).

was not strong enough to achieve this without outside help. His impression was that the Americans would regard the presence of Pibul in a coalition cabinet with the help of his supporters and headed by Khuang Aphaiwong, the leader of the Democrat Party, as a cheap price to pay for what, it was assumed, would be a very pro-American administration. Thompson warned that the danger of that type of reasoning lay in the fact that the ex-dictator was not a man to remain quiescent in a subordinate position. Though far from satisfied, the Foreign Office agreed to follow the American line and adopt a policy of 'wait and see'.

In Bangkok, Pridi and Thamrong were aware of their weak position in the Thai political scene. Pridi called a meeting of his followers to discuss further tactics.<sup>35</sup> A government by coalition, though admittedly desirable, was considered to be unfeasible. Nor was it possible to allow the 'democrat' opposition to come into power because they would immediately victimise those politicians who were at present in the Thamrong government. The only solution would be a reshuffle of the present cabinet.

The Foreign Office welcomed Thamrong's plan to reshuffle the cabinet in May 1947, hoping that it would further strengthen the government's position, particularly

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35. Thak, op.cit. p. 23.

against the opposition.<sup>36</sup> Though there were fears in some quarters that Thamrong might establish a dictatorship government and would follow a policy of 'bottling up' the opposition,<sup>37</sup> the Foreign Office thought otherwise. From the point of view of a stable government in Thailand, it was argued, there was an advantage in its being a strong one.<sup>38</sup> Over the long term, however, it was agreed that the policy of 'bottling up' the opposition might be a dangerous one. It might not be in the long term interest of businesses in Thailand if the Thai Government returned to their pre-war practice of arbitrary decisions. It would be useful therefore if in public references to Thailand, made in the House of Commons, the British Ministers could emphasise their desire to see a stable and democratic government established in Thailand.

The Thai Legislative Assembly met in mid-May

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36. Minute by C.M. Anderson, 16 May 1947, on Thompson-Foreign Office, 14 May 1947, FO 371/63910 (F6655/1565/40).

37. These fears were expressed by Prince Svasti, the Thai Ambassador at the United Nations, in his interview with C.M. Anderson on 15 May 1947. For Prince Svasti, the only solution to Thai political problems would be a re-shuffle of the Thamrong administration and the formation of a coalition government. If Pridi continued to persist with his policy of 'strengthening' his present government by legislation, he believed it would be bound to aggravate internal dissensions and eventually lead to trouble. Ibid

38. Ibid.

1947.<sup>39</sup> The Democrats called for a session to question the government, which lasted seven days. The Democrat Party, acting as the opposition, attacked the government for its inability to control economic conditions, as well as on the mystery of the death of Rama VIII.<sup>40</sup> The debates were broadcasted over the radio and received wide audience. The government was able to weather the weeklong gruelling attack from Democrats. Shortly after gaining a vote of confidence from the Assembly, Thamrong resigned to form a new cabinet.

Nevertheless, the publicity given to these affairs did not help to stabilize the political situation. Rumours of coups and counter coups became pervasive, leading to more confusion. Thompson reported that Pibul was in close touch with Khuang, with whom he had frequent meetings.<sup>41</sup> After his failure to win a vote of censure against Thamrong, it was said that Khuang was in an 'emotional condition more and more swayed by his personal hostility to the Senior Statesman and the present Siamese Prime Minister

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39. Thompson-Foreign Office, 17 May 1947, FO 371/63910 (F6717/1565/40).

40. Ibid.

41. Thompson-Foreign Office, 20 May 1947, FO 371/63910 (F6909/1565/40); Thompson-Foreign Office, 26 May 1947, FO 371/63910 (F7116/1565/40).

...<sup>42</sup> Thompson feared that this state of mind would only lead Khuang to ally himself with Pibul, 'who cannot hope to return to public life constitutionally without the support of the Democrats and other opposition elements, whom the ex-dictator will, of course, exploit for his purposes'.<sup>43</sup>

### The November 1947 Coup

By the autumn of 1947 signs of an impending coup against the Thamrong government began to emerge. A group of young army officers under General Phin Chunhawan, a retired Lieutenant-General,<sup>44</sup> began to organise plans to stage a coup d'état against the Thamrong Government. Pridi and Thamrong were aware of the army's restlessness, and in fact Thamrong was told about the army's plans.<sup>45</sup> However, they seem to have underestimated the ability of the army officers to stage a coup and to have relied excessively on

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42. Thompson-Foreign Office, 27 May 1947, FO 371/63910 (F7112/1565/40); Thompson-Foreign Office, 30 May 1947, FO 371/63910 (F7334/1565/40).

43. Thompson-E. Bevin, 28 June 1947, FO 371/63910 (F9300/1565/40).

44. Phin Chunhawan was a retired Lt. General. He was a strong supporter of Pibul Songgram. For his role in the November 1947 Coup see, Thak Chaloemtiarana (ed.) Thai Politics: 1932-1957, Vol. 1. Social Science Association of Thailand, Bangkok, 1978. pp. 568-579.

45. Thak Chaloemtiarana, Thailand: The Politics of Despotism, Social Science Association of Thailand, Bangkok, 1979. pp. 36-37.

the influence of Luang Adul, the Army Commander-in-Chief.<sup>46</sup> Adul also appears to have received a direct invitation from Thamrong and Pridi jointly to take over, but feeling perhaps as weary as they, or as a long time Police Chief, not yet sufficiently in control of the Army to which he had only been transferred to bolster Thamrong, he ignored it.<sup>47</sup>

The military had their own reasons for being dissatisfied with the Thamrong Government. The main reason was that they resented their loss of power and prestige under the so-called 'Free Siamese' Government. The military felt that they were harshly treated by the Pridi/Thamrong Government. As a means of ensuring the control of the armed forces and seeking their support for civilian governments, Pridi had forced top military officers who had close associations with Pibul into retirement or transferred them into less important posts. Top military positions were given to officers who were sympathetic to civilian leadership. Major-General Adul, an ex-chief of Police who worked closely with Pridi as one of the Free Thai Movement leaders, became Commander-in-Chief of the army, while Rear-Admiral Luang Sangwon Suwannachip was Adjutant-General of the Armed Forces and Police Chief.<sup>48</sup> The navy received more favourable treatment

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46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.



than the army. This fact was primarily due to its active participation in the Free Thai Movement. Pridi also wanted to build the Navy into one of his strongholds for the purpose of countering a possible military uprising in the army.

Another cause for discontent was the belief that the army was being blamed for mistakes made in the Second World War. General Kach, who had himself been a Free Thai collaborator, noted that while it was all right to heap praise on the Free Thai Movement, it was not fair that the press and some politicians should belittle the army by saying that in the fifty years or so the army's existence it could not accomplish what the Free Thai did in two years, that is, steer the country safely towards being on the winning side. He noted that many army officers were deeply hurt by those statements, indeed several were extremely angry.<sup>49</sup>

The army also was aware that under the new constitution of 1946 military officers would be barred from active political roles. Article 24 section 2 stipulated that members of the Senate could not be a government official. Thus, as pointed out by Thak, it was legally impossible to be Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Prime

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49. Ibid.

Minister at the same time.<sup>50</sup> The change also meant that the army could not 'load' parliament with active duty officers to ensure that the assembly would be partial to its aspirations.

The smouldering resentment among the armed forces finally burst out on 8 November 1947. The most prominent leaders of the army coup were Phin Chunhawan, a retired Lieutenant-General and General Luang Kach Songkhram. As none of these men had command of the troops necessary for a military takeover nor did they have national stature or reputations, they invited Pibul to lead the coup.<sup>51</sup>

On the night of the November 8, army troops seized strategic positions and the major government buildings throughout Bangkok. Like the previous coup this seizure of power was bloodless. The coup plans called for the arrest of Pridi and Thamrong. Thamrong and members of his cabinet had been forewarned and succeeded in escaping. Pridi narrowly escaped capture and was given protection by the navy.

As pointed out by Thak, Pibul's role in the coup

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50. Ibid.

51. For Pibul's role in the November 1947 coup see, Jayananta K. Ray, Portraits of Thai Politics, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1972. pp. 209-210.

appears to have been essentially symbolic.<sup>52</sup> As he was still a well-known as well as respected army officer, the coup group believed through use of his name, they could solicit support from the people and army. But it was too soon to bring Pibul into the government. The Coup Group realised that the Western Powers, particularly Britain and the United States, were against the return of Pibul and the military to power.<sup>53</sup> Soon after the coup, Pibul was appointed as the new Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, replacing General Adul. Adul, on the other hand, was appointed as a member of the newly-created Supreme Council of State.<sup>54</sup>

In a statement for foreign consumption, Pibul declared that the military had to act to save their country from ruin and they were ready to prove to the world their good intentions.<sup>55</sup> In another announcement, it was said that the military, including Pibul, had no political

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52. Thak, op. cit. p. 36.

53. New York Times, 10 November 1947. Thompson himself had expressed his disapproval on the return of Pibul to political life to Prince Nitas, Pibul's emissary, when he came to see him on November 10. See Thompson-Foreign Office, 10 November, 1947, FO 371/63910 (F14916/1565/40).

54. The Supreme Council of State was created soon after the coup to replace the old Regency Council. The new council was presided over by Prince Rangsit.

55. Frank C. Darling, Thailand and the United States, Public Affairs Press, Washington D.C., 1965. pp. 57-58; Thak, op.cit. pp. 35-36.

ambitions.<sup>56</sup> They would retire as soon as peace and order were restored. General elections would be held within ninety-days under the new provisional constitution to appoint new members of Parliament.<sup>57</sup>

To avert Western hostility, Khuang Aphaiwong, the Democrats' leader, was again invited to form a provisional government. By allowing Khuang to head a new provisional government, the military as well as Pibul were able to claim publicly that they were not seeking personal political power. At first Khuang hesitated to accept the Premiership.<sup>58</sup> However, after Pibul assured him that the military would not interfere in his government, Khuang agreed. In his announcement, Khuang declared that his government would be composed of moderate men regardless of political affiliation or personal influence.<sup>59</sup> He also assured the foreign powers that the government would cooperate with the United Nations and honour all international obligations. At the same time frequent statements continued to emanate from Pibul's Headquarters that he would retire from the scene 'as soon as peace and

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56. John Coast, Some Aspects of Siamese Politics, Institute of Pacific Relations Press, Washington D.C. 1965. p. 41.

57. Ibid.

58. Thompson-Foreign Office, 10 November 1947, FO371/163911 (F14944/1565/40); Thompson-Foreign Office, 15 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F15182/1565/40).

59. Ibid.

order are restored.<sup>60</sup>

To some extent these assurances seem to have induced Thompson to take a more conciliatory public stance towards the new regime than his previous attitude. Though he opposed Pibul's return to power, he advised the Foreign Office not to denounce him on the ground that he might well consolidate his position, thereby presenting them with an enduring fait accompli.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, it appeared to him that the coup was not merely a stroke of ambition on the part of Pibul alone but a concerted move supported by the more conservative members of the Royal family. To some extent, Thompson's observation might be true. Most of the conservative members of the Royal family considered Pridi as anti-monarchist and he was frequently charged with attempting to establish a republic in Thailand. Many conservatives recalled his radical economy plan of 1933 and the animosity of Prajahipok toward Pridi who had overthrown the absolute monarchy. Pridi also was blamed for the death of the young King Ananda Mahidol, for it was Pridi who recalled the young King to Thailand from his study in Geneva. Thus for Thompson, the coup was a broader right-

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60. Ibid.; see minute by A.M. Palliser, 19 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F15263/1565/40).

61. Thompson-Foreign Office, 9 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F14917/1565/40); Thompson-Foreign Office, 17 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F15259/1565/40).

wing movement.<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, neither London nor Washington felt that they should be in a hurry about formally recognising the new regime, especially as Pridi Banamyong and Thamrong had disappeared and might perhaps be contemplating a counter-attack with the help of the Free Thais and the Navy.<sup>63</sup> In the meantime, the Foreign Office authorised Thompson to deal with the Thai authorities on a de facto basis.<sup>64</sup>

#### Pridi's Escape to Singapore

Ten days after the coup, Pridi Banamyong decided to leave Thailand.<sup>65</sup> Despite his assurance that he would not molest Pridi,<sup>66</sup> Pibul had successfully aroused public feeling against Pridi by starting a highly publicized investigation into the death of the late King Ananda, and this seemed to be the final straw which induced Pridi to

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62. Ibid.

63. Foreign Office-Thompson, 10 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F14971/1565/40).

64. Ibid.

65. Thompson-Foreign Office, 11 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F14971/1565/40).

66. Interview between Cpt. Dennis and Marshal Pibul on November 11, 1947, FO 371/63911 (F15004/1565/40).

leave Thailand.<sup>67</sup> Thamrong, on the other hand, was planning to stage a counter-stroke against the 'usurper government' and its supporters with the help of the Free Thais.<sup>68</sup>

In the early morning of November 19, 1947, Pridi, accompanied by two of his supporters, in naval uniforms, arrived at the British Naval Attaché's house, requesting the British authorities to help him and his friends to leave the country.<sup>69</sup> The situation put the British Embassy in Bangkok in a dilemma. Commenting on this situation, Thompson wrote:

'I dislike all this melodrama but neither the U.S. Ambassador nor I can see how we can act. We are handicapped from any point of view, and the sooner that people get out and away the better.'<sup>70</sup>

After discussing the problem with Stanton, the United States Ambassador, Thompson agreed to help Pridi and his friends to escape to Singapore.<sup>71</sup> In his telegram to the Foreign Office on November 20, Thompson hoped the Foreign

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67. Minute by W.D. Allen, 2 December 1947, FO 371/63911 (F15866/1565/40).

68. Thompson-Foreign Office, 11 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F14974/1565/40).

69. Thompson-Foreign Office, 19 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F15371/1565/40).

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

Office would approve his action purely on humanitarian grounds, as well as because of other obligations to Pridi.<sup>72</sup>

Following Pridi's escape, the two Ambassadors felt there was an imperative need for immediate action to ensure that the news of the former's escape, when it broke, should be responsibly handled by the Thai authorities. The Foreign Office, however, had a different view about it. The Foreign Office felt it would be unnecessary for Thompson to inform them since the new government was not recognised formally by the British Government.<sup>73</sup>

The Foreign Office argued:

'While we are not yet clear as to the precise circumstances which have been revealed about the late King's death, we gather that there has been no indictment of the persons who were evacuated by the U.S. Naval Attaché. If that is so, it is not clear that there is any irregularity in your own or the American Embassy's conduct even vis-a-vis the usurper Government. At this distance it seems to us that Luang Pibul is most anxious to secure the goodwill of the United States and Great Britain. That being so, it would hardly be wise for him to take us to task for ridding him of his enemy in a manner least likely to cause him or his Government embarrassment'.<sup>74</sup>

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72. Thompson-Foreign Office, 20 November 1947, FO371/63911 (F15388/1565/40).

73. Foreign Office-Thompson, 20 November 1947, FO371/63911 (F15388/1563/40).

74. Ibid.



The Foreign Office preferred Thompson to indicate the facts about Pridi's escape to Pibul through his unofficial contacts, and at the same time to advise him not to give publicity to the incident.

Despite the Foreign Office's views, Thompson stuck to his decision to inform the Thai authorities about the incident. Accordingly, Thompson wrote a short and moderate letter to Khuang Aphaiwong.<sup>75</sup> This was well received by Khuang when Whittington delivered it to him in person and he maintained that he was glad that Nai Pridi had gone.<sup>76</sup> However, his official reply was completely different.<sup>77</sup> He declared himself to be upset by Nai Pridi's departure and also dropped sinister hints about Nai Pridi's implication in the 'assassination of the King'. He considered the assistance given to Nai Pridi by both British and American Ambassadors as 'an interference in what is purely an internal affair of the country in fact, resulting in defeating the cause of justice'.<sup>78</sup>

Thompson ascribed this change of tone to the

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75. Minute by A.M. Palliser, 24 November 1947, on Thompson-Foreign Office, 23 November 1947, FO 371/63912 (F15510/1565/40).

76. Ibid.

77. Thompson-Foreign Office, 22 November 1947, FO 371/63912 (F15509/1565/40).

78. Ibid.

influence of Pibul and to Nai Khuang's desire to have something in writing expressing his disapproval of Nai Pridi's escape.<sup>79</sup> Stanton, however, refused to take the matter seriously and he was strongly opposed to returning any reply.<sup>80</sup> But Thompson had discreetly asked Doll, the Financial Adviser to the Thai Government, to inform Khuang of his displeasure about the latter's change of attitude and once again, he advised Khuang to handle the matter carefully.<sup>81</sup>

Pridi Banamyong arrived in Singapore on November 21 and was placed by the British authorities at St. John's Island.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile Thompson advised Lord Killearn, British Special Commissioner for Southeast Asia, to ask Pridi to issue a statement denying the allegation made by his opponent of his implication in the late King's death.<sup>83</sup> Thompson thought that this statement should be made in response to Pibul's statement in an interview with Daily Telegraph on November 23 that measures would be taken

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79. Thompson-Foreign Office, 23 November 1947, FO 371/63912 (F15510/1565/40).

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Lord Killearn-Foreign Office, 24 November 1947, FO 371/63912 (F15553/1565/40); Lord Killearn-Foreign Office, 24 November 1947, FO 371/63912 (F16340/1565/40) and letters attached.

83. Thompson-Foreign Office, 24 November 1947, FO 371/63912 (F15563/1565/40).

against Pridi and Thamrong if they were found to be implicated in criminal activity.<sup>84</sup>

On November 25, Henry N. Brain, Adviser to the British Special Commissioner, approached Pridi about the matter. Accordingly a draft statement was prepared by Brain.<sup>85</sup> On November 27, the statement was issued by the British authorities on Pridi's behalf. The statement was as follows.

'Your Excellency, in view of certain allegations about me which have been given wide publicity, I should be grateful if you would inform His Excellency, the Governor of Singapore, under whose jurisdiction I have placed myself, of the following:

I deny absolutely that I was in any way implicated in the death of His Late Majesty King Ananda, which I most sincerely deplored. I further declare to the best of my knowledge and belief that no member of my present entourage was implicated in that unhappy event. I should greatly appreciate it if suitable publicity could be given to this statement.'<sup>86</sup>

Thompson suggested that the Foreign Office should send a copy of the statement to the Thai Prime Minister, but was opposed by his superiors.<sup>87</sup> The Foreign Office feared that

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84. Daily Telegraph, 23 November 1947.

85. Lord Killearn-Foreign Office, 25 November 1947, FO 371/63912 (F15623/1565/40).

86. Ibid.

87. Thompson-Foreign Office, 26 November 1947, FO 371/63912 (F15629/1565/40).

such a direct approach might be interpreted by the Thai Government as an attempt by the British Government to influence opinion in a matter of internal politics.<sup>88</sup>

Following a report that Nai Tiang Srikhand, a Free Thai, was contemplating an uprising on the north-eastern border of Thailand, Thompson once again asked Lord Killearn to persuade Pridi to issue a public statement urging the Free Thais not to cause useless bloodshed and destruction.<sup>89</sup> The statement should be widely broadcast by press and radio. At the same time Pridi should also send a message to Bangkok asking him to remain quiet. What Thompson feared was that if Nai Tiang carried out his intentions, Pibul would not only declare the Free Thai Movement to be outlawed but that reprisals would be taken against Pridi's followers held as hostages in Bangkok. Approached by Brain, Pridi agreed to the suggestion. On November 27, Pridi broadcast from Singapore, urging his followers to desist from bloodshed.<sup>90</sup> He also wrote to Nai Khuang through the United States Ambassador in Bangkok urging the government to refrain from taking reprisals against them.

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88. Foreign Office-Thompson, 27 November 1947, FO 371/63912 (F15629/1565/40).

89. Thompson-Lord Killearn, 27 November 1947, FO 371/63912 (F15629/1565/40).

90. Lord Killearn-Thompson, 27 November 1947, FO 371/63912 (F15708/1565/40).

## Reaction from Malayan Authorities

Pridi's presence in Singapore had however provoked hostile reaction from the Malayan authorities. The matter arose when Pridi asked the Malayan authorities to allow him to stay in Penang as his predecessor, Phya Manapakorn, had done in 1933.<sup>91</sup> Sir Edward Gent, Governor of the Malayan Union, was not prepared to allow him to go to Penang on the grounds that the island was admirably situated for political intrigues against the authorities in Thailand.<sup>92</sup> His removal to that island could only give the impression to the Thai authorities that the British were actively giving Pridi an opportunity for such an action. Though, in his present frame of mind, it seemed that Pridi would give an undertaking to abstain from political activity, his important position in Thai politics could not fail to make him a central figure for plans by others, to which he would no doubt be a more or less willing party. There would certainly be constant comings and goings in Penang by

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91. Phya Manapakorn was the Thai Prime Minister appointed soon after June 1932 Coup d'état. In 1933 he was overthrown by the Army and was forced to flee to Penang. Lord Killearn-Thompson, 26 November 1947 FO 371/63912 (F15671/1565/40).

92. Lord Killearn-Foreign Office, 5 December 1947, FO 371/63912 (F16097/1565/40).

political agents of various sorts,<sup>93</sup> some of whom were undesirable from the local point of view. The Malayan authorities had considered alternative places for sanctuary but were convinced that any other location in the Malayan Union or Singapore would have similar objections. Moreover, they argued, no guarantee could be given that Nai Pridi's safety against his enemies would be ensured. From that point of view also, a domicile more distant from Thailand where he would be safer was desirable. Finally, the Governor feared that retaliatory action by the present Thai authorities might take the very harmful form of interference in the rice supply exported from Thailand.

The Governor of Singapore himself was extremely unwilling to allow Pridi to remain more than a few weeks at the outside in St. John's Island.<sup>94</sup> The house there was needed for official purposes. Moreover, Pridi himself could not expect to remain indefinitely in that lonely place. Thus the question of his future domicile arose as a matter of some urgency.

In view of these considerations, the Governors of

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93. It was feared also that Pattani separatist leaders would seek support or at least collaborate with Pridi and his party to stage a rebellion in the Southern provinces. This aspect will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

94. Lord Killearn-Foreign Office, 5 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16097/1565/40).

Singapore and the Malayan Union, and the Colonial Office too, hoped that arrangements could be made at an early date for Pridi to go to another British territory which was further removed from Thailand than Malaya.

Lord Killearn argued that a matter of principle was at stake.<sup>95</sup> He pointed out that it was part of the tradition of British justice that British territory in any part of the world was a safe asylum for political refugees. Moral factors of that kind were going to be of the greatest importance in maintaining British leadership in that part of the world. The physical strength which in the past had guaranteed British influence had so greatly diminished. Furthermore, Pridi, who had by his past friendship to Britain the strongest claim to a welcome there, had himself appealed to the precedent of an earlier antagonist, Phya Manapakorn, who took refuge in Penang in 1933.

He added:

'We are now proposing to refuse his request not because of any concrete evidence but because of fear that he might become a nuisance. Surely the reasonable course of action and one which is mostly likely to be profitable in the long run, since it takes into account the possibility, to put it no higher than that, of Nai Pridi's return to power is to offer the hospitality of Malaya for which he has asked, at the same time explaining frankly the possibility of embarrassment should he engage in or become the focus of political activity and make it clear that in such an

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95. Ibid.

event he would have to move elsewhere.'96

Lord Killearn asked Thompson to give his view on the likelihood of a return to power by Pridi and the proposal that he should be refused permission to stay in Malaya.

Thompson said it was somewhat of a leap in the dark to attempt any forecast on the prospects of the Senior Statesman's return to politics.<sup>97</sup> Pridi, he said, was suffering from two disabilities which might militate against his return to politics. Firstly, Thompson argued, he suffered from his connection with the death of the King, and secondly, he had allowed himself to be surrounded and exploited by the 'worst crooks in the land'. His personal financial integrity was never called into question, but he was criticised for his over-developed loyalty to old associates who were not above using it to their own advantage. Even if the ex-Prime Minister was successful in throwing out the present regime, either by a counter-coup or following the defeat of the Democrats in the elections, he thought he would find the presence of Pridi an embarrassment. Naturally, if Pridi could be cleared of complicity in the King's death to public satisfaction, his prospects would improve at once.

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96. Ibid.

97. Thompson-Foreign Office, 16 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16100/1565/40).



With regard to the question of Pridi's presence in Malaya, Thompson said he really could not take seriously the suggestion that he was a menace to security. Whatever he might be, Thompson stressed, Pridi had proved himself to be a friend of Britain. 'I can think of nothing more likely to reduce our stature in oriental eyes than for us now to snap and snarl at his heels. Consequently, I agree entirely with the views expressed by Lord Killearn.'<sup>98</sup>.

Meanwhile Pridi informed Lord Killearn of his wish to go to London. Lord Killearn was quite delighted with the news and strongly supported it. As he said:

'This may be a most fortunate turn of events. He cut the local gordian knot with which we were faced over immediate disposal of Nai Pridi and will give breathing space during which we may see which way the Free Siamese are going to jump. I therefore strongly recommend that approval be given for this visit and that I be authorised to make the necessary arrangements'.<sup>99</sup>

The matter was examined by the Foreign Office. Allen considered Nai Pridi's visit to England would have certain obvious disadvantages. He minuted:

'He is unlikely to want to do so just out of affection for us, it is far more probable that he wants to get in touch with his supporters and intrigue politically against the new regime. Furthermore,

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98. Ibid.

99. Lord Killearn-Foreign Office, 7 December 1947, FO 371/63914(F16096/1565/40).

having arrived here he may be in no hurry to go back. There is, at the same time, no reason why we should give in to the suspicions of the local Colonial Authorities, if we thought it best for him to remain for the time being in Singapore.

On the other hand, it would be an uncomfortable business to have to deny the right to visit England to someone who is generally regarded as having been a valuable friend during the war, and who was made much of here only a year ago, just because his country has fallen again into the hands of a man we regarded as our enemy.

Furthermore, we should very properly extract from Nai Pridi an undertaking to abstain from all political activity during his visit and expel him if he violated it. If, as is quite possible, he merely stays quietly with the Svasti at Virginia Water and there is no ostensible political activity, I should not have thought we need worry much.'<sup>100</sup>

On balance, Allen wrote, they could allow Pridi to come to England on condition that his visit was limited to a few weeks and that he undertook to abstain from all political activity. It would be best to stipulate that Pridi should not come until he had received his Thai passport, since it was better that the British Authorities should not give him too much overt support by issuing him with a travel document for the purpose. Denning thought that if Pridi came to England, Pibul and his Government would assume that he had come to rally the opposition and to plot

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100. Minute by W.D. Allen, 23 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16098/1565/40).

against him.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, if he wanted to come and live as a private citizen, Dening supposed that they should not seek to prevent him. Dening suggested the Home Office should be consulted on this matter. Accordingly, the matter was forwarded to the Home Office for consideration.<sup>102</sup> The Home Office agreed to allow Pridi to make a short visit to England but on a non-diplomatic visa.<sup>103</sup>

Probably dismayed by the British attitude, Pridi, later changed his mind and decided not to come to England. Pridi stayed in Singapore until May 23 when he left for Macao.<sup>104</sup>

#### French overtures and the British Response

The French Government too was quite worried about developments in Thailand. The French were concerned lest the return of Pibul to power would mean the revival of the Thai irredentism that the French had experienced during the Second World War. On November 12, M. Massigli, the

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101. Minute by Dening, 12 December 1947, ibid.

102. G.C. Whitteridge -Miss K. Knot (Alien Dept.), 16 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16098/1565/40).

103. Minute by W.D. Allen, 23 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16098/1565/40).

104. MacDonal-Foreign Office, 17 December 1947, FO 371/69993 (F8534/21/40); MacDonal-Foreign Office, 4 January 1948, FO 371/69993 (F8082/21/40).

French Ambassador in London, submitted an aide-mémoire to Sir O. Sargent, Permanent Under-Secretary at the British Foreign Office.<sup>105</sup> It set forth the French Government's view on the November 1947 coup d'état in Thailand. It argued that any show of moderation by the Provisional Government should not leave foreign observers under any illusions. Sooner or later, the new dictator would seek by external successes to escape from the internal difficulties with which he might be faced. The Kingdoms of Cambodia and Laos were in danger of being the first victims of such a policy and pan-Thai imperialism might lead Thailand on to more ambitious goals. In these circumstances, M. Massigli envisaged the following measures:

- (a) a warning by the principal powers;
- (b) suspension of the economic facilities given to Thailand since the end of the war;
- (c) rupture of diplomatic relations with Thailand;
- (d) submission to the United Nations of a situation considered to be a threat to peace and international security.

The aide-mémoire also drew attention to the fact that the French Government had received no assurances similar to those conveyed to other Western governments regarding the observance by Thailand of her international obligations. The French Government proposed however to find out the view

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105. French's aide-mémoire 12 November 1947 FO 371/63911 (F15014/1565/40).

of the British and the United States Governments before taking up a definite attitude.

In his reply, Sir O. Sargent emphasized the need for caution in view of the support the new Thai Government seemed to enjoy in conservative circles and the number of moderate and able men who had consented to be associated with it.<sup>106</sup> As regards the more drastic measures proposed by France, he suggested that anything of that kind must await some concrete evidence of hostile intentions on the part of the new government. Meanwhile it would be premature to accord formal recognition to the new regime until they were convinced that it could be relied upon to act in good faith in its relation with other powers. Sargent assured M. Massigli that if the Thai Government should attempt to recover the territories returned to Indochina in 1945, the British Government would be prepared to consult afresh with the French Government with a view to considering appropriate measures. The British Ambassador in Bangkok would be instructed to intimate informally to the Thai Government that the British were disturbed at their failure to convey to the French Government the assurances regarding the observance of international obligations already conveyed to the United States Governments.

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106. O. Sargent-M. Rene Massigli, 18 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F15020/1565/40).

On November 22, Thompson telegraphed his observations on the French proposals.<sup>107</sup> He reported that the French Minister in Bangkok had in fact received an assurance from the Thai Government, similar to those given to the United States and British Ambassadors, about Thailand's observation of her international obligations, and that M.Gilbert himself was in favour of caution. All three Western representatives in Bangkok were opposed to the measures envisaged by the French Government.

Stanton, the United States Ambassador, privately suggested that both the British and United States Governments should issue a reasoned statement that as long as Pibul remained in power they would not recognise the new regime.<sup>108</sup> Thompson disapproved Stanton's suggestion because he believed that statement would only encourage the anti-government forces and thus further strengthen the military position. To Thompson, the main consideration was whether or not the Provisional Government was in a position to maintain law and order and govern the country. With the exit of the Senior Statesman, Pridi Banamyong, Thompson judged that their chances of ensuring stability had greatly improved. He added that if the situation continued to show signs of increasing stability, he would consider de facto

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107. Foreign Office-Thompson, 18 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F15104/1565/40).

108. Ibid.

recognition of the Provisional Government pending the result of the proposed elections in three months time.

Following the observations made by Sargent, the French Government decided to withdraw its proposals of November 12.<sup>109</sup> The French Ambassador, M. Massigli, also indicated his government's decision not to pursue measures with a view to securing special assurances from the Thai Government.<sup>110</sup> However, as an alternative to that, the French Government pressed for the issuance of a statement by the British, French and American Governments. The suggested statement was as follows:

'The United States, British and French Governments, who are naturally anxious about any occurrence which might compromise the restoration of stability in Southeast Asia, have been following with attention the political developments which have taken place in Siam as a result of the Coup d'état of November 9.

The three governments have decided to exchange views and maintain close contact with each other with a view to adopting a common attitude in this question.'<sup>111</sup>

The French Government's suggestion was closely considered by the British Foreign Office. W.D. Allen was strongly in

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109. Paris-Foreign Office, 13 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F15153/1565/40); Minute by W.D. Allen, 25 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F16085/1565/40).

110. Foreign Office-Thompson, 18 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F15104/1565/40).

111. Ibid.

favour of the suggestion.<sup>112</sup> He thought that the Foreign Office should not be deterred by Thompson's plea for caution from issuing a statement on the lines which the French had proposed, since that was extremely inoffensive, and did not really amount to a warning at all. With regard to Thompson's suggestion to accord de facto recognition to the Provisional Government, he was doubtful. He said:

'We had already given Mr. Thompson authority to transact business with the new Siamese regime on a de facto basis. It is quite likely that, if the elections are held with some sort of democratic procedure, we shall be more or less obliged to grant de jure recognition afterwards. I can see little advantage in adopting any intermediate formula - such as an announcement recognising the de facto authority of the new government. This has admittedly been done in certain cases in the past (e.g. the Soviet Union in about 1923) but usually only when there was little likelihood of de jure recognition for a long indefinite period. In the present case, there is, I believe, on the contrary, quite a lot to be said for keeping quiet until the elections are actually held. As long as we do this they are likely to be on their best behaviour.

If we give them some form of recognition too easily their attitude may stiffen and they might even decide that there was no particular hurry about holding the elections.'<sup>113</sup>

Dening agreed but he was doubtful whether the Americans would accept the phraseology of the French statement,

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112. Minute by W.D. Allen, 22 November 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16085/1565/40).

113. Ibid.



because as a general rule they preferred not to be associated publicly in that way.<sup>114</sup> He also reminded them not to forget China, since the Chinese Ambassador had approached Thompson. Apart from consulting Thompson, Dening thought the Foreign Office should make their willingness to issue a statement in the form proposed by the French conditional upon agreement by the United States.

On November 28, Thompson was informed about the French proposal.<sup>115</sup> Thompson was told that the Foreign Office had no objection to making the statement provided that the United States was prepared to make a statement in identical terms. If the United States was unwilling, the Foreign Office would still be prepared, in a reply to a question in the House, to make a statement.

Thompson, in his reply, advised the Foreign Office to be careful not to create in Thailand some sort of resentful national feeling of the type that had considerably strengthened Franco in Spain. On the other hand, Thompson saw no objection to the Foreign Office's proposed statement in parliament, following the lines of the suggested French statement but omitting the phrase 'with a view to adopting a common attitude in this

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114. Minute by Dening, 25 November 1947, ibid.

115. Foreign Office-Thompson, 28 November 1947, FO 371/63911 (F16085/1565/40).

question'. Thompson argued:

'... I see no reason why we should publicly employ a formula that might prove embarrassing when the problem of recognition arises. I make this point because while the local situation today is no better and no worse than yesterday there is a feeling that if we get through the weekend without disaster then the position will start to improve. Nai Pridi's appeal for peace has been widely featured in the vernacular press and distributed in other ways and it is hoped that it may exert a considerable influence on the rank and file of 'Free Siamese' and if as a result the present regime settle themselves more firmly in the saddle, then I think, it may suit us, before too long an interval, to enter into unofficial relations with them - what the United States Ambassador calls 'de facto' recognition pending the elections or otherwise, in facing such outside support what is admittedly a good cabinet may grow utterly discouraged and disintegrate, leaving the way clear for Pibul and his fellow militarists to take over entirely'.116

### Proposed Mediation

While the question of a joint statement was considered, the Foreign Office received yet another suggestion for solving Thai political problems. This time it came from Pridi Banamyong, the Senior Statesman, and Prince Svasti.

Pridi Banamyong suggested that some form of

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116. Thompson-Foreign Office, 29 November, 1947, FO 371/63911 (F16085/1565/40).

mediation should take place between the old government and the new one as a step towards the bringing about of an agreement between them and the setting up of a coalition government led by a non-party premier.<sup>117</sup> He considered mediation should be effected through the Bangkok representatives of Britain, the United States and China, who would form a committee with a representative of each of the two Thai regimes to consider how the country could be governed democratically.

The proposal should be in the form of a memorandum addressed to Pibul and either Thamrong or himself. He believed that there was a fair chance of Pibul accepting it as he gathered from Thai broadcasts and from news of arrests that Luang Pibul and the 'usurper' government were nervous. There was a possibility of a counter-coup by the army or the navy because the appointments to various high position by Pibul of reserve officers which, he affirmed, would be unpopular with the officers on the active list. He also considered that delay in recognition of his government might put Pibul in a mood to compromise.

In support of his plan, Pridi argued that troubles in Thailand meant trouble for all Southeast Asia, and that if adverse effects on the supply of flour and rice were to

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117. Lord Killearn-Foreign Office, 3 December 1947, FO 371/63913 (F15973/1565/40).

be prevented, mediation should take place before the rice was harvested in January. As a result of mediation, he would visualise a dissolved Lower House awaiting re-election, an Upper House, of which the old members had resigned, awaiting a new nomination by the Legislative Assembly, and finally a return to normal conditions.

Prince Svasti's ideas coincided closely with those of Nai Pridi.<sup>118</sup> Prince Svasti felt that it was essential for the good of Thailand that Marshal Pibul and his military clique should be got rid of. If the present government could not stand on its own feet without the Marshal then its demise would be no bad thing and it should be replaced by a coalition government. In his view, the ideal man to head a coalition government would be Thawee Bunyaket,<sup>119</sup> whom he regarded as a 'thoroughly honest, non-party man and unique among Thailand's ex-cabinet ministers - he has no clique followers'. With Thawee at the top, he believed Thailand could really begin some cleaning up and make progress in the economic and social fields.

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118. Discussions between Prince Svasti and G.C. Whitteridge, 4 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16202/1565/40). See also Prince Svasti's letter to Mayhew, 5 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16233/1565/40).

119. Thawee Bunyaket was one of the civilian promoters of the coup of 24 June 1932. At different periods Thawee occupied the post of Secretary-General to the cabinet, Minister without portfolio, Minister of Education, Minister of Interior, Minister of Agriculture and Prime Minister. During the Second World War, he was one of the top leaders of the Free Thai Movement.

Whitteridge of the Foreign Office agreed that both Nai Pridi and Prince Svasti were probably right in thinking that only a push from outside would bring a solution.<sup>120</sup> The question was how might that be done.

He argued:

'Nai Pridi's ideas involve a crude form of interference by the United Kingdom, United States and China. The inclusion of the latter country is not calculated to improve the prospects of mediation, while the exclusion of France, though unavoidable if intervention is to have any chance of success, would annoy the French. A rather milder approach to the problem might be less objectionable and they could informally tell the Provisional Government that their countries cannot recognise Siam as long as Marshal Pibul remains in force. A word might also be dropped to the effect that we shall expect to see free elections held soon under the old constitution. This could be followed by similar intimations from the Chinese and French representatives'.<sup>121</sup>

However, before taking the matter further, Whitteridge suggested that they had to await Thompson's views on the matter. He believed the notion of a coalition government might appeal to him.

On December 4, Thompson expressed his views on the matter.<sup>122</sup> While personally favouring any step which might

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120. Minute by Whitteridge, 14 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16206/1565/40).

121. Ibid.

122. Thompson-Foreign Office, 4 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16030/1565/40)

lead to a detente in Thailand, Thompson was doubtful whether, as things were, there were any desire by either side of the political factions in Thailand to talk the matter over in the hope of achieving some compromise. On the one hand, there was the ex-Premier making great play with what he regarded as the legal strength of his present position; while, on the other hand, there was a group of men who were convinced that they had acted in the best interests of the country and that if left alone, they could bestow great benefits on the people. Neither one side nor the other seemed to appreciate the dangers of the hour, nor the fact that recent events had discredited Thailand in the outside world. The second fact which Thamrong certainly did not realise, argued Thompson, was that in foreign communities and among well-informed persons generally, there was no wish to seek to remove from office any of the late cabinet because of corruption and incompetence. 'Nai Pridi would do well to face up to this unpalatable truth', commented Thompson.<sup>123</sup>

Despite these considerations, Thompson did not rule out the possibility of mediation in some form and he himself considered that should any approach be made, it should be in the first instance to the head of the current Council of State, Prince Rangsit of Chainad, who as direct representative of the King ought to have a detached view

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123. Ibid.

and should play the part of a peace-maker. Unhappily, Thompson pointed out, Prince Rangsit was not a robust person and carried little or no weight politically. In consequence, however, he stood aside from the hustings and would thus be a channel through which to convey to other parties the friendly advice of foreign powers to compose their difficulties pending an appeal to the country.

Unexpectedly, on December 5, Thamrong met Thompson privately and told him that he was prepared to discuss a compromise with Khuang Aphaiwong and other members of his cabinet on condition that Pibul was eliminated from his present position as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.<sup>124</sup> In his reply, Thompson reminded Thamrong that while Khuang and his government were threatened with force they could not dispense with armed protection which only Pibul could extend to them. If, therefore, Thamrong insisted on the immediate dropping of Pibul before any talks could take place, then it would be useless to pursue the matter. On the other hand, he suggested if Thamrong were to give a written assurance that there would be no counter-action against the present regime for a specified period of time during which discussions might be arranged, there might be some hope of a detente which would strengthen the cabinet rather than Pibul and his military

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124. Thompson-Foreign Office, 4 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16072/1565/40).

clique.<sup>125</sup> In that event it would be possible to judge in a calmer atmosphere the value of repeated assurances by Nai Khuang that as soon as the situation permitted he would dispense with Pibul's service and support. Thompson told the Foreign Office that if Thamrong agreed to meet Khuang, he proposed to put the whole business in the hands of Prince Rangsit and leave it to him to follow up.

The Foreign Office, however advised Thompson to defer any action until the views of the United States Government were ascertained. 'I do not think we shall achieve anything useful, and we may well burn our fingers, by taking any initiative of the kind proposed unless the United States Government agree with line we adopt and are prepared to act similarly'.<sup>126</sup>

In his reply, Thompson stressed that it was greatly to British interests to help achieve detente and he trusted that the Foreign Office would not allow this fact to be obscured by the doubts and hesitations of the State Department.<sup>127</sup>

The Foreign Office agreed to permit certain

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125. Ibid.

126. Foreign Office-Thompson, 5 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16072/1565/40).

127. Thompson-Foreign Office, 8 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16159/1565/40).



measures if it was only to tell Prince Rangsit that Thamrong had intimated his willingness to have talks with Nai Khuang and his cabinet.<sup>128</sup> However, the Foreign Office was still doubtful as to whether Pibul would allow his enemies to get together with Khuang. Furthermore, it was still sceptical whether Khuang and his cabinet would remain in power if Pibul was able to rig the elections and impose the constitution, which would, on the face of it give him a very large measure of dictatorship. It stressed that the Foreign Office was reluctant to become in any way the sponsors of reconciliation if in the end a reconciliation should pave the way for Pibul to secure unchallenged authority. In that event 'we may find him less well disposed towards us and our friends and his present anxiety forces him to be'.

Thompson argued that while there was any threat of a counter coup it was impossible for the cabinet to dispense with Pibul.<sup>129</sup> Thompson thought Pibul would, in the absence of a successful counter-coup, remain to a greater or lesser degree a power behind the civil administration. He could see no reason why in the changing circumstances, Pibul should offend the Foreign powers, notably America and Britain, by reviving the narrow

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128. Foreign Office-Thompson, 9 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16159/1565/40).

129. Thompson-Foreign Office, 10 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16230/1565/40).

nationalist practices of pre-war years. He believed Khuang rather than Pibul might be the obstacle to a detente. Pibul, who was a close friend of Thamrong, might make a deal to save the country from disaster. As to whether Khuang would remain in power if Pibul rigged the elections, Thompson thought that in the confusion and uncertainty any guess about elections would be of the wildest nature.

He added:

'I think we can only deal with day to day developments. It has been my policy from the start to use any influence against disorder vigorously, for once disturbances begin no one could foresee how it would end in the city in which - as someone put it - no one can throw a stone without hitting a Chinaman. So far, this policy has been successful. But, as already stated, the danger remains. I am doing what I can do to ease matters, I am inspired by the anxiety to see civil administration strengthened to the point of being able to dispense with the protection of Pibul'.<sup>130</sup>

In the absence of reconciliation, he believed, the possibility of Pibul securing unchallenged authority over the present Cabinet could only grow into virtual certainty.

Meanwhile, on December 9, the State Department was informed of the circumstances in which the British Foreign Office had authorised Thompson to approach Prince Rangsit if requested to do so by Thamrong, to reveal Thamrong's

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130. Ibid.

willingness to negotiate with Khuang Aphaiwong.<sup>131</sup> At the same time the Foreign Office enquired about the Americans' attitude towards the present situation in Thailand and whether they thought that there was any further action which might jointly or separately be taken.

The Foreign Office pointed out to the State Department that its non-recognition policy towards the new regime was insufficient to remove Pibul from his present position.<sup>132</sup> Pibul, it thought, might ostensibly take a step backwards after the present government was firmly established, presumably after the elections, and yet remain in the background with the reins of power in his hands, much as Pridi did when he was Senior Statesman. With the powers which the new constitution would confer, he could exercise a virtual dictatorship and by then might be far less well disposed towards foreign powers than he ostensibly was at present.

The Foreign Office asserted that the British Government had no wish to interfere in the internal politics of Thailand, but on the other hand mere non-recognition might not suffice to avert the situation developing as outlined. A clear indication in advance that

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131. Foreign Office-Lord Inverchapel, 9 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16159/1565/40).

132. Ibid.

the four powers principally concerned would withhold recognition as long as Pibul remained either in his present position or at the head of the Army might contribute towards his removal. It might also serve a useful purpose for them to indicate their disapproval of the proposed Thai constitution. If the State Department considered it advisable they should also inform the French and the Chinese Governments of this proposal.

The State Department, however, was not attracted to the Foreign Office's suggestion to give a clear indication in advance that recognition would be withheld so long as Pibul remained in his present position. They also considered it would be inadvisable to express disapproval of the draft constitution neither did they wish to commit themselves to any public statement at that stage.<sup>133</sup> The State Department considered that Pibul was the real power in Thailand, and that, except for his removal by force, would be likely to remain in control. They pointed to the revival of his Tharmathipat Party and to the likelihood of the Party's success at the elections. They thought that Pibul might find it convenient to re-admit Thamrong, in which case the former dictator's position would be strengthened. Despite its estimate that Pibul was likely to become entrenched behind the present regime, the State

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133. Lord Inverchapel-Foreign Office, 10 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16232/1565/40).

Department did not think it would be wise to take positive action against him at the moment. They preferred to continue with the non-recognition policy in order to keep their freedom of action.

The State Department's attitude caused disappointment among the Foreign Office officials. A.M. Palliser, though considering the State Department's analysis of the situation as sound, felt doubtful whether their negative approach would have much effect other than to allow Pibul to strengthen his hand.<sup>134</sup> Whitteridge commented that the State Department's attitude was disappointingly negative: the chances of ousting Pibul without a push from outside were small.<sup>135</sup>

Thus, without the State Department's support, the Foreign Office had to abandon its plan to indicate in advance that they would not recognise the new regime unless Pibul retired from his present position.<sup>136</sup> Despite this setback, the Foreign Office was prepared to go ahead with its plan to make a unilateral statement in Parliament. On December 19, Ernest Bevin, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in his statement to Parliament, declared

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134. Minute by A.M. Palliser, 12 December 1947, ibid.

135. Minute by G.C. Whitteridge, 12 December 1947, ibid.

136. Foreign Office-Lord Inverchapel, 18 December 1947, FO 371/63914 (F16159/1565/40).

that:

'HMG, who are naturally anxious about any occurrence which might compromise the restoration of stability in Southeast Asia have been following with attention the political developments which have taken place in Siam as a result of the coup d'état of November 9. They are exchanging views and maintaining close contact with the other Governments concerned in regard to the question'.<sup>137</sup>

Meanwhile, in Bangkok, Thompson informed Prince Rangsit of the offer made by Thamrong to meet Khuang.<sup>138</sup> Prince Rangsit agreed to arrange the meeting. In the purely personal conversation that ensued Prince Rangsit described to Thompson how on the night of the coup d'état he had been forced practically at the point of a tommy gun to sign the new constitution 'to save the people from bloodshed'. He said that he would never trust Pibul who, like Pridi was very much at the mercy of certain extremely unscrupulous persons. He intimated that the longer the present Cabinet remained dependent upon Pibul for protection, the more difficult they would find it to shake him off.

Though Khuang said he was prepared to meet Thamrong, no such meeting was ever held.<sup>139</sup> Instead a

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137. Statement in Parliament by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 19 December 1947. FO 371/63914 (F16820/1565/40).

138. Thompson-Foreign Office, 18 December 1947, FO 371/63915 (F16588/1565/40).

139. Ibid.

meeting which was arranged by Admiral Sindhu, Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, was held between Thamrong and Pibul Songgram on December 29, 1947.<sup>140</sup> Pibul assured the ex-Premier that he had nothing to do with political matters, advising him, in this regard, to confer with Khuang. While the meeting was far from being cordial and was generally negative, Thompson commented that 'the mere fact that it took place is interesting, especially in the light of the ex-Premier's earlier statements that he would never talk to Pibul'.<sup>141</sup> The meeting also helped to lessen the growing tensions between the two factions.

#### Elections and question of recognition

It should be recalled that Thompson at various times had urged the Foreign Office to accord de facto recognition to the Khuang Government. His attitude understandably was that the new government appeared to be efficient and that basically speaking all that concerned Britain was that Thailand should be a stable force in Southeast Asia and should honour her obligations. This feeling was further strengthened by the numerous assurances given by the Khuang government and by Pibul himself that they would keep faithfully to all their international

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140. Thompson-Foreign Office, 31 December 1947, FO 371/63915 (F16991/1565/40).

141. Ibid.

obligations, that their only desire was to establish a firm and honest government in Thailand, and that Pibul himself would retire within ninety days.

On January 9, 1948 Thompson once again raised the question with the Foreign Office.<sup>142</sup> He argued that if the Khuang cabinet remained in office after the elections, the Foreign Office should establish official relations with the new Thai government without worrying too much about Pibul Songgram. He maintained that if they continued to withhold their support from the administration which he regarded as 'one of the most experienced, efficient and honest this country has seen for many years' their destruction could only be a matter of time. Once they fell apart through being treated as 'pariahs by the leading foreign powers, their replacement by the undesirable elements was a certainty'.<sup>143</sup>

He added:

'With a cabinet such as we enjoy here today, Pibul is not, in my opinion, a menace to foreign interests. But if these men give way to the ex-Dictator's pals then we can look out for squalls'.<sup>144</sup>

Thompson felt the Foreign Office should take into account

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142. Thompson-Foreign Office, 9 January 1948, FO371/69985 (F743/21/40).

143. Ibid.

144. Ibid.



such facts as the evident determination of the present de facto administration to do all they could to increase official rice exports and the meticulous way in which they had so far honoured the financial and other obligations of their predecessors. The huge payment in London on December 31 and January 1 of nearly £ 750,000 in tin ore compensation, for the Burmese railway and other claims, was eloquent testimony to their good faith. He also advised the Foreign Office to keep in step with the Americans.

Thompson's views were commented upon critically by A.M. Palliser at the Foreign Office. He could not help feeling that Thompson was mistaken in suggesting that if the present cabinet remained in office after the forthcoming elections, the British Government should recognise them without worrying too much about the influence, whether in or out of the Government machine, of Pibul. He argued:

'We should perhaps remember that when Pibul first came into power in 1933, he showed great skill in adapting outwardly democratic methods to achieve his ambitions. He might well do the same again. It is not only, nor even primarily, on moral grounds that we have to fear a return to power by Pibul. Our own practical interests, the furtherance of British commercial activity, the export of rice etc. would, I think, suffer from the unrest and disorder which any regime dominated by the military would ultimately produce.

Mr. Thompson says, the people we want to support are the new cabinet, who will be only too pleased if they could dispense

with the support of Pibul and his henchmen. If they remain in office after the elections, as they almost certainly will, recognition will be desirable but if we recognise while Pibul remains in his present position, he (and if not he certainly his more hotheaded supporters) will only interpret this, as acquiescence in his own position of authority, an interpretation which could only encourage him to ever increasing interference in Thai politics'.145

Palliser also disagreed with Thompson's suggestion that they should keep in step with the Americans. He argued:

'I think we must make determined efforts to carry them with us and perhaps also the French and make it clear on behalf of all of us that we are not prepared to have any dealings with a Siamese administration in which Pibul holds any official position. We consider that he must fully implement his original promise at the time of the coup d'état to retire once more into private life. Obviously, even if this succeeded in bringing about Pibul's retirement, he would continue to exercise influence behind the scenes as Nai Pridi has been doing since the end of the war. But he will at least tread carefully and will have a clear indication that as far as we are concerned he is persona non grata'.146

The State Department, he stressed, had been disappointingly negative so far and they might not be able to carry the Americans with them in that policy. Palliser hoped the Foreign Office could persuade the Americans to be in line with the British policy. 'If we cannot, I am afraid we

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145. Minute by A.M. Palliser, 13 January 1948, FO 371/69985 (F735/21/40).

146. Ibid.

shall in any case have to do as Mr. Thompson suggests and recognise after the elections, provided nothing unforeseen occurs before then'.<sup>147</sup>

The matter was brought to the attention of Drumright of the United States Embassy in London by P.F. Grey.<sup>148</sup> P.F. Grey asked the latter whether any further consultation between their two governments was required as regards policy towards Thailand. One possibility, Grey suggested, was that both the United States and the British Governments should inform the Khuang Government, if possible in conjunction with the French, that there would be no question of recognition as long as the Marshal remained in power. This idea, he understood, did not at present commend itself to the American Government. Drumright agreed and said that he thought that the joint attitude which they held had been made clear already, and that any formal action might place them in difficulties later if Pibul remained in power. Grey said he understood his point but he warned that the British Government did not want another Franco situation on their hands, and at that moment the Marshal's position seemed to be strengthening not so much because he was popular as because he was indispensable. Both Drumright and Grey agreed that for the moment no further action seemed possible. They ought to

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147. Ibid.

148. Ibid.

hold the position until the elections and what to do then must depend upon the situation which emerged thereafter.

### Elections

Elections were held on January 29, 1948 as promised.<sup>149</sup> Khuang's Democrat Party gained a considerable majority in the elections.<sup>150</sup> The Tharmatipat Party, which was actively supported by the army and heavily financed by wealthy followers who expected the military to make a comeback, had lost.<sup>151</sup> The other contenders in the election were the Prachachon Party, which had formerly been a faction within the Democrat Party, and the Independents which included some of Pridi's more innocuous followers who had not been arrested or forced into hiding.

Khuang's overwhelming success in the elections encouraged the Foreign Office to recommend recognition of the Thai Government if the former and his cabinet remained in power. In his minute to Ernest Bevin, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Denning advised him to tell the Americans and the French, and subsequently the Chinese, that Britain would be in favour of recognising the new

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149. Thompson-Foreign Office, 2 February 1948, FO 371/69986 (F1719/21/40).

150. Thompson-Foreign Office, 4 February 1948, FO 371/69986 (F1927/21/40).

151. Frank C. Darling, op. cit., p. 63.

government when it was established on February 19, 1948, provided that 'Nai Khuang remains in power with the bulk of his present cabinet, or that at any rate a government of similar complexion is maintained in office'.<sup>152</sup> The British government, he added, might consult with the United States and French Governments as to the desirability of enquiring informally what the position of Pibul was to be when the new government was formed, as a hint that they still regarded him with some suspicion. 'But whether this is agreed to or not, I doubt if it would be in our interests to delay recognition'.<sup>153</sup>

Bevin agreed. Subsequently, on February 13, the State Department was informed about the Foreign Office's tentative views. The Foreign Office argued that:

'It seems to us that it is in the interests of our respective Governments to have friendly relations with Siam, which are likely to be jeopardised if we persist indefinitely in a policy of non-recognition. If, on the other hand, we recognise the new government, we shall still be in a position to exercise pressure through the normal diplomatic channel if they should act in a manner inconsistent with their obligations, whereas at present our absence of official contacts renders this more difficult. There does not for the time being seem any justification for the belief that, following upon recognition, the new government will adopt policies

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152. Minute by Dening to Ernest Bevin, 11 February 1948, FO 371/69986 (F2414/21/40).

153. Ibid.

unfriendly towards our respective governments'.154

On the position of Pibul, the Foreign Office confessed that:

'while we are reluctant to see Luang Pibul remaining in a position of power, it is difficult to see what we can do about it, since in theory, at any rate, he will, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, be a servant of the Government and not in political office. Though he will no doubt continue to pull the strings just as Nai Pridi did when he was Senior Statesman, it may be difficult for us to prove this or to state it categorically as a reason for non-recognition. Before the war Luang Pibul had the backing of Germany, Italy and Japan which is no longer available to him. Our information is that he recognises today that he took the wrong side and is anxious to please. Without his former backing he can in any case hardly advocate policies which would be likely to arouse the united opposition of the principal foreign powers. Be that as it may, one method of indicating our continued suspicion of his activities might be to make enquiry in Bangkok as to his intentions once the new Government is set up.

But we doubt whether our distrust of Luang Pibul will justify us in turning our faces from the new Government when it assumes office if in fact it is of the same complexion as the present Provisional Government under Nai Khuang. It seems to us that it is in the interests of our respective Governments to have friendly relations with Siam, which are likely to be jeopardised if we persist indefinitely in a policy of non-recognition. If, on the other hand, we recognise the new Government, we shall still be in a position to exercise pressure through the normal diplomatic channel if they should act in a manner

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154. Foreign Office-Lord Inverchapel, 13 February 1948, FO 371/69986 (F2424/21/40).

inconsistent with their obligations, whereas at present our absence of official contacts renders this more difficult. There does not for the time being seem any justification for the belief that, following upon recognition, the new Government will adopt policies unfriendly towards our respective Governments.

Quite what the procedure will be when the new Government takes office is not yet clear. But assuming that it notifies foreign missions in Bangkok of its assumption of office, we presume that formal acknowledgement by these missions would be regarded as constituting recognition'.<sup>155</sup>

On February 19, the United States Embassy in London informed the Foreign Office that their soundings with the French and Chinese Governments revealed agreement that the powers concerned should recognise the new Government, provided that Khuang was appointed Prime Minister. However, if the Prime Minister was any other than Khuang further consultations should take place. The United States Government accordingly suggested that the representatives of the principal powers should consult together at Bangkok and should forward to their respective Government an agreed recommendation as regards the appropriate time and manner of recognition. The United States Government agreed that recognition should be given by means of a reply to notes from the new Government to the representatives of the principal powers in Bangkok.<sup>156</sup>

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155. Ibid.

156. Minute by Dening, 19 February 1948, ibid.

Thompson was duly informed about the Anglo-American decision to recognize the new regime in Thailand. He was asked to concert action with his colleagues as proposed.<sup>157</sup>

On February 21 Khuang Aphaiwong was asked by the President of the Supreme State Council, Prince Rangsit, to form a cabinet.<sup>158</sup> The Democrat leader was hesitant at first to accept the offer since he had no desire to serve as a puppet for the military. However, after getting assurances from Pibul that the military would not interfere in politics, Khuang finally agreed to form a cabinet.<sup>159</sup> The Assembly met towards the end of February. Khuang's cabinet received an overwhelming vote of confidence in both houses of Parliament, and within thirty-six hours it obtained the long awaited recognition by Britain and the United States.

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157. Foreign Office-Thompson, 14 February 1948, FO  
371/69989 (F2414/2/40).
158. Thompson-Foreign Office, 23 February 1948, FO  
371/69988 (F3434/21/40).
159. Thompson-Foreign Office, 25 February 1948, FO  
371/69987 (F3023/21/40).



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SECOND PIBUL PREMIERSHIP AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE MILITARY RULE

THE elections, which duly took place in the latter part of January 1948, resulted in a comfortable majority for Nai Khuang Aphaiwong and his cabinet. In February the new Assembly met and by early March the cabinet secured a vote of confidence. The door was thus opened for the recognition of the new Government by the Powers. This was duly granted on 6 March 1948, when Britain, the United States and various other countries resumed official relations with Thailand after a break which had lasted since the previous 9 November 1947, when the Thamrong Administration had been violently overthrown.

The establishment of normal intercourse between Thailand and outside world did not strengthen the position of Khuang Cabinet to the extent that had been anticipated. Their illegal assumption of office in the first instance in the wake of the military had placed them squarely in the power of the latter, upon whom, anyway, the Prime Minister and his colleagues depended entirely for protection and support against their political opponents. It was therefore reasonable to suppose that once the soldiers tired of their protégé's continued control of affairs, Khuang would find it hard to resist a demand that he should go.

On the morning of April 6, Chakri day, four subordinate members of the November coup d'état clique, headed by Lt. Col. Khun Chamnong Phumiwet, appeared at the residence of Premier Khuang Aphaiwong and presented an ultimatum that he and his Cabinet must resign within twenty-four hours.<sup>1</sup> They stated that the Coup Group had passed a resolution in a recent meeting to this effect. They stated also that the Coup Group was dissatisfied with his government's inability to solve pressing needs - the Chinese question, the Communist menace and the high cost of living.<sup>2</sup>

The refusal of the Coup Group to play a minor role in the government was one of the main reasons that prompted them to take such action. The poor showing of Pibul's Tharmathipat Party in the January 1948 elections had been a major insult to the military leaders and invalidated their claim that they had acted on behalf of the people in staging the November 1947 coup. Also, they were becoming more frustrated as the Democrat Party took over the Senate, the Supreme State Council, the Cabinet, the House of representatives and finally the Constituent Assembly. If they chose to abide by the provisional Constitution and the results of the latest elections, they saw themselves out of

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1. Frank C. Darling, Thailand and the United States, Public Affairs Press, Washington D.C., 1965. p. 63.

2. Liberty, 8 April 1948.

power for at least another four years. If a Permanent Constitution were drafted by the Democrat Party they would continue to play only a minor role in the government.<sup>3</sup> The Military leaders finally decided to increase their political power.

Khuang immediately called together all Cabinet Ministers that could be contacted and it was decided that a letter should be drafted to Colonel Chamnong requesting confirmation of the demand from more responsible leaders such as the Field Marshal Pibul Songgram, General Phin and General Kach Songkhram. The letter was delivered to Col. Chamnong, who was eventually found in conference with the above three men at Pibul's residence. At two o'clock in the afternoon, Generals Phin and Kach went to Khuang's residence and confirmed the demand.<sup>4</sup>

Khuang then summoned the Air Force and Navy Commanders for advice as to whether he should acquiesce to the demands made by the November Coup Group. The Air Force Commander at five o'clock in the afternoon informed him that he had better give in as military resistance would be impossible. The Commander-in-Chief of the Navy appeared at Khuang's residence about eleven o'clock in the evening to inform him that the Navy was in no position to offer

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3. The Bangkok Post, 10 April 1948.

4. Frank C. Darling, op. cit. p. 64.

resistance either. During the course of a Cabinet meeting called that evening a minority were in favour of arresting the officers for sedition, but in accordance with the majority, it was decided to resign and a letter of resignation was drafted to the Supreme Council of State giving the details of the military demand. During the evening of April 6 the military units in the city were alerted and it was reported that field telephones were strung throughout the city.

On the morning of April 7, Khuang was summoned by the Council of State, where apparently his resignation was turned down, at least until such time as consultations could be had with the Field Marshal.<sup>5</sup> Pibul appeared shortly before noon, accompanied by General Kach. When questioned by Prince Rangsit as to the events of the previous day and his position, Pibul protested that he was not informed of the acts of the November coup d'état leaders, but, feeling apparently that the time had come for him to accept the premiership if it were offered, he proceeded to outline the problems that were facing the country. When Prince Rangsit suggested that, as Pibul occupied an important post in the Army, someone else should be selected to be Premier, Luang Pibul spoke up stating emphatically that the military group would accept no one else as Prime Minister.

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5. Liberty, 8 April 1948.

While Khuang was attending the ordinary Senate session at two o'clock in the afternoon a note from the Council reportedly turning down his resignation, reached him, but also calling him to another appearance at four o'clock in the afternoon. According to Khuang's Secretary, the Premier's resignation was accepted only after his insistence that the alternative might be another coup d'état, which would only cause more trouble for the Thai Government. In any event he wished to clarify the issue of military interference once and for all. At seven o'clock that evening Khuang gave a press interview and handed out copies of his resignation letter dated April 6.<sup>6</sup>

On the morning of April 8, the Council received Khuang and his outgoing Cabinet in audience, formally accepting their resignation.<sup>7</sup> At noon a letter was dispatched from the Council of State to Pibul asking the latter to accept the Premiership. Throughout the day various members of Khuang's outgoing cabinet were approached by emissaries of Pibul to ask them to continue in office, but most of them refused. On the evening of the third day the radio announced Khuang's resignation without mentioning the appointment of Pibul as Premier. This was explained later as due to the fact that he was not yet certain that he should accept. The appointment of Pibul as

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6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

Premier thus marked the return of military rule in Thailand.

In response to the event, the Commander-in-Chief of the Thai Navy, Admiral Sindhu summoned the British and American Military Attachés and informed them secretly that he and General Adul were working together to overthrow Pibul. Their aim was to instal General Adul as the head of the Coalition Government, including Thamrong, Seni Pramoj, Phya Srivisar and others. They would not act without some support from Army and Police. Admiral Sindhu said that the nominations to the new Pibul Government were very disturbing and Adul would urge the Regency Council not to accept them. If Pibul went ahead even though he received a vote of no confidence from the Assembly, Admiral Sindhu thought that Adul would urge the Regency Council to resign. If this resignation took place, Sindhu stated that the King would abdicate.

Admiral Sindhu was anxious to know for certain that Britain and America would not recognise the Pibul Government. In reply, the British Naval Attaché replied that the British Government's recognition would not be automatic and that in recognising the Khuang government the British as well as the American Governments had taken into consideration the facts that it was composed of prudent men and that the Marshal had promised to remain Head of the Army and not to become Premier.

On the next day, April 14, the British Naval Attaché conferred with Admiral Thamrong, the ex-Premier. The latter told the British Attaché that he viewed Pibul's 'little coup' with distrust and dismay.<sup>8</sup> He described the Marshal as an ambitious scourge who had used Khuang as a puppet. He thought Khuang was either a coward or in collaboration with Pibul. He believed that as Pibul had money, arms and men, he would probably remain in power for not less than a year; a vote of no confidence in the Assembly and non-recognition by the foreign powers would have no effect on him. Thamrong said that he himself could not see his way to joining a coalition government. The Navy had refused to help him when he was thrown out and they would not expect him to help them now.

Meanwhile, the formation of a new Government under Pibul had once again brought the question of recognition to the front. Foreign representatives in Bangkok were against giving automatic recognition to Pibul government.<sup>9</sup> Stanton, the US Ambassador in Bangkok told the State Department that he could not conscientiously recommend immediate recognition of a Pibul government because of statements made by the United States in the past about democracy and constitutionalism and also because he thought such

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8. Whittington-Foreign Office, 6 April 1948, FO 371/69990 (F5101/21/40).

9. Whittington-Foreign Office, 9 April 1948, FO 371/69990 (F5253/21/40).

recognition would be a nasty shock to more responsible opinion in Bangkok.<sup>10</sup> He suggested that the non-recognition procedure adopted last November should be adopted. The previous and any Pibul administration should be judged on its merits with reference to its fulfilment of Thailand's international obligations. Meanwhile, the Western Powers might issue a joint statement to the effect that 'the situation was being carefully watched' as proposed earlier by the French.

Whittington, the British Counsellor in Bangkok, was of the same opinion. He thought that if Pibul got a vote of confidence in the Assembly, automatic recognition by the Western powers would show a cynical disregard of what they had said publicly about the Marshal and of the considerations upon which they had based their recognition of Khuang's administration.<sup>11</sup> 'On the other hand', he reminded the Foreign Office, 'the paramount importance must be the procurement of rice from Siam and we must avoid spoiling the excellent results which are now being obtained. Also, I submit that we must face the fact that this country is looking for a strong man and that Pibul is obviously one in the eyes of the majority'.<sup>12</sup> He agreed

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10. Ibid.

11. Whittington-Foreign Office, 9 April 1948, FO 371/69990 (F5253/21/40).

12. Ibid.



with Stanton that the non-recognition procedure of last November should be adopted. The degree and timing of recognition would depend on the persons included in the Government.

The Foreign Office however was still undecided on the best course they should adopt towards the new Government until they had consulted the Americans and other interested Powers.<sup>13</sup> In the meantime, the Foreign Office advised Whittington not to acknowledge any official notification of the formation of a new government.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, Lord Inverchapel, the British Ambassador in Washington, and also British representatives in Nanking and Paris, were instructed to consult with their respective host Governments on their view of the best course to be taken towards the new Thai Government.<sup>15</sup> The Foreign Office argued that assuming Pibul obtained his vote of confidence it might prove difficult for the Powers to find legal grounds for refusing recognition of his Government. Although they knew that the resignation of the Khuang Government and the various steps which had followed had been induced by military threats, the process had

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13. Foreign Office-Whittington, 10 April 1948, FO 371/69990 (F5249/21/40).

14. Ibid.

15. Foreign Office-Lord Inverchapel, 13 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F5435/21/40).

followed formally constitutional lines and thus differed from the coup d'état which had brought the previous government into power. The situation was disturbing because, whether or not they desired to accord recognition to the new Government, it seemed likely that whereas the Khuang Government, whatever its antecedents, was composed chiefly of men of capability and integrity, apart from the point of view that it was a far better government than its predecessors, it seemed that the future government would be composed purely of Pibul's creatures, who might well prove incompetent in public affairs.

The British Government's view was that much as they disliked the prospect of Pibul's return to power, there was little prospect of taking effective action to prevent it. The export of rice was vital to the needs of the whole of Southeast Asia and they would not contemplate any coercive action, as suggested by the French earlier, which might entail the risk of curtailing or stopping the rice flow.

They felt that no useful purpose would be served by withholding recognition indefinitely. In the event of formal recognition of the new government being decided upon, they considered that they should certainly demand, as they did from the Khuang Government, categorical undertakings regarding the continued observance of Thailand's international obligations.

On April 15, Lord Inverchapel discussed the issue with State Department officials.<sup>16</sup> The State Department's Legal Advisers were of the opinion that, since the proceedings in Thailand had been on formal constitutional lines, it would require a positive act to break off relations with the successor governments. Assuming Pibul obtained a vote of confidence, the State Department were anxious to 'duck' the non-recognition issue, despite the advice of Stanton to the contrary. Instructions had been given to the United States Ambassador in Bangkok to acknowledge receipt of the communication if he received notification of the formation of the new government.

Lord Inverchapel reported that the State Department had given the above guidance to Stanton because the latter preferred a period of non-recognition. Stanton had been told not to demand categorical undertakings regarding the continued observance of Thailand's obligations. In lieu of that, the State Department proposed to arrange for an official statement to the press to the effect that the United States Government would watch carefully the manner in which Thailand observed her international obligations and the way in which she treated United States nationals. A hint might also be given that consideration of the disposition of former assets would be

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16. Lord Inverchapel-Foreign Office, 15 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F5589/21/40).

suspended. The State Department pointed out that if they adopted a non-recognition policy they might easily find that the Soviet Government was the only important power in formal relations with Thailand. In view of the activities of Communists in Burma, Indonesia and elsewhere, the United States Government would consider the situation created by non-recognition unnecessarily hazardous.

In his discussion with Dickson, of the United States Embassy in London, Grey pointed out that the State Department seemed to have some notion, which appeared to him unworkable, that they could continue 'formal' relations with the new Thai Government without raising the question of recognition.<sup>17</sup> Grey thought that the new government would be almost sure to raise the question of recognition themselves, either by a note stating that they had assumed office or by replies from the Embassies in Bangkok to ordinary notes on current business. Grey hoped Dickson would seek clarification from the State Department on these matters.

On the same day, Ashley-Clarke, the British Ambassador in Paris, reported to the Foreign Office the result of his discussion with M. Baeyens, the Director of the Asiatic Department of the French Foreign Ministry, on

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17. Discussions between P.F. Grey and Dickson of the United States Embassy in London, 14 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F5986/21/40).

the issue of recognition.<sup>18</sup> M.Baeyens considered that if Pibul obtained a constitutional vote of confidence there was nothing much that they could do except, as suggested by the Foreign Office, to secure appropriate assurances regarding Thai international obligations. But if Pibul did not get his vote of confidence he might either acquiesce in his political setback or force his way by unconstitutional means. In the latter event the French Government would be in favour of the strongest possible action with the object of getting Pibul out. The French Government would be ready to associate themselves with any action the British Government were prepared to take. The measures which they thought might have the most effect lay in their own power rather than in the Thais', for example, cutting off oil supplies, refusal of loans and other measures. However, M.Baeyens said his Government would be quite ready to study such measures as the withdrawal of Embassies and the closure of the Indochina frontier. But he was against making any public statement at that stage which might later force them to disavow the position adopted. He recalled that the statement which the French had thought desirable on the last occasion failed in its effect because the United States did not cooperate and also because it had received little publicity. He suggested that they should await the outcome of the vote in the Thai Assembly and

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18. Paris-Foreign Office, 15 April 1948, FO 371/69991 F5551/21/40).

reconsider the matter in the light of whatever emerged.

The Chinese Government, on the other hand, felt that there was no alternative but to accept Pibul's Government despite their dislike of him.<sup>19</sup> This policy was dictated by several considerations, namely, rice supplies, the Communist threat in Thailand and Southeast Asia and the presence of the large number of Chinese residents in Thailand. Meanwhile the Chinese Chargé d'Affaires in Bangkok had been instructed to acknowledge any official notification from Pibul Government.

In Washington, on April 21, Hubert Graves, Counsellor of the British Embassy, discussed with the State Department officials the need for concerted action over the recognition issue.<sup>20</sup> Despite his efforts, the State Department still preferred to instruct its Ambassador in Bangkok to acknowledge receipt of any notification of the forming of the Pibul Government if that Government should receive a Parliamentary vote of confidence. At the same time, he was also instructed to put in his letter to Pibul the substance of the proposed press statement plus a request for a categorical affirmation of the Thai Government's willingness to assume Thailand's international

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19. Nanking-Foreign Office, 17 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F5599/21/40).

20. Lord Inverchapel-Foreign Office, 21 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F5918/21/40).

obligations and other commitments. Graves remarked that the British position differed from this only in that it wished to loiter somewhat in acknowledging the notification and that it desired to secure the categorical affirmation of responsibility of international obligations before resuming formal relations.

Meanwhile, in Bangkok, Pibul and his cabinet formally took office on April 16, after presenting a brief and generalized statement of policy to Parliament. On April 21, Pibul received his vote of confidence from the Assembly.<sup>21</sup> Abstentions were heavy and reflected concern felt over the manner in which Khuang was ousted and the interference in government affairs by the military.

The British Foreign Secretary responded by announcing in the Parliament that the British Government would adopt a 'wait and see' policy on the question of whether the new government would adhere to treaty obligations and other commitments.<sup>22</sup> The United States Government also issued a statement in the press on April 23 indicating that they would watch carefully the manner in which Thailand's international and other obligations were carried out and how American citizens and their interests

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21. Whittington-Foreign Office, 21 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F5918/21/40).

22. Foreign Office-Lord Inverchapel, 22 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F5918/21/40).

in Thailand were treated.<sup>23</sup>

With the official establishment of the Pibul Government, the Foreign Office thought that there was a need for all principal Powers to concert on how that recognition should be accorded. On April 22, the British Ambassador in Washington was again requested to approach the State Department on the matter.<sup>24</sup> At the same time British Ambassadors in Paris and Nanking were asked to approach the French and Nationalist Chinese Governments. Since the Pibul Government had received a vote of confidence in the Assembly, the Foreign Office was of the opinion that they should accord both de facto and de jure recognition to it. Such recognition would take the form of acknowledgement of the note which had been received from the Thai Foreign Minister announcing his Government's assumption of office. This acknowledgement should be purely formal in tone. Before according such recognition, categorical and written assurances should be received from the Thais to the effect that Thailand would continue to observe her international and other obligations. Such assurances could best be obtained by the dropping of an informal hint to the Thai Foreign Minister that they should expect to receive them.

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23. Lord Inverchapel-Foreign Office, 21 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F5918/21/40).

24. Foreign Office-Lord Inverchapel, 22 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F5918/21/40).



The State Department agreed to synchronise its action with the Foreign Office and was preparing to instruct its Ambassador to that effect.<sup>25</sup> It was the same with the French Government.

On April 24, the Foreign Office agreed to Whittington's suggestions that they should accord recognition to the Pibul Government, if possible first obtaining written assurances.<sup>26</sup> If not, the Foreign Office considered that the assurances given by Pibul in the Assembly at the time that he obtained his vote of confidence were adequate. Accordingly, Whittington was instructed, if possible in conjunction with his United States and Chinese colleagues, formally to acknowledge receipt of the communication from the Thai Foreign Minister.<sup>27</sup>

On April 30, Whittington, in conjunction with the United States Ambassador, acknowledged receipt of the Thai Foreign Minister's communication of April 16 and thus

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25. Lord Inverchapel-Foreign Office, 22 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F5919/2/40).

26. Foreign Office-Whittington, 24 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F5677/21/40).

27. Ibid.

formally accorded recognition to the Pibul Government.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, by the twist of events, Pibul Songgram, whom the Western press labelled as a 'Japanese-sponsored quisling' became Prime Minister of Thailand. The British press, *The Times*, were soon hailing the new Prime Minister as 'the strong man of Siam'. It commented :

'His return to power seems to have been generally accepted by the Siamese people. They believe that a strong man is needed to cope with the economic difficulties which afflict them, and they have never shared the view of the allies that he was to be blamed for his efforts to promote the country's interests during the war. The change of government is a real blow to the growth of democracy in Siam, but it is unlikely to affect Siamese relations with other countries. The Marshal is a firm supporter of Anglo-Siamese friendship: and those who know him best claim that at any rate he would not have collaborated with the Japanese during the war if the allies had been able to give him the support he wanted to safeguard the neutrality of his country'.<sup>29</sup>

### The Consolidation of Military Rule

Field Marshal Pibul Songgram, after the militarists restored him to office in April 1948, at no

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28. The British Embassy in Bangkok received note from the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs on April 16, 1948. Foreign Office-Whittington, 28 April 1948, FO371/69991 (F5677/21/40); Whittington-Foreign Office, 30 April 1948, FO 371/69991 (F6739/21/40).

29. The Times, 1 May 1948.

time enjoyed the plenitude of power which had characterised his position in the years following 1938. Political power remained in the hands of influential army and police officers. To maintain his position, Pibul was obliged to use political methods such as compromise rather than direct force. In addition to that, throughout the years until 1951, his regime was constantly challenged from various groups to oust the 1947 Coup Group from power.

The Free Thais, the obvious centre of opposition to his regime, rapidly disintegrated after their only strong leader, Pridi Banamyong, had gone into exile in November 1947. The arrest of the Free Thai key leaders such as ThongPlaeo, Thong In, Thawin Udom and Tiang Srikhand, however, weakened their movement.<sup>30</sup> There were other potential elements of opposition as well. But these proved to be ineffective, mainly because their aspirations were local and particular. The first of these parochical opposition forces that had to be faced was the Malays of Southern Thailand.<sup>31</sup> The return of Pibul to power in April 1948 sparked off rebellion in Dusun Nyiur in Narathiwat province. The rebellion was repressed without difficulty.

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30. Thak Chaloemtiarana, Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism, Social Science Association of Thailand, Thai Khadi Institute, Thammasat University, Bangkok, 1979, p. 46.

31. For a detailed discussion on the Malay unrest in South Thailand, see Chapters Four and Five of this thesis.

Another potential challenge to Pibul regime came from a group of disgruntled officers from the Army General Staff. In September 1948, a plot against Pibul and the Coup Group was formulated. General Net Kemayothin, Army Chief of Staff, with the support of the pro-Pridi group within the Army was the leader of the conspiracy.<sup>32</sup> The main causes of this plot derived from the Army General Staff. They regarded the interference of certain coup leaders in their military careers as a threat. According to Net and his friends' opinions, this kind of interference would 'drive out capable persons and demoralize others...(and it might) easily lead to lowering of military standards'.<sup>33</sup> The alleged plan was to arrest Pibul and other government officials, as well as leading Army officers during the wedding reception of Lt. General Sarit Thanarat. This plot was uncovered before its leaders had an opportunity to act. It involved some sixty officers, many serving on the Army General staff. These professional army officers received only light sentences or suffered a forced retirement from active military service. The leaders of the Coup Group, however, used this incident as an opportunity to purge the army of disloyal followers and to assure its undivided support of the Pibul Government.

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32. Thak, op. cit., p. 41.

33. Jayanta K. Ray, Portraits of Thai Politics, Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi, 1972, p. 123.

## The February Disturbances

The most serious challenge to Pibul's regime occurred on February 26, 1949 when Pridi Banamyong stole back into the country, and with the support of the Navy and some of his Free Thai followers attempted to overthrow the Government.<sup>34</sup> While the army and the navy were conducting their military manoeuvres, Pridi and his supporters captured Thammasat University and used it as their headquarters. Another group broke into the Radio Thailand, and announced over the air that Pibul, Phao and Kach had been relieved of all duties. Direck Jayanama, former Foreign Minister, was appointed as Prime minister while Admiral Luang Sindhu, the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy was to become the Supreme military Commander. Rear-Admiral Thahan was to assume the position of Minister of Defence.<sup>35</sup>

After three days of fighting and several hundred casualties, the insurrection was easily crushed by the loyal army forces under General Sarit and General Phao. Pridi fled into exile in China.

Simultaneously, the Chinese Communists' victory

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34. 'Siamese Affairs: Political and Military' in Military Attaché, Bangkok-Director of Intelligence, 28 February 1949, FO 371/76282.

35. Ibid.

over the Nationalists in China intensified Thai leaders' fear of the Chinese. Pibul did not fail to exploit the occurrence to gain sympathy from the Western powers. Pibul alleged that Pridi was making some kind of bargain with the Chinese Communists and that the Free Thais could not be distinguished any more from the former.<sup>36</sup> He warned that the Communists, allied with Pridi and his Free Thais, would cause 'great trouble' for Thailand.

Thompson seemed to be influenced by Pibul's rhetoric. In his telegram to the Foreign Office, Thompson recommended that the British, in collaboration with the Americans, should strengthen the hand of Pibul Administration in their resistance to the forces of disorder.<sup>37</sup> He believed that the return of Free Thais to office would be disadvantageous to the British interests. 'Not only have those people displayed a deplorable degree of irresponsibility, but it is certain that once in power they will have to rely to a large extent on Left-Wing and Chinese help'.<sup>38</sup>

The Foreign Office, however, did not swallow the whole of Pibul's argument about the complicity between the

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36. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 179, 7 March 1949, C0537/54462/3.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

Free Thais and the Chinese Communists. In its telegram to Thompson on March 14, the Foreign Office indicated that it might be possible that Pibul for his own ends was exaggerating the closeness in links between the Free Thais, especially their sympathisers in the Navy and the Chinese Communists.<sup>39</sup> However they should avoid any action which could be misconstrued as taking sides in their internal affairs.

Meanwhile, the Thai police under General Phao began to take strong measures against the plotters of February. Some former cabinet members and assembly members associated with Pridi were shot while in Police custody, and many others were held in prison. The Foreign Office was concerned at the strongarm measures taken by the Pibul Administration against Pridi's followers. On April 14, 1949, R. H. Scott wrote to Thompson expressing his concern as to how far Pibul was exaggerating the local Communist threat to enlist British aid and at the same time to get his own back on his political opponents by denouncing them as Communists or Communist-inspired.<sup>40</sup> He agreed that the Chinese Communists in Thailand were ready to cash in on the recent revolt and possibly to assist Pridi taking Pibul's place if, in fact, Pridi was ready to play their game.

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39. Foreign Office-Bangkok, No. 131, 14 March 1949, FO 371/76782 (F3550/1019/40).

40. R.H. Scott-Thompson, 14 April 1949, FO 371/76282, ibid.

Whatever Pridi's association with the Communists might be or might not be, Pibul was apparently taking advantage of the present anti-Communist feeling among the Western powers to brand all his opponents Communist and hoping that too much notice would not be taken off his punitive measures against the four prominent Thais who were 'shot while attempting to escape'.

While agreeing that Pibul should make the most of any factor in the February trouble to bring him support at home and abroad, Thompson, however, did not believe that Pibul was merely exploiting a Communist bogey for his own selfish purposes.<sup>41</sup> Thompson pointed out that 'the Communist danger here was a real one. It springs not from the Siamese themselves but from the large Chinese minority; and as the cause of Chinese Communism succeeds in China itself, it is becoming increasingly indistinguishable from the cause of Chinese nationalism in Southeast Asia'. In their dealing with Pibul, the British should not allow themselves to be unduly prejudiced by their memories of the thirties or by resentment over his role in the war. They should concentrate on the present and future and whether he could or could not be trusted to work with, rather than against British.

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41. Thompson-R.H. Scott, 16 April 1949, FO 371/76282 (F6416/1019/40).



Regarding the question of Pibul's treatment of his political opponents, Thompson contended that it was hard to say to what extent Pibul could be accused of the liquidation of Thongplaeo and the other three Thai politicians. He pointed out that General Phao, and not Pibul, was responsible for the killings of the four Free Thai members.

### The Manhattan Rebellion

Another serious threat to Pibul occurred in June 1951, when the navy made a desperate effort to challenge the army's political power. On June 29, 1951 while Pibul was presiding over the ceremony transferring the Manhattan's ownership to the Thai Government, a group of navy men kidnapped Pibul and held him hostage on board a warship H.M.S Ayuthaya. Despite some hours of negotiations between the rebels and the government, the two sides were unable to reach an agreement. The leaders of the naval rebellion demanded the resignation of Pibul's cabinet.<sup>42</sup> The Government demanded the kidnappers release the Prime Minister before midnight on June 29. Otherwise the government forces would crush the rebels. The kidnappers remained adamant. At dawn on June 30, 1951, an air force plane bombed the flagship, sinking it. Pibul escaped by

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42. Whittington-Morrison, 10 July 1951, FO 371/92950 (F1015/5).

jumping overboard and swimming to shore. Pibul blamed the Communists for inciting the naval rebellion. However, Whittington reported to the Foreign Office that there was no evidence indicating Communist involvement in the naval rebellion, though increasing activity among the local Communists at this period was apparent. Steps were at once taken to destroy the navy both as a fighting arm and as a political force. Senior officers were replaced by men acceptable to the army and police, the naval air-arm was suppressed. The marines were reduced to one battalion, and all ships were transferred to the base at Sattahip, comfortably remote from the capital. The aim of the naval personnel involved in this affair seemed to have been primarily to replace the army by the navy as the dominant factor in the government, though perhaps also to liberalise the regime; but their defeat only strengthened the position of the army and made Pibul still more the prisoner of the forces he sought to control.

#### Radio Coup of November 1951

The last important source of opposition to the military's complete control of the country was the assembly. Some civilian politicians had been vocal in criticising the Government on the interferences of the military in politics and notorious corruption in high places. In an effort to limit the power of the soldiery, a new constitution, drafted by the Khuang government, had

been promulgated in March 1949. Among other provisions it expressly forbade members of the services to join political parties. It was not surprising that from the first the Coup Group disliked the new constitution. By the end of 1951 they felt strong enough to proclaim the revival of the 1932 Constitution.

The pretext for the action thus taken was that the Government, as constituted, had failed to cope with the rising tide of communism and had also failed to cope with the increasing cost of living and with corruption. Without any previous consultation with Pibul, a group of officers led by General Sarit and General Phao effected a further coup, which took the form of announcing the reinstatement of the 1932 Constitution and the dissolution of the existing legislature. They reaffirmed their support of the constitutional monarchy but said that the 1949 constitution was too advanced for Thailand. This was known as 'radio coup' because it was reported on the radio without further elaboration. The Legislature was again reduced to unicameral form with its government-appointed upper half of the assembly.

The coup coincided with the return of the King from his long residence in Europe and might have been expressly timed to forestall any possible attempt by his entourage to curb the military's power. Moreover, the opposition were not likely to incur the discredit of

causing disturbance during the ceremonies attending the King's return. The King expressed his displeasure by refusing to acknowledge the new political situation for four days after his return.<sup>43</sup> During this time negotiations went on between the government and the palace. If the King failed to recognise, the Coup Group feared that the foreign powers would not recognise the new regime. A solution was reached, however, and the King approved the new constitution. The regime was thereafter granted recognition by other countries.

Elections for the new House were held in February 1952, shortly before the formal promulgation of the new Constitution. Under the new regime the existence of political parties was illegal. No organised opposition was possible at the elections. No less than 15% of the electorate voted. The power of the military was further increased by the fact that of the twenty-eight members of the new Cabinet formed after the elections, no less than twenty-one were service officers. Both General Phao and General Sarit took office. General Phao became the Deputy Minister of Interior while General Sarit was appointed as Deputy Minister of Defence. Pibul Songgram survived the coup and continued to hold the premiership, though his position was plainly weakened by the conduct of his nominal

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43. Bangkok-Foreign Office, 7 December 1951, FO 371/92958 (FS1005/106).

supporters, in launching the coup without his approval. General Kach, a notorious trouble-maker, who played a prominent part in the coup of April 1948, was arrested on suspicion of plotting with the Left-wing to overthrow the regime.

Though Pibul's authority was weakened by the indiscipline of senior officers, still the Prime Minister had survived the troubles of five years of office. The rivalries within the cabinet and the services operated to his advantage since they precluded the emergence of any clearly designated successor. In addition, the Free Thais had ceased to be an effective organisation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MALAYAN-THAI BORDER RELATIONS; THE MALAY UNREST IN SOUTH THAILAND

THE first problem that faced Pibul Songgram after his accession to power in April 1948 was not connected either with the Communists or his political opponents but with the Malays of South Thailand. Since the end of the Pacific War the Malays had been struggling to gain independence or at least autonomous rule for Greater Pattani. The November coup of 1947 and subsequently the return of Pibul Songgram and his military clique to power had caused fears among the Malays lest his reappearance would mean the recurrence of oppression which they had witnessed during his war-time regime. The trouble in Thailand's Southern provinces had ramifications in Malaya, for the Malays there, especially in Kelantan sympathized with those under the Thais. The British Government was urged to protest to Thailand over the situation and, in fact, some Malays even pressed the British Government to detach the four Southern provinces of Thailand and add them to Malaya. This chapter will discuss the origin and development of the Pattani Malay unrest in South Thailand and its repercussions in Malaya. This chapter will also touch on the Anglo-Thai response to the Malay unrest.

## The Historical Background

The Malay unrest in South Thailand was not, in fact, 'a sudden bolt out of the blue'.<sup>1</sup> Its roots may be traced to the period in the late eighteenth century when the provinces were first forcibly occupied and incorporated into the Thai Kingdom. The four Malay provinces of South Thailand - Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Setul - were incorporated into the Thai Kingdom during its renewed expansion under Rama I in the campaign of 1785.<sup>2</sup> The campaign resulted in the submission of Pattani which, henceforth, was not regarded as a tributary state like Laos and Cambodia, over which the Thais claimed suzerainty, but rather as an integral part of the Kingdom.

Ever since the forcible annexation, the Malay population of Pattani had nourished a deep smouldering resentment against their forcible incorporation into the Thai Kingdom. Several abortive uprisings by the Malays in

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1. Nantawan Haemindra, 'The Problem of the Thai Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand', part 1, JSEAS, Vol. VII, 2, September 1976. p. 206.
  2. A. Teeuw & D.K. Wyatt, Hikayat Patani, The Hague, 1970. p. 23; See also, J. Anderson, Political and Commercial Consideration, JMBRAS, vol. 35, pt. 4, 1962; R. Bonney, Kedah, 1771-1821, Kuala Lumpur, 1971; D.G.E. Hall, A History of South East Asia, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1968; Thadeus & Chadin Flood (eds.), The Dynastic Chronicle of Bangkok Era, The First Reign, The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, Tokyo, 1978; K. Wenks, The Restoration of Rama I, 1782-1809, University of Arizona, Tucson, 1968.

Pattani broke out during 1789-1791. Bangkok finally decided to reduce Pattani's strength and semi-independence by a policy of 'divide and rule'. Pattani was consequently divided into seven small states, namely, Pattani, Saiburi, Nongchik, Yaring, Yala, Reman and Rangae.<sup>3</sup> These states were administered as a third or fourth-class province under the supervision of the Thai Commissioner of Songkhla. Thereafter, these 'seven states' were closely controlled and administered on the same lines as the outer province of Thailand proper, in contrast to other tributary states, viz. Kelantan and Trengganu. A chief was from time to time appointed directly by the King for each separate state. This change created a great deal of resentment among Malay rulers. Consequently, in 1832 the 'seven states' attempted to rebel against Bangkok. The rebellion was, however, defeated and the ruler of Pattani and Yala retreated to Kelantan. Six years later, in 1836, there was another abortive revolt in the region. This time the Malay rulers in only four of the 'seven states' cooperated with the rebels from Kedah. The Malay rulers of Pattani, Yaring, and Saiburi, however, remained loyal to Bangkok. In 1839, Kedah which had been occupied by the Thais since 1821, was subdivided into four principalities, namely, Kedah, Kubangpasu, Perlis and Setul. Each was independent of the other and headed by a Thai-supported Malay ruler; but all

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3. Ibrahim Shukri, Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani (History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani), Pasir Puteh, Kelantan, 1958. pp. 88-92; Teeuw & Wyatt, op. cit., p. 98.



were placed under the authority of Nakornsri thamarat. The territorial division of the tributary states of Kedah and Pattani undoubtedly resulted in the weakening of these states. They become more dependent on Bangkok.

A reversal of the policy of sending Thai officials to rule Kedah and Pattani directly proved to be effective in stopping discontent and disorders in the region. The nomination of indigenous elites as Governors in the seven provinces, and the re-instatement of the ex-Sultan of Kedah in 1842 further increased political stability in all the Malay tributary states.<sup>4</sup> The Thais had also successfully settled the Kelantan civil war in 1839. Tuan Besar (also known as the Chief of Kampong Laut) was appointed by the Thais to become the new ruler of Pattani.<sup>5</sup> His family ruled the state until 1902 when Tengku Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin, the last ruler of Pattani, was deposed.<sup>6</sup>

As these provinces were geographically remote and bordered on British protected territories, Bangkok had to

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4. L.A. Mills, 'British Malaya, 1824-1867', JMBRAS, Vol. 33, pt. 3, 1960; J.M. Gullick, 'Kedah in the Reign of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin II (1854-79)', JMBRAS, Vol. LVIII, part 2, November 1985. See also, W.F. Vella, Siam under Rama III, New York, 1957. p. 77.
  5. Cyril Skinner, The Civil War in Kelantan in 1839, MBRAS. Singapore, 1965.
  6. Ibrahim Shukri, op. cit. p. 129; Tej Bunnag, The Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892-1915, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1977. p. 156; Penang Gazette, 12 March 1904.

tolerate the indigenous rulers' preservation of considerable autonomous power in matters concerning jurisdiction, local revenue collection and control over the personnel of government. As a result of this new policy, the relationship between Bangkok and its Malay provinces was good and a peaceful atmosphere prevailed for several decades.

However, this peaceful atmosphere did not survive long when, in the 1890s, Chulalongkorn decided to introduce the policy of administrative centralization known as the Thesaphiban system of provincial administration.<sup>7</sup> This policy was aimed at exerting more direct control from Bangkok over subordinate areas, including the Malay provinces, so as to lessen pressure from Britain and France to take over outlying regions themselves.

In 1901, the 'seven states' of Pattani were regrouped into one administrative unit called 'Boriwen Chet Huamuang' (Area of the Seven Provinces), and placed under the control of the Area Commissioner, who was to reside in Pattani. In the same year, the 'Regulations Concerning the Administration of the Area of the Seven Provinces' were issued.<sup>8</sup> These regulations were apparently aimed at

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7. For a detailed study on the Thesaphiban system of administration see, Tej Bunnag, op. cit.

8. Prince Damrong-Tengku Abdul Kadir, 16 December 1901, CO 273/282.

increasing centralized control over the Malay States. Judges, a deputy Governor and a revenue officer were appointed by Bangkok to 'assist' the local rulers. Tribute (the Bunga Mas) was no longer to be received by the treasuries of the areas but was to be handled by the Revenue Department in the same way as the rest of the Kingdom, which meant also that the revenues flowed out of the provinces to Bangkok. This change resulted in increased conflict between the Malay rulers and the Commissioners. The Malay rulers clung to the belief that the tribute (bunga mas) represented their relationship with Thailand and therefore that taxes should be collected so that the traditional tribute might be deducted and sent to the suzerain power.<sup>9</sup> The Commissioners represented the new order which was viewed by the Malay rulers as an imposition on them. In the new context, symbolic tribute had no value and the collection of a poll tax as a straight forward means of taking revenue away from the Malay rulers and shifting then to the Commissioners obviously reflected the overall change in political power. As might be expected, the Malay rulers did not take kindly to the new system which forcibly deprived them of their traditional power of taxation and appointment. Despite the promised compensation and fixed income, the Malay rulers remained

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9. Tengku Abdul Kadir-Prince Damrong, 27 December 1901, CO 273/282.

10. Tengku Abdul Kadir-Swettenham, 13 August 1901, CO 273/274.

dissatisfied.

In addition to the above administrative reforms, Thailand began to take her right to approve the local candidates for the throne more seriously, with the intention of breaking the hereditary nature of governorship. For instance, Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin, a son of Raja Sulaiman of Pattani, was proclaimed by the Pattani Chiefs as Raja of Pattani after his father's death.<sup>10</sup> Following custom the Chiefs sent a letter to the King of Thailand, Chulalongkorn, requesting Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin's confirmation as the new ruler. About two months later the new 'ruler' proceeded to Bangkok to receive approval. To his dismay, Chulalongkorn would not say that he would be confirmed as the new ruler until he had ruled for at least a year or two.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, more Thai Bureaucrats were appointed to fill positions in the new administrative structure.

The Malay Rajahs of Pattani and their people did not submit to their loss of autonomy without an outcry. As encroachments on their authority grew, some began to appeal directly to the King of Thailand. Another avenue of appeal was to Great Britain. Many appeals and requests from the

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10. Tengku Abdul Kadir-Swettenham, 13 August 1901, CO 273/274.

11. Ibid.

Malay rulers were submitted to the British officers in Malaya and Singapore stating that they would like to be under British rule.<sup>12</sup> But neither the Straits Settlements Governor nor the Colonial Office were inclined to take the request seriously. This was probably because of the Secret Convention of 1897 between Britain and Thailand, which stated that Thailand would not give any concession in the Malay peninsula to any foreign power without British written consent and that the British would support Thai authority over these Malay states.<sup>13</sup>

In 1901, the relationship between 'the seven Malay states' and Bangkok was particularly tense. Several appeals sent to Britain brought no action to 'relieve them of the oppression and unjust treatment by the Siamese', and it appeared to the Malay rulers in Pattani that all avenues of peaceful appeal had been exhausted. They began their own plan with Raja Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin, the ruler of Pattani, taking the lead, to rise against the Thai authorities in an effort to drive them out. The Malay rulers hoped that when the French heard that the Thais were being attacked in the south, they would attack in the east

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12. Swettenham-Colonial Office, 21 May 1901, CO 273/268.

13. For further details on Secret Convention of 1897 see, Thamsook Numnonda, 'The Anglo-Siamese Secret Convention of 1897', JSS, Vol. LIII, pt. 1, January, 1905. pp. 45-61.

and divert Thai forces from Pattani.<sup>14</sup> The uprising was planned to take place in October, 1901, and a large supply of arms and ammunition was acquired from a German firm in Singapore.<sup>15</sup> However, while the plan was being laid, the British, who actually had no particular sympathy toward Thai suzerainty in the area, but who were afraid of an uprising, which 'would spread throughout the east coast of the peninsula endangering all (British) commercial enterprises', dissuaded the Malay rulers from an uprising.<sup>16</sup> The Malay Rulers agreed and once again sent petitions to Britain stating their grievances against the Thais. The grievances centred around two main issues: first, the Commissioner's encroachments on the authority of the Malay rulers, especially in the sphere of revenue collection, and second, the interference of Thai officials in the practice of Islam. They appealed to Great Britain to intervene between their states and the King of Thailand and suggested that if there was no redress there would be violence.<sup>17</sup>

Again, no action was taken by Great Britain. The Malay rulers, who had little hope that the British would

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14. Swettenham-Colonial Office, 23 July 1901, CO 273/273; Archer-Foreign Office, 22 Oct. 1901, CO 273/296.

15. Swettenham-Colonial Office, 23 July 1901, CO 273/274.

16. Ibid.

17. Tengku Abdul Kadir-Swettenham, 13 May 1901, CO 273/274.

intervene on their behalf, continued their plan to take the situation into their own hands. While the Malay rulers were planning for an uprising and the British were debating how to handle the Malay states, the Thais moved to establish their authority more clearly in the region by forcing the Malay rulers to agree to the appointment of a Government Secretary whose consultation and signature would be required in order for the Ruler to promulgate any decrees. The Malay rulers however took the position that the proposed administrative structure would deprive them of all authority and make them subordinate to several Thai officers of no particular rank.<sup>18</sup> They, therefore, sent a letter of protest to King Chulalongkorn in Bangkok.

In late 1901 and early 1902 measures were taken to tighten control further in Saiburi and Rangae through the appointment of two Thai officers to rule in conjunction with the Malay ruler in each state. The ruler of Pattani, Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin, led the opposition to Thailand. The Thai Ministry of Interior however knew of the conspiracy. On February 21, Abdul Kadir was arrested and finally was imprisoned in Pitsanuloke for 'gross disobedience' against an order of the King. The Thai had succeeded in removing the man capable of organizing the feeling of resentment into action.

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18. Tej Bunnag, op. cit. p. 146.

Abdul Kadir was released two years later and was allowed to go back to Pattani, after having signed an understanding with the Thai Government to refrain from politics.<sup>19</sup> In 1905 Abdul Kadir decided to leave Pattani to take up residence in Kelantan.

Determined to integrate the Malay area into the Thai administrative system, Chulalongkorn decided that the central bureaucracy had to be extended and all levels of power had to be transferred into the hands of appointed officials from Bangkok. Consequently, a new method of provincial administration was introduced. In 1906, the area of the 'seven provinces' was administratively amalgamated into a new unit called Monthon Pattani.<sup>20</sup> From 1906 onwards, the former Sultanate of Pattani was rapidly integrated into the provincial administration of Thailand. Finally, it was divided into four provinces namely, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Setul.<sup>21</sup>

On March 10, 1909, Thailand signed a Treaty with Britain which resulted in the transfer of Thai suzerainty over Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu and Perlis as well as adjacent islands from Thailand to Great Britain, while Thai

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19. Swettenham-Colonial Office, 19 March 1902, CO 273/282.

20. Colonial Office-Foreign Office, 7 March 1902, CO 273/282.

21. Nantawan Hamendra, op. cit. p. 203.



suzerainty over the region to the north - Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Setul - was recognised.<sup>22</sup> The British, in turn, renounced extraterritorial rights in Thailand and acknowledged Thai sovereignty over the region to the north of the new Malayan border. Thus, by this treaty, the Malays in Southern Thailand were divided by an artificial boundary from their brethren in British Malaya. Despite this division, cultural affinities, inter-marriage between Malay families north and south of the border, and the seasonal migration of day labourers promoted strong Malay identification with neighbouring British Malaya. These factors all served to perpetuate close contacts with the Malays in British Malaya, and to keep alive their nationalistic spirit. As argued by Haemindra, 'the Malays have become Thai citizens not of their own free will, but by the accidents of political history which caused the incorporation of their communities into an expanding Thai Kingdom'.<sup>23</sup>

### Belukar Semak Uprising (1923)

For many years after the incorporation of Greater Pattani, the Thai Government encountered a number of uprisings both in Pattani and in the other Thai Malay

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22. Thamsook Numonda, 'The Anglo-Siamese Negotiations 1900-1909', (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1966), pp. 193-223.

23. Nantawan Haemindra, op. cit. p. 198.

provinces.<sup>24</sup> Local resistance became widespread during the reign of King Vajiravudh (1910-1925). The resistance to Thai rule took the form of religious uprisings seeking to remove the alien political authority from their region. In 1910 and 1911 two separate uprisings broke out in Yala and Pattani led by the religious leaders. In both cases, the Government was successful in forestalling these minor uprisings from escalating into widespread insurgency.

After a few years of calm, a major uprising broke out in Belukar Semak, a small village in Narathiwat province, in 1923. This uprising indicated the political and social discontent among the Malays. The major factor which contributed to the discontentment was the Thai Education Act of 1921.<sup>25</sup> This law required all the children to spend 4-5 years studying in a national programme of education until they attained a certain standard. It was true that the law was not strictly enforced in the Malay provinces, but the objective of the act was enough to worry the Malays. The Malays regarded it as an effort by the Thais to 'siamify' the Malays, and a gradual step towards stamping out the Malay cultural and

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24. Ibid. p. 204.

25. 'Report on the disturbances in Patani during January, February and March 1923', in J.F. Johns-Paget, 9 March 1923, CO 717/31; 'Report on visit to Pattani, August 13th. to 20th. 1924' by W.W. Coultas (Acting Consul in Songkhla), 25 August 1924, CO 717/31.

religious identity.<sup>26</sup>

The imposition of a tax of one tical per head on all adults regardless of sex as required by the Education Act of 1921 further added to discontentment.<sup>27</sup> A tax of one tical might seem a very trivial matter but the time chosen for its imposition was most unfortunate as Pattani was only beginning to recover from years of acute trade depression. The local padi crop during 1921 and 1922 seasons was poor and during 1922 the cattle export trade was entirely stopped by a rinderpest epidemic.<sup>28</sup> When those misfortunes were taken into account, it was not surprising that the people should resent any attempt to collect additional taxes. In late 1922, the Malays in the Malay provinces united to defy the Thai authorities by refusing to pay taxes and rents on land.<sup>29</sup> They were reportedly forming a liberation movement for Pattani which was based in Kelantan under the direction of Tengku Abdul Kadir, the former Rajah of Pattani.<sup>30</sup> Matters came to a head on January 1923 when a party of Thai police

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26. Penang Gazette, 14 March 1923.

27. See, 'Report on the disturbances in Pattani during January, February and March 1923', op. cit.; 'Paper on Malays in Siam', in Colonial Office-Kuala Lumpur, 18 March 1949, CO 717/156.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

endeavoured unsuccessfully to disperse a religious meeting. The despatch of troops and the removal of the unpopular Commissioner of Pattani, Phya Dechanuchit, restored peace in the area. In July 1923, the central government in Bangkok was forced to reassess its policy of compulsory education and greater bureaucratic penetration and involvement in the economic and social affairs of the region. King Vajiravudh instructed his Ministry of Interior to set new guidelines. The most relevant were as follows:<sup>31</sup>

1. Whatever practices or regulations appeared to oppose Islam should be abolished immediately. Any new guidelines must not be in violation of the Islamic religion.
2. The level of taxation among the Malays of Pattani should not be higher than what people in Malaya were required to contribute.
3. Public officials to be assigned to Pattani should be honest and polite. No official should be sent there as a punishment on account of their misbehaviour in other areas.

The new guidelines reflected the Thai Government's realisation of the problems of Pattani. A concession given

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31. Nantawan Haemindra, op. cit p. 205; see also, 'Some Facts about Malaya in South Siam', by GEMPAR Information Bureau, Kota Bharu, 1948.

to the Malays in Pattani could be seen as an effort to relieve the pressure towards total separation of the area from the Thai state. The threat of losing Pattani and its dependencies to the British was seen as very real. In the aftermath of the Belukar Semak uprising, the Penang Gazette, demanded the annexation of Pattani from Thailand.<sup>32</sup> In view of this, the policies of cultural assimilation and administrative control had to be carried out with great caution.

### Forced Cultural Assimilation Policy and the Malays Reaction

The coup d'etat of June 1932 promised a new beginning in the process of political evolution in Thailand.<sup>33</sup> It apparently ushered in an era of constitutional government with a revolutionary doctrine of popular sovereignty. The emphasis on freedom and equal opportunity to participate in the process of self-government and, as a final result, the enjoyment of the fruits of national modernization were promised to all people. The change was welcomed by the Malays of the Greater Pattani region. Within the parliamentary system,

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32. Penang Gazette, 14 March 1923.

33. For a detailed study on the 1932 coup see, Thawatt Makaropong, History of Thai Revolution: A Study in Political Behaviour, Chalermint, Bangkok, 1972; Benjamin A. Batson, The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1984; K.B. Landon, Siam in Transition, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1939.

the Malays believed that they could win concessions from the central government to maintain their autonomy with regard to religious, cultural and linguistic affairs.<sup>34</sup>

For the first time in the general election of 1933, a Malay representative was elected to the Bangkok Parliament. He was Abdullah WangPuteh from Setul province. In the election of 1936 two Malay candidates were elected to represent the provinces of Pattani and Narathiwat in the Parliament. They were Kumuda Abdulputra and Tengku Abdul Jalal, better known as Adul Nai Saiburi. Tengku Abdul Jalal was the son of the last Raja of Saiburi, Tengku Muttalib. In 1937, the government appointed a Bangkok Muslim, Banchong Sricharoon, to the senate.

However, the democratic form of government caused the Thais to become more nationalistic than before. After the Thai revolution of 1932 administrative changes were made. In that year the Pattani Monthon, which had been formed from the seven states in 1906, was united with the Monthon of Srithammarat to its north; but a year later, in the reorganisation of the local government, all Monthons were abolished and each muang, now called changwat, became a separate administrative unit directly responsible to

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34. Ibrahim Shukri, op. cit. p. 135-136; see also, 'Paper on Malays in Siam', op. cit.

Bangkok. In the case of Monthon Pattani three changwats, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, were established. Setul also formed a separate changwat of predominantly Malay population.<sup>35</sup>

With the change of national and local administrative structures, the former sultanate states had reached the stage of being directly ruled by Thai officials as ordinary Thai provinces. It is quite clear that the aim of the Thai government was to treat the Malay provinces in exactly the same way as the rest of the country, and gradually to absorb the region and its population into Thailand proper.

Initial steps were taken to assimilate the Malays by enforcing the compulsory education law. The entire Malay population was now placed in a dilemma. Thai education from the very beginning was equated with Buddhism, because of the prominent role Buddhist monks played in the literacy campaign during the previous regime. The Malay people objected to Thai education because they felt it was the prelude to a plot to get their children into the Thai army.<sup>36</sup> To take part in the educational system offered by the Government would mean to cast off an important feature of their Malay ethnic and religious

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35. 'Paper on Malays in Siam', op.cit.

36. Ibid.

identity. Furthermore, the Thai language, in which all teaching was conducted, was not their language and, more serious, if the children did not learn Malay they could not study the Islamic law and might be seduced to Buddhism.<sup>37</sup> The policy was thus a failure but it aroused considerable opposition among the Malays.

However, a cause of real despair to the Malays was the dictatorship of Pibul Songgram (1938-1944). Pibul Songgram became Prime Minister in 1938 after the retirement of Phya Bahol due to poor health. Different from his predecessor, Pibul was an extremely ambitious and highly disciplined individual who wanted to see Thailand make faster progress as a nation. He was often irked at the backwardness and apathy of the Thai people. Once Pibul had consolidated his power he launched a program designed to arouse a strong nationalist spirit in the national life.

By a Royal decree a Thai Rathaniyom policy (Thai Customs Decree) was formulated whereby all Thais, irrespective of race and religion, had to wear the European style of dress, with particular kind of hats, eat with spoons and at tables.<sup>38</sup> The campaign begun in 1940, was

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37. Ibid.

38. Thamsook Numnonda, Thailand and the Japanese Presence, 1941-45, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1977; For contemporary discussion of the Rathaniyom policy see, Prince Wan Waithaiyakin, 'Thai Culture', Journal of the Thailand Research Society, 35, part 2, September 1944, pp. 135-145.



headed by Pibul himself, and ably assisted by Luang Vichit Vadhakan, the Director-General of the Department of Fine Arts and a Minister without portfolio. Some of these injunctions were good but many were not practicable and created bitter feelings of regimentation even among the Thais themselves.

In the spirit of the times the Government also attempted to control the religious life of the nation. The purpose was to equate patriotism with Buddhism. This was one of a number of measures of the ultranationalistic period that were particularly offensive to the Malays. The Malays in South Thailand felt especially hurt because of the aim of preventing them wearing Malay dress, using Malay names and speaking and learning Malay language, and lastly receiving Islamic religious instruction.<sup>39</sup>

Another cause for the discontentment was the efforts of Pibul to eliminate Muslim laws and to convert the Muslims to Buddhism. Since the administrative reforms of King Chulalongkorn, the personal affairs of Malays with regard to marriage and inheritance were given exemption from the Thai law and were left under the Islamic religious authorities. Pibul did away with the exemption. Muslim laws in matters of marriage, divorce and distribution of

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39. Ibrahim Shukri, op.cit. p. 141; 'Some Facts about Malays in South Siam', op.cit.

property were eliminated. In 1944, the post of Kadhi (Religious Judge) was eliminated. All such cases would in future be referred to the civil court and civil laws would be used.<sup>40</sup>

Realising that their religious and cultural identities were under challenge, the religious leaders under the leadership of Haji Sulong bin Abdul Kadir, a well-known religious teacher, established an organisation in Pattani known as He'et alNapadh alLahkan al Shariat (A Society in the Defence of Islamic Religious law), Haji Sulong was educated in Mecca and was said to be strongly influenced by the religious thoughts of Jamaluddin Al-Afgahani and Muhammad Abduh. He returned to Pattani in 1930 and began a teaching career and soon after established himself as a well-known religious teacher in the region. The object of this society was to encourage cooperation among the religious leaders responsible for resisting the efforts of the government to assimilate the Malays and to violate the Islamic religion.<sup>41</sup>

Tengku Abdul Jalal, a son of the former ruler of Saiburi, and a Member of Parliament for Narathiwat, also submitted in February 1944 a letter to Pibul Songgram, calling for suitable amendments concerning the enforcement

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40. Ibrahim Shukri, op. cit. p. 142.

41. Ibid.

of cultural regulations with regard to the culture of the Malay people in Southern Thailand.<sup>42</sup> He charged the Buddhist Governor of Pattani province with harshness in enforcing the cultural rules thus causing economic difficulties and religious discontent. He hoped the central government would intervene so that the feelings of the people would not be hurt. The Prime Minister's secretary curtly replied that a Ministry of the Interior investigation found the action of the Governor was right and proper and had not caused unrest or hardship among the people of the province.

Whatever Malay goodwill there was for Thai rule disappeared during the Pibul administration because of the oppressive measures. Those who could endure them remained but those who could not went to Kelantan and Kedah. It should be noted that these two states together with Perlis and Trengganu were transferred to Thailand by the Japanese in October 1943. Although under the Thai administration, no attempt was made to implement the Thai Rathaniyom policy there.<sup>43</sup> Malay and English languages were still used in the official dealings.<sup>44</sup>

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42. Tengku Abdul Jalal-Pibul Songgram, 14 February, 1947 in Tengku Abdul Jalal Papers.

43. See, Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 'Kelantan under the Japanese/Thai Administration, 1942-45', Nusantara, no. 3, 1981.

44. Ibid.

Following the resignation of Pibul as Prime Minister in July 1944, Tengku Abdul Jalal wrote another letter to Khuang Aphaiwong, the new Prime Minister, insisting on the necessity of some amendments to the policy then being applied to the Malays so as to avoid any possible unrest among the population in the four provinces.<sup>45</sup> Faced with this undesirable prospect, the Khuang Government discontinued its predecessor's cultural policy. On May 3, 1945, Pridi Banamyong, the Regent, proclaimed The Patronage of Islam Act which aimed at breaking the impasse between the government and the Malays. The preamble of the Act stated clearly the real intention of the proclamation:

'Whereas the constitution of the Thai Kingdom grants full freedom of religion to the people with the King as the Great Sustainer of religions and considering the fact that some Thai people in a certain region profess Islam, it is appropriate that the Muslims should be assisted and protected in their religious affairs ...'46

The Act stipulated that new institutions be established to serve as a mediator between the Muslim community and the government. One of these was the office of

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45. Phon Chatek Wanek (Secretary to Pibul Songgram)-Tengku Abdul Jalal, 29 August 1944 in Tengku Abdul Jalal papers.

46. Alijah Gordon, 'Patani: Strategies for Decolonization', a paper presented to Organisation of Islamic Countries Committee on Muslim Minority Affairs, 23-25 September 1984, Perth, Australia.

Chularajamontri. The occupant of this post would be considered the spiritual leader of all Muslims in Thailand. He would advise the King and his government on all matters regarding the religious concerns of the Muslims. The Act also directed the government to establish Islamic educational Institutions for the children whose parents hitherto had been reluctant to send them to government schools. The Act also called for the establishment of 'The Central Islamic Committee of Thailand' and in provinces where there was a sizeable Muslim population the government would establish a Provincial Islamic Committee. The members of these Committees would be appointed on the advice of the Minister of Interior.

It was hoped that the proclamation of the Act would contain the damage done by the Pibul cabinet and its forced assimilation program. However, the Act remained to be implemented. In the meantime, the Malays, encouraged by the new spirit of Malay nationalism in Malaya, began to look to the Allied powers to free their provinces from Thai rule.

#### **Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen and Pattani Issue**

When the Pacific War broke out on December 7, 1941, Pibul accepted the Japanese demands and declared war against Britain and the United States a few weeks later. In return for Thai collaboration, the Japanese ceded to the

Pibul Government the territories taken from Thailand by the French in the northeast and by the British in the south. Thus, once again with the cession of the four Malay states of Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah and Perlis to Thailand, the Pattani Malays were united with their brethren in the peninsula who had been separated by the artificial boundary since 1909.

Meanwhile, Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen, the second son of Tengku Abdul Kadir, the last ruler of Pattani, who retreated with the British to India in February 1942, was preparing a grand scheme to free Pattani from Thai rule. Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen was born in Pattani in 1905 and received his early education at Assumption College in Bangkok. After completing his education there, Mahyideen continued his studies at Penang Free School. After his father's death in 1933, he joined the Kelantan Civil Service as a Superintendent Education Officer.

Mahyideen then became the figure from whom the Pattani Malays sought advice and protection. It had been his ambition to see Pattani free from Thai rule. The opportunity came when war broke out in Southeast Asia in December 1941 and Thailand joined the Japanese. Mahyideen offered his services to coordinate an underground movement among the Malay nationalists, hoping that once the war was over, the British would help him to liberate Greater Pattani from Thailand. In February 1942, Mahyideen fled

with the British forces to India as a member of the Free Malay Movement. He served as the Chief of the Malay section in the Information Department. After the formation of Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) and the creation of Force 136, Mahyideen was engaged as head of Force 136 Malay section with the rank of Major. His task was to recruit Malays for Force 136 for operation in South Thailand and East Coast of Malaya.<sup>47</sup> For his efforts, the British Military officers, who were involved in the operation, promised to give full support for Pattani independence. Perhaps naively, Mahyideen does not seem to have realised that the promise was made only by lower echelon British military officers. At a reception in New Delhi, a group of British officers toasted his success in achieving independence for Pattani.

The question of the strategic importance of South Thailand was indeed discussed at a much higher level. Some senior officials in London had stated that the southern peninsula of Thailand was such a strategic area that it should come under British control. On March 15, 1943, Sir George Maxwell, a former Chief Secretary of the Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements, in a secret

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47. A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948, MBRAS, Monograph No. 8. 1979. p. 143; Jen Tan Sri Ibrahim bin Ismail, Sudahkah Kamu Bertemu Mariam? (Have You Met Mariam?) Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1986. p. 40.

memorandum to the Colonial Office 'Future of the Kra Isthmus' had recommended that the region should be annexed by the British on strategic grounds.<sup>48</sup> Maxwell considered the region as 'the heel of Achilles' for the British Empire. It was in this region that the Japanese had landed their forces and wrecked the British defence in Malaya and Burma. Maxwell also pointed to the danger of a canal being constructed in the Kra Isthmus by Thailand or other foreign powers which would directly threaten the position of Singapore. He argued that it would not be difficult for the British to annex the Southern region. Ethnologically, most of the population there, especially in the region of Pattani, Setul, Yala and Narathiwat, were of the Malay race closely connected with the neighbouring states of Malaya. These Malays, Maxwell argued, as a result of the intensively nationalistic policy pursued by the Thais, who abolished the sultanate of Pattani and made Thai the only official language, were said before the outbreak of war to have been likely, in any proper plebiscite, to vote overwhelmingly in favour of transfer to British Malaya.

The Colonial Office opinion in October was that the inclusion of these areas in a Malayan Federation on political grounds would not present any social difficulty. However, the suggestion of any territorial unification

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48. Colonial Office-Foreign Office, 30 March 1943, FO 371/35979 (F1732/222/40).



would doubtless cause serious American criticism. As for bases at the Kra Isthmus, the Colonial Office felt that if the proposal could be portrayed as comparable with the 'analogy of the United States bases in the West Indies',<sup>49</sup> it might provide a less embarrassing solution. Although the establishment of bases on the Kra Isthmus or complete control of the Thai frontier provinces would be desirable, the Colonial Office did not think either would in itself be a decisive factor in ensuring the security of Malaya.

The question of the security value of the Kra Isthmus for the defence of Malaya was referred to the Cabinet's Post-Hostilities Planning Committee for strategic evaluation.<sup>50</sup> This Committee proposed that an effective air defence system centered on the Kra Isthmus might prove of some value for the security of Malaya and Burma. However, the Committee's recommendation gained little support. Instead it was suggested that a British Military Mission should be established in Thailand to supervise the Thai Government on all defence matters.

Meanwhile, Mahyideen, through his Force 136 clandestine operations, was able to establish links with the Pattani Malays in South Thailand and help them to

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49. Ibid.

50. War Cabinet Far Eastern Committee: Post War Strategic Arrangements in Siam. FE(45) 1, 11 January 1945. FO 371/46544 (F406/296/40).

establish an anti-Thai/Japanese resistance movement. His plan was that when the Allied forces invaded Thailand and Malaya, the anti-Thai/Japanese resistance movement, in close collaboration with Force 136, would simultaneously rise against the Japanese. He thought that while the Pattani states were under Allied occupation, the Pattani Malays would appeal to the United Nations for freedom from Thai rule.

However, to his dismay, before the British could embark on their operations in Thailand and Malaya, the Japanese surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. The plan of operations in South Thailand was called off. Nevertheless, Mahyideen still had some hopes that, in the post-war settlement, Thailand would be treated as a defeated belligerent by the Allied powers because of her collaboration with the Japanese, and that Thai rule would be ended not only in Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah and Perlis but also in the Pattani states of South Thailand.

The Pacific War ended in August 1945. On September 8, the Allied Military Agreement was signed in Kandy between General Senanarong and Lord Mountbatten, as Supreme Commander of the Southeast Asia Command.<sup>51</sup> This Agreement allowed the Allied forces to enter Thailand to

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51. Direck Jayanama, Siam and World War II, The Social Science Association of Thailand Press, Bangkok, 1967. p. 167.

disband the Japanese troops. Thereafter, negotiations between Britain and Thailand began in Kandy to settle the war between the two countries. At this time there were strong rumours that Thailand would be punished by Britain because of her role in the war on the side of Japan and also because Thailand had annexed the northern Malay states in July 1943.<sup>52</sup> As a reasonable penalty, it was believed that the southern provinces of Thailand would be annexed by the British and joined with the British Malayan Union. This prospect was pleasing to the Malays on both sides of the border.

On returning to Malaya in September 1945, Mahyideen advised Tengku Abdul Jalal, former Member of Parliament for Narathiwat, who was then in Kelantan, to submit a petition to the British Government requesting their help in liberating the Pattani states from Thai rule. It was to this end that Tengku Abdul Jalal and other Pattani prominent leaders submitted a petition to the British Secretary of State for the Colonies on November 1, 1945.<sup>53</sup> The petition stated the Malay grievances under Thai rule and requested 'the Allied Nations' to 'help us in

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52. 'Some Facts About Malays in South Thailand', op. cit.

53. Petition dated 1 Nov. 1945 in Tengku Abdul Jalal Papers. A copy of the petition is also found in the papers of Miss Barbara Whittingham-Jones, MS.145982, Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. (Hereafter referred as Jones Papers).

our desire, and release us from the hands of Siam'. The request was made on the basis of the San Francisco Declaration which stated that 'all dependent states should be given freedom and the people of such states should be allowed to administer their own countries in the ways most suitable to them'. They argued that:

'Pattani is really a Malay country, formerly ruled by Malay Rajah for generations, but has been Siam's dependency only since about 50 years ago. 54 Now the Allied Nations ought to help the return of this country to the Malays so that they can have it united with other countries in the Peninsula'. 55

The petition concluded with a warning that if the Allied Nations delayed or were late in giving a peaceful settlement in Pattani and its districts 'surely there would be intense feeling of dissatisfaction and future danger to all the Malay population there.'

In the event, however, because of the American pressure, the Thais were treated with leniency in the Anglo-Thai Peace Treaty of January 1946 and no transfer of new territory to British Malaya was enforced. This caused intense disappointment to the Malays. On January 15 , 1946,

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54. It should be noted that Pattani were forcibly occupied and incorporated into the Thai Kingdom during its renewed expansion under Rama I in the campaign of 1785, and thus became a Thai dependency since then. See, K. Wenks, op. cit.

55. Petition dated 1 November 1945, op. cit.

another petition was submitted to the British Government through the Supreme Commander of the British Armed Forces.<sup>56</sup> While expressing their hopes that they would be released from Thai rule, they also demanded the incorporation of the four provinces with British Malaya.

There were several reasons for Britain to adopt a cool attitude. The foremost factor was that British policy was restrained by the United States. The United States, who had at no time regarded themselves as in a state of war with Thailand, were anxious to see Thailand's territorial integrity respected. This attitude was clearly spelt out to the British, in fact, before the war ended.<sup>57</sup> The British Government also had good reasons for adopting a lenient attitude. Good relations with Thailand were regarded as necessary both in the short term and long term. Thailand's surplus rice was a vital element in the relief of the deficit food areas in India and Southeast Asia but no system of rice supplies could be satisfactorily operated if the Thai Government were obstructive. Willing cooperation by a stable government was considered to be

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56. Petition dated 15 January 1946 in Tengku Abdul Jalal Papers.

57. For a detailed study on the negotiations for the settlement of war between Britain and Thailand see, Nicholas Tarling, 'Rice and Reconciliation: The Anglo-Thai Peace Negotiations of 1945', a paper delivered at the 2nd. National Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia held at the University of New South Wales, 14-19 May 1978.

essential. Long term interests likewise required a lenient attitude. The restoration of trade relations with Thailand would assist in the recovery of the British economy whereas a harsh treaty would be detrimental to British interests. The British Military authorities also took the view that later Thai cooperation in the defence of Southeast Asia was of paramount military interest. Under such a consideration a punitive settlement which would undermine the stability of the democratic government of Thailand was to be avoided. Annexation moreover had been expressly repudiated at the Cairo conference. The Cairo declaration stipulated for the ultimate freedom of subject peoples and countries. The transfer of South Thailand was thus out of the question.

In response to the Pattani Malays' petition, H. R. Bird, the British Chargé d'Affaires in the Bangkok Legation, reminded the Foreign Office that the 'Mohamedans' in South Thailand had never been British subjects.<sup>58</sup> He also had never heard of a claim to extension of protection to 'Mohamedans' on non-British territory on the ground of their religion. He dismissed the claims made by the petitioners that the Pattani Malays were subjected to serious oppression and misgovernment. But there was little doubt that if the Thai Government came to suspect them of organising a separatist movement their conditions would

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58. Bird-SACSEA, 16 February 1946, FO 371/54421 (F2492/1342/40).

take a turn for the worse. Bird did not deny the fact that during the war-regime there was some discrimination against Malay religion, but he said this was contrary to the traditional Thai policy and efforts were now being made to have the ex-Thai Premier, Field Marshal Pibul Songgram, charged as a war criminal.

Wilson-Young of the Foreign Office also argued that the Malays had no real grounds for alleging that they were persecuted or oppressed.<sup>59</sup> He pointed out that since the end of the war some remarkable progress had been made by the Pridi Government to alleviate the Malay grievances. For instance, with the promulgation of the 1946 Constitution, the pre-war status of the Malays was restored. The usual privileges enjoyed by the Malays before the Pibul era in matters of family law and inheritance were retained. The Pridi administration had also set up an Islamic Central Committee of Thailand with the Chularajamontri as the ex-officio chairman. Chaem Promyong, also known as Haji Samsuddin Chem, an influential Bangkok religious teacher, was appointed to hold the office.<sup>60</sup>

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59. Minute by Wilson-Young, 16 February 1946, ibid.

60. Haji Samsuddin Mustaffa or better known as Chaem Promyong was educated at the Al-Azhar University, Cairo. For a brief note on Haji Samsuddin Chaem see, Andrew Forbes, 'Thailand's Muslim Minorities', Asian Survey, November 1982, vol. 22, no. 1.

J.J. Paskin of the Colonial Office thought that there was no case for the British Government to approach the Thai Government on the problem at that moment as he felt the Pattani Malays were Thai citizens.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, in his letter to J.C. Sterndale Bennett, Paskin requested the Foreign Office to watch the position carefully and to report if there were signs of the Thais reverting to a really oppressive policy in Pattani.<sup>62</sup>

Anderson added that if a direct representation was made to the Thai Government at that stage it would give the impression to them that while the French were pressing the Thais to relinquish territory in the east the British were taking the opportunity to press them to relinquish territory in the south.<sup>63</sup>

Although the annexation of the Pattani provinces was not effected, the publicity given to the issue by the Malayan press caused considerable embarrassment to the British Government. The Thai press took up the matter very vigorously with an anti-British tone. To calm the local feelings, the British Legation in Bangkok issued a statement on February 16, 1946, denying that the British

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61 J.J. Paskin-J.C. Sterndale Bennett, 7 May 1946, FO 371/54421 (F6978/1342/40).

62. Ibid.

63. Minute by C.M. Anderson on Brain-S. Bennett, 15 May 1946, FO 371/54421 (F2433/1342/40).



government had any interest in their affairs. It stated that:

'Had the Government of the United Kingdom wished to raise any question concerning South Siam, this would have been done at the time when the negotiations covering the cessation of hostilities between Siam and the United Kingdom were still going on'.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, both the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office decided not to entertain the Malays' petition. In the meantime it was hoped that the concessions made by the Pridi Government to the Malays would alleviate their grievances.

#### Haji Sulong and the Struggle for Autonomy

The failure of the nationalist-royalist leadership under Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen and Tengku Abdul Jalal to liberate the Pattani states from Thai rule with British help paved the way for the ulama or religious leaders to involve themselves in the political struggle. Different from the nationalist-royalist group, the religious leaders struggled to gain an autonomous situation, or at least legal autonomy. The ulama were under the leadership of Haji Sulong bin Abdul Kadir, President of the Islamic Provincial Religious Council. As President of the Islamic Provincial Religious Council, Haji Sulong was a close

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64. Bird-SACSEA, 16 February 1946, FO 371/54421 (F2433/1342/40).

friend of Chaem Promyong, the Chularajamontri. He had high regard for Pridi Banamyong whom he thought was more sympathetic to the Malays than the other Thai leaders. Haji Sulong accepted Pridi's concept of a Swiss-type federalism with cultural autonomy for all ethnic groups within Thailand with decentralization of power.<sup>65</sup>

To appreciate the strong hope and high expectation Haji Sulong had of Pridi's leadership, it should be mentioned that upon his assumption of the premiership in March 1946, he allocated funds to promote Islamic religious and educational welfare in the Pattani region. It was Pridi that appointed a cabinet committee to look into the ways and means to improve the deteriorating situation in the south. As mentioned earlier, it was also Pridi who restored the Malay pre-war religious status and created the post of the Religious adviser to the Government known as Chularajamontri.

When a Commission known as the 'Bangkok Enquiry Commission' headed by Chaem Promyong or Haji Samsuddin, the Chularajamontri, arrived at Tabal to enquire into the conditions and the views of the Malays, Haji Sulong, submitted to the Thamrong Government a seven-point plan for the establishment of an autonomous state of Pattani. The

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65. Alijah Gordon, op. cit.

details of his plan were as follows:<sup>66</sup>

1. The appointment of a single individual with full powers to govern the four provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Setul in particular having authority to dismiss, suspend or replace all government servants, this individual to be locally born in one of the four provinces and to be elected by the people;
2. Eighty per cent of government servants in the four provinces to be Muslims;
3. Malay and Thai to be official languages;
4. Malay to be the medium of instruction in the primary schools;
5. Muslim law to be recognised and enforced in a separate Muslim court where the one-time Kadhi sat as an assessor;
6. All revenue and income derived from the four provinces to be utilised within them; and
7. The formation of a Muslim Board having full powers to direct all Muslim affairs under the supreme authority of the head of state

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66. See, 'Some Facts About Malays in South Siam', op. cit.

mentioned in 1.

Haji Sulong did not propose an independent state but an autonomous territorial and cultural entity to preserve its special identity within Thailand. The demand for eighty per cent of the government officials to be Muslims was to ensure that there would be no cause of misunderstanding and violence in the region. The basic problems in the past were because of the officials' ignorance of Malay society, religion, culture and pattern of behaviour. Many Thai district officials were limited in their capacity to play a meaningful role in the district by their inability to speak the local Malay dialect. This prevented real direct contact with the natives and led to misunderstanding of what information was received. Furthermore, some officials were racially prejudiced. They regarded the Malay villagers as not very intelligent and inclined to be lazy. There were also complaints against the Thai officials - police and administrative officials - to do with bribery and corruption. In view of this, Haji Sulong considered that the appointment of local Muslims as administrators would overcome Malay grievances.

On the matter of language, Haji Sulong thought that as the majority of the population in the region were of the Malay race it would be relevant if the official language, apart from Thai, should be Malay language. The same should apply to the medium of

instruction in school. In this way, Malay culture and identity could be preserved.

As might be expected, the Thamrong government's reaction to Haji Sulong's petition was cold, and no action to meet the demands was taken. Once it accepted the establishment of a special administrative body for the area under a Muslim High Commissioner, it would cease to be master of its Malay minority. In addition, if the Malays' demands were accepted, a similar move would be made by the other minority ethnic people in other areas. So there could be no compromise with the Malays of the South. There was to be no change in the structure of power relations between the Greater Pattani region and Bangkok. Thailand would continue as a unitary state with a centrally-controlled bureaucracy and with a unified legal system except in the domain of personal law and inheritance, where the Malays had been allowed to apply Islamic law.<sup>67</sup>

However, before these limited promises could be implemented, the Thamrong government was forcibly overthrown in a military coup of November 7, 1947. Khuang Aphaiwong, the leader of the Democrat party and former Thai Prime Minister, was appointed as new Prime Minister. Despite the appointment of a civilian to head the new government, the return of the military, particularly, Pibul

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67. Straits Times, 30 October 1947.

Songgram, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, caused fears among the Malays lest his return would mean a recurrence of the repressive policy that the Malays had experienced during his first regime. Owing to the unsettled conditions in Thailand, many Malays were leaving their homes and coming to Kelantan.

In mid-November 1947, Mahyideen went to Java to find out what assistance Pattani might expect from the Indonesians if they revolted against the Thais.<sup>68</sup> He had an interview with Soekarno and other Indonesian nationalist leaders but failed to gain their support. Mahyideen was told that the Indonesians were not in a position to assist unless their own affairs were settled and that his best course was to ask for British assistance and protection.

Mahyideen returned empty-handed to Malaya in early December, 1947. On returning to Kelantan, Mahyideen arranged a meeting at his residence at Pantai Semut Api, a small seaside resort outside Kota Bharu, with Tengku Abdul Jalal and Haji Sulong.<sup>69</sup> It was disclosed at the meeting that the interim Government headed by Khuang Aphaiwong had invited a number of Pattani leaders to Bangkok for

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68. MSS, Political Intelligence Journal No. 4/48, dated 29 February 1948, C0537/3682.

69. MSS, Political Intelligence Journal, No. 4/48, dated 29 December 1947, C0537/3682.

discussions. Haji Sulong refused to accept this invitation until he had an assurance that his seven demands were accepted. After some discussion, the meeting unanimously agreed to appoint Mahyideen as their representative in dealing with the Thai government. The meeting also discussed future action to be taken by the Pattani Malays. On this aspect, Mahyideen referred to the message sent by Pridi Banamyong, who was then in exile in Singapore, through Haji Samsuddin Chaem, who was then in exile in Kelantan, asking for Mahyideen's assistance to stage a counter-coup against the Military regime in Bangkok in return for assistance in the furtherance of his plans. The meeting decided however that they were not strong enough either in numbers or in arms to stage an armed uprising; that they would first of all try to obtain their independence by constitutional means, but that if the Thai army became fully employed suppressing a counter-stroke by Free Thais the Pattani Malays would then rise in armed revolt. A few days later, Haji Sulong returned to Pattani and informed his followers of this decision.

Meanwhile, Phya Phipit Pakdi, a member of the Provisional Assembly, advised the government to accede to the seven-point demands of the Malays which were submitted to the Thamrong government earlier.<sup>70</sup> He explained that there was a great misunderstanding in regard to the belief

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70. Straits Times, 18 December 1947.

that the Malays were seeking to breakaway from Thai rule. 'All they want is a separate home of their own but within the same force'.

### The Arrest of Haji Sulong and its repercussions in Malaya

The Thai authorities watched the situation with seriousness, after the rumours of a possible uprising in the region jointly organised by Haji Sulong and Pridi Banamyong.<sup>71</sup> On January 16, 1948, Haji Sulong was arrested along with his son and three colleagues and charged with 'engaging in a plot to separate the four southern provinces from Siamese administration, and formed a party of guerillas to create mischief in the four states'.<sup>72</sup> By this action, the Thai Government hoped to suppress the religious-led movement while it was still nascent and before it could spread widely. But the arrest touched off simmering discontent in the region.

The arrest of Haji Sulong sparked protests from the Pattani leaders in exile. On February 16, 1948, Tengku Abdul Jalal sent a telegram to Khuang Aphaiwong requesting the release of Haji Sulong and his friends without

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71. MSS, Political Intelligence Journal, No. 4/48, dated 29 February 1948, CO537/3682.

72. Ibid.



conditions.<sup>73</sup> He sent also a telegram to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, appealing for intervention in order to prevent bloodshed and to end the sufferings of the Malays in Pattani under Thai rule.<sup>74</sup>

Meanwhile, in Kota Bharu, the Pattani Malay refugees had formed themselves into a body known as 'Gabungan Melayu Pattani Raya' (The Association of Malays of Greater Pattani) or GEMPAR, with its principal office in Kota Bharu, Kelantan.<sup>75</sup> Mahyideen, because of his association with the British in general and the Malayan government in particular, did not hold any office in the association. The President of GEMPAR was Tengku Ismail, a Pattani Royalist. Members of the Executive Committee consisted of Pattani political exiles such as Tengku Abdul Jalal, Tengku Petra and Tengku Din. Local nationalist leaders from Kelantan Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) were also appointed to hold office in the association, such as Saad Shukri Hj. Muda, Nik Mahmood Nik Majid and Nik Mohamed Nik Abdul Rahman. The association was registered as a welfare association and the stated objectives of the

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73. Mahyideen-B.W. Jones, 22 February 1948, Jones Papers.

74. Mahyideen-B.W. Jones, 31 January 1948, Jones Papers; and Singapore Free Press, 14 February 1948.

75. Straits Times, 28 January 1948; Thompson-Foreign Office, 31 January 1948, FO371/69996 (F1670/21/40).

association were given as follows:<sup>76</sup>

- (a) to unite all Malays in South Thailand and their descendents;
- (b) to look after their welfare; and
- (c) to encourage cooperation among them and to improve their education and culture.

However, the real objectives of GEMPAR as stated in its secret instructions to its members were amalgamation of the four South Thailand provinces into one state under the Federation of Malaya, and the termination of Thai rule by means of propaganda and the formation of a secret revolutionary committee.<sup>77</sup>

From its formation, GEMPAR began to publicise the sufferings of the Malays of South Thailand both in and outside Malaya. On March 16, 1948, GEMPAR issued a pamphlet entitled: 'Some Facts About Malays in South Siam'.<sup>78</sup> These pamphlets were distributed to the Malay political bodies as well as the press. GEMPAR also sent telegrams to the United Nations asking that a plebiscite be held in the four provinces in South Thailand to determine

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76. Minutes on the formation of GEMPAR, 8 February 1948, Tengku Abdul Jalal Papers; see also, 'The Manifesto of Gempar', Tengku Abdul Jalal Papers.

77. Notes on GEMPAR, CO717/52286.

78. This paper was believed to be drafted by Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen. See, Mahyideen-Jones, 6 March 1948, Jones Papers.

the people's wishes, whether they would prefer to remain under Thailand or to join Malaya.<sup>79</sup> GEMPAR also engaged a British journalist, Miss Barbara Whittingham-Jones, to promote the Pattani case at an international level.<sup>80</sup>

As a result of a wide campaign organised by GEMPAR, the Pattani Malay issue began to gain attention from the Malayan press and political parties. The Malay press in editorials and Malay political bodies in their general assemblies began to focus their attention and express their concern over the predicament of Pattani. The Singapore Free Press, for instance, in its editorial on February 3, considered the Malays of Southern Thailand as being 'the victim of misrule'. It stated:

'The Malay peoples (in South Thailand) must today regret that when the Bangkok treaty of 1909 was signed, transferring to Great Britain all 'the rights of suzerainty, protection, administration and control whatsoever which Siam possessed over the states of Kelantan, Trengganu, Perlis and Kedah, Patani was not included. Patani

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79. B.W. Jones, 'Pattani Appeals to UNO', The Eastern World, April 1948.

80. Miss B.W. Jones, the British Journalist, was a close friend of Mahyideen. Both of them served with the Allied Forces at Southeast Asia Allied Command (SEAC) in India during the war. Following her visit to Pattani province in October 1947, a vigorous pro-Pattani propaganda campaign was launched by Jones in the form of published articles, both in Malaya and Britain, to secure international support for the liberation of Pattani from Thai rule. She also approached Commonwealth and Muslim Diplomats to bring Pattani's case to the United Nations but to no avail.

would have then have had a happier fate than half a century of oppression, designed to denationalise the Malay population. There was a brief relaxation of this policy immediately after the war, when Siam still had ex-enemy status, but now it is being reinforced'.<sup>81</sup>

Warta Negara strongly criticised the Thai Government for condoning such acts of barbarism on the Malay minority and urged the United Nations to send a commission to investigate the matter at the earliest possible moment. It also called on the responsible national organisations in Malaya to do everything in their power to help the Malays in South Thailand.<sup>82</sup> Sin Jit Poh considered the developments there would inevitably affect the peace of Malaya and impair Malay-Thai friendship. The paper hoped that the UNO and Whitehall would take action to prevent the situation from further deterioration.<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, some Malayan newspapers in Singapore and Malaya had been publishing sensational stories of riots, arrests and large-scale exodus of Malays from the Pattani states to Malaya. For instance, Utusan Melayu reported that the Malays in South Thailand were preparing to launch guerilla activities, if Haji Sulong was treated

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81. Singapore Free Press, 3 February 1948.

82. Warta Negara, 3 March 1948.

83. Sin Jin Poh, 9 March 1948.

unjustly.<sup>84</sup> The Straits Times reported on March 2 that large numbers of Malays from the four southern Thai states 'are pouring into Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Perak because of the threats of arrests and oppression by the Siamese'.<sup>85</sup>

One of the first Malay political organisations to respond to the Malay grievances in South Thailand was the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP). In its meeting in Kota Bharu on February 10, the Malay Nationalist Party decided to sympathise with the cause of the Malays in South Thailand and to appeal to the UN Security Council.<sup>86</sup>

The Singapore Malay Union (SMU) also took up the Pattani Malay cause. At a mass meeting on March 6, Sardon Hj. Jubir, President of SMU, decided to send a formal protest to the United Nations accusing the Thai Government of a policy of 'forced assimilation of Malays', and of measures to implement that policy.<sup>87</sup> On March 25, Sardon submitted the resolution adopted at the meeting to consider the position of the Malays in the four Southern States of Thailand to Lord Listowel of the Colonial Office. The resolution reads as follows:

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84. Utusan Melayu, 5 March 1948.

85. Straits Times, 2 March 1948.

86. Utusan Melayu, 16 February 1948.

87. Sunday Times, 7 March 1948.

'This meeting condemns the repressive measures used by the Government of Siam to implement that policy and while expressing its sympathies with the victims of that iniquitous policy calls upon the United Nations Organisation to consider the appointment of a Commission to enquire and report on the conditions prevailing in the said states in Siam, with the object of holding a plebiscite to determine the desires of the people with regard to the separation of the territories in question from the Kingdom of Siam.'<sup>88</sup>

The Malay radicals, in particular former members of API (Angkatan Pemuda Insaf) also took action to fan the flames of revolt in South Thailand. In fact, Ahmed Boestaman, the ex-leader of API, had approached Mahyideen and Tengku Abdul Jalal asking for permission to organise armed resistance. Mahyideen, however, rejected the offer.<sup>89</sup>

The mounting tension in the southern provinces and growing criticism in Malaya had finally goaded the Khuang Government into action. On March 5, Khuang Aphaiwong, the newly-appointed Prime Minister, admitted during the parliamentary internal policy debate in Bangkok that there was unrest prevailing in South Thailand.<sup>90</sup> The debate on the Malay problems in South Thailand was raised by Nai Banchong Sricharoon (Haji Abdul Wahab Mustafa), a Muslim

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88. Sardon Jubir-The Colonial Secretary, 25 March 1948, F0371/69992.

89. 'Political Climate in South Thailand' by Mentri Besar of Kelantan, 1 May 1948, Tengku Abdul Jalal Papers.

90. Liberty, 5 March 1948.

Senator and also the Chairman of the Islamic Central Council. The Senator blamed the corrupt and oppressive behavior of the administrative officials in the Southern provinces for the trouble. He described the administrative officials there as 'little better than bandits'. The inhabitants had been ill-treated and oppressed, their property taken away from them by force, their houses had been burnt, and their language, customs and religion trampled on. No one had dared to petition the Government for fear of retaliation. He added:

'I know that I will have to prove my accusations but as I am a Muslim and a member of the Committee of the Central Islamic Council, I consider it my duty to inform the Ministry of Interior of the true state of affairs in order to find ways and means to remedy the situation. When I was told of the situation in the South I could hardly believe my own ears. The Ministry of Interior took no steps in the matter when I referred to them. Some of the persons who sent the report to me were mysteriously killed, others fled into Malaya and spread the news that the inhabitants of Patani were being cruelly treated by the Siamese. There was no question of separatist movement or riots. It was a case of rank injustice on the part of the officials.'<sup>91</sup>

Nai Banchong Sricharoon urged the Government to take immediate and positive actions to remedy the situation. He also pressed for the appointment of a new Chularajamontri.

Khuang Aphaiwong assured the house that a special committee had been set up by the Government to get at the

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91. Ibid.

root of the trouble in the southern provinces. As to allegations made by the Senator, the Government had to make a thorough investigation of the position before necessary action could be taken. However, he promised that some reforms would be introduced in the four provinces to overcome the Malay discontentments. He assured the House that complete freedom of worship would be guaranteed and the Malay language would be taught in primary schools. He also promised to transfer corrupt Thai officials. Furthermore, there was a promise of the appointment of a 'respected' Muslim-Malay as special commissioner to act as religious affairs adviser to the Government.

As a follow-up, Khuang sent his Minister of Education, Seni Pramoj, to the southern provinces to investigate the Malay complaints.<sup>92</sup> There were rumours that Seni Pramoj would go to Kelantan to meet with Mahyideen, but the meeting did not take place.

GEMPAR, through its circular, felt rather sceptical that the Commission would succeed in extracting the true facts from the people, since before the coming of the Commission, the people had already suffered terrible pressure and intimidation at the hands of the Thai police and Armed forces.<sup>93</sup> On the appointment of a special Muslim

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92. Singapore Free Press, 10 March 1948.

93. Mahyideen-B.W. Jones, 15 March 1948, Jones Papers; Singapore Free Press, 10 March 1948.



Commissioner for the four Malay Provinces, GEMPAR noted that it would be possible that the offer would be made to Mahyideen. GEMPAR considered it as 'false propaganda' trying to ease the feelings of the Malay people in the four provinces. GEMPAR reminded the Pattani Malays:

'The people are therefore reminded that this is a cunning diplomatic move on the part of the Siamese Government to appease the people. The offer should in no circumstances be accepted, as we are demanding the freedom of religion. We will treat those who accept the Government's offer as traitors to the people'.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, despite Khuang's promises of reform, GEMPAR was still sceptical that the Thai Government would implement it. On the contrary, it regarded it as 'false propaganda' trying to ease the feelings of the Malay people in the four provinces.

### The Dusun Nyior Uprising

However, the Khuang Government did not stay long enough in power to be able to implement the promised reforms for the Malays in the southern provinces. On April 8, 1948, Khuang Aphaiwong was forced to resign by the Coup Group in favour of Pibul Songgram, the ex-dictator. The accession of Pibul Songgram to premiership and the memory of his former repressive policy during the war regime

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94. Ibid.

created anxiety among the Malays. Thus, it was not surprising when the unrest became more pronounced in the provinces. In fact Pibul was warned by his Assemblymen that unless the Thai Government implemented official promises made earlier by the Khuang Government, the unrest would be bound to grow.<sup>95</sup>

Realising his unpopularity with the Malays, Pibul invited Abdullah WangPuteh, an influential Malay and also a Member of Parliament for Setul, to join his cabinet as Deputy Minister of State for Education.<sup>96</sup> He was expected to be helpful to the government in solving the Malay problems.

Before any official move could be made a serious outbreak occurred in Dusun Nyior, a small village in Narathiwat province, on April 26-27, 1948. The trouble started when the Thai police were said to have intervened in a Muslim religious gathering. According to Mahyideen, the real source of trouble could be traced to mid-1947 when the Thai Police were ambushed by a party of Malay gang robbers near a village called Belukar Semak, the same spot where the 1923 abortive uprising broke out.<sup>97</sup> In the

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95. Straits Times, 27 April 1948.

96. Singapore Free Press, 14 April 1948.

97. 'Political climate in South Thailand' by Mentri Besar of Kelantan, 2 May 1948, Tengku Abdul Jalal Papers.

ambush, the leader of the Thai Police was shot. Later the Thai Police started punitive measures and burnt the village of Belukar Semak, alleging that the villagers were in league with the gang robbers. A few hundred of the villagers fled to Dusun Nyior and Belum within Perak territory. Following the Malayan Government's anti-Communist operations in Northern Perak, the refugees in Belum were forced to retire to Thai territory and settled in Dusun Nyior. A Chinese trader in Dusun Nyior heard of this concentration of a number of Malays (about 20) and reported it to the Police thinking that they were robbers. As a result, on the following day, the Police surprised them while they were having their meal. The Malay villagers, under the leadership of a religious teacher, Haji Abdul Rahman, fought against the Police and finally the Police retired. The incident became more serious when the people of the surrounding villages came the following day to join the Dusun Nyior group as the rumours were going round that the Thai Police were coming in strength to exterminate all the Malays.

The fight that persisted between the Thai Police and the Malays in the following days cost many lives on both sides. The Straits Times reported that between thirty and a hundred persons were killed in the clashes.<sup>98</sup> In response to the riot, Mahyideen immediately issued a

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98. Straits Times, 29 April 1948.

statement to his followers in the four provinces calling for calm and urged them to settle their grievances through legal and peaceful means.<sup>99</sup>

On 29 April 1948, Mahyideen was called by the Chief Minister of Kelantan, Nik Ahmed Kamil, to enquire about the riot.<sup>100</sup> The Minister warned him not to get involved in the Southern Thai problems so as to jeopardise the position of the Kelantan Government or to involve the Government of the Federation in any international complications. Mahyideen assured the Chief Minister that he still advocated negotiation by constitutional means. But he deplored the apathetic attitude of the Thai Government in not even suggesting a compromise to settle the Malay problems based on the seven demands proposed by Haji Sulong to the Thai Government in April 1947. If all means of achieving those demands by negotiations failed, he could not say what the future would bring. However, Mahyideen assured the Chief Minister that so long as the Pattani Malays consulted him he would do his best to hold them against doing anything rash.

Meanwhile, in Bangkok, Pibul called an emergency cabinet meeting. As a consequence, a Pacification

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99. MacDonald-Foreign Office, 13 May 1948, FO371/69993 (F1972/21/40).

100. Political Climate in South Thailand by Mentri Besar of Kelantan, 2 May 1948, Tengku Abdul Jalal Papers.

Commission, headed by Phraya Amraridhdamrong, a veteran administrator, and comprising four others including Abdullah WangPuteh, was set up and given full powers to deal with the situation and to recommend measures to remedy Malay grievances.<sup>101</sup> At the same time renewed demands by the Muslim population were submitted to the Pibul Government by the Pattani Assemblymen Charoon Subsaeng and the Senate member Banchong Sicharoon. They urged the Thai Government to issue a full statement of its policy in regard to the Muslim population of the four Southern provinces. They also sought larger Muslim representations in the Thai legislature, administration and economic life, and freedom of religion, culture and education of the Muslims. In reply to the request for a clear statement of policy, Pibul renewed assurances of freedom of religion and facilities for Malay education. However, the demand for wider administration rights for the Malay population were rejected on the grounds that the Muslim inhabitants in these provinces enjoyed the same rights and were governed by the same laws as the Thai.<sup>102</sup>

In response to Pibul's assurances, the Singapore Free Press commented:

'More inquiries, more promises and minor concessions are not going to satisfy the

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101. Malay Mail, 2 May 1948.

102. Singapore Free Press, 18 May 1948.

embittered Malays. Bangkok can hold down Patani with police and troops at the price of continual unrest, which may one day flare into open rebellion and lead to demands by neighbouring Muslim countries for the international inquiry which Siam has every reason to try and avoid.

The time has surely come for Bangkok to make a realistic approach to the whole problem - to recognise frankly that 'assimilation' by force has been a failure and, if pursued, may well end in tragedy. A thorough clean-up of corrupt and inefficient officials, opportunities for Malays to enter the administration and some measures of provincial autonomy would go a long way toward winning Malay sympathy and remove the growing desire for separation from Siam'.<sup>103</sup>

Meanwhile, while touring the troubled region in the Southern provinces, Abdullah WangPuteh, the Deputy Minister of State for Education in Bangkok, privately crossed the border to Kota Bharu for talks with Mahyideen on the Malay grievances.<sup>104</sup> Abdullah expressed his readiness to mediate between the Pattani Malays and the Thai Government. If the Thai Government agreed to the mediation, he hoped Mahyideen would agree to come to Bangkok to represent the Pattani Malays. Mahyideen was prepared to consider the proposal provided that the Thai Government agreed to accept his four conditions:

- a) Haji Sulong, being a very prominent figure, must be released in order to attend the meeting.

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103. Ibid.

104. Singapore-Foreign Office 18 May 1948, FO 371/69993 (F7165/21/40); Straits Times, 16 May 1948.

- b) In order to maintain peace in South Thailand, the leaders of the South Thailand Movement who fled from Thailand should be permitted to return and their personal safety guaranteed.
- c) Police patrols in the villages of South Thailand were to be withdrawn to towns.
- d) The Thai Government should invite him officially to the proposed conference and a copy of the invitation should be sent to the British and the United States Ambassadors.

Late, in May, a message was sent by GEMPAR asking for a peaceful settlement of the Malay problems through negotiations. The message also sought the release of Haji Sulong and his friends.<sup>105</sup> However, the Thai Government did not accept the conditions set by Mahyideen for the proposed meeting, and as a result no such meeting was ever held. Some Thai Ministers considered that it would not be befitting the dignity of the Thai Government to seek the help of Mahyideen. These Ministers considered that affairs in South Thailand were purely Thai affairs and that they could easily be settled. As for Haji Sulong, he was put on trial in June 1948. The trial was held at Nakornsithammarat on the Public Prosecutor's request that the 'accused is very influential in Pattani and witnesses

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105. Straits Times, 29 May 1948.

must be free from influence'.<sup>106</sup> However, the hearing was postponed because the key government witness, Pattani Governor Phraya Ratanapkadi, had been absent.

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106. Bangkok-Foreign Office, 12 June 1948, FO 371/69993 (F8324/21/40).



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE MALAY UNREST IN SOUTH THAILAND:

#### BRITISH RESPONSE AND ATTITUDE

AS discussed earlier, after the Japanese defeat in 1945, there were some hopes among the Pattani Malays that the Malay provinces of South Thailand might be annexed to British Malaya. However, to their dismay, no transfer of territories took effect. Despite appeals from Pattani, London chose to maintain friendly relations with Thailand. Apart from strategic and commercial considerations, the need for Thai rice constituted the main reason for Britain to maintain friendly relations with Thailand.

However, the deteriorating situation in South Thailand after the arrest of Haji Sulong in January 1948 seemed to worry the British Malayan Government. The trouble in the four Malay provinces had ramifications in Malaya. The Malayan Government sympathized with those under Thai rule. In fact the British Government was urged not to recognise the Khuang Government until a plebiscite be held in the southern districts to determine the people's wishes whether they would prefer to remain under Thailand

or to join Malaya.<sup>1</sup> The British were concerned lest the trouble in South Thailand would affect Anglo-Thai relations. Immediately after the arrest of Haji Sulong, Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen, the alleged Pattani leader, had been summoned to Kuala Lumpur, where he was warned by Sir Edward Gent, the Malayan Union Governor, not to get involved with the politics of Thailand, for the British Government would not tolerate Malaya being used as a base for such a project.<sup>2</sup> Sir Edward Gent, advised the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to decline to entertain representations from the Pattani leaders 'in what is a domestic affair in Siam'.<sup>3</sup>

In fact this policy was again reconfirmed by Lord Listowel of the British Colonial Office when he visited Kelantan in early March 1948 and talked with

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1. Mahyideen cabled to Clement Attlee, on January 25, 1948, the following message:

'In the name of humanity and justice we crave that you do not recognise the Siamese government before thoroughly investigating the Fascist ways of administration in the four Malay States in South Siam. Our endurance under the Siamese officials' maladministration is exhausted. We request that a plebiscite be held in the four states'. See Mahyideen-B.W.Jones, 22 February 1948, Jones Papers.

2. Mahyideen-B.W.Jones, 21 January 1948, Jones Papers.
3. High Commissioner, Malaya-Secretary of State for Colonies, No. 11, 5 March 1948, CO 537/3682.

Mahyideen.<sup>4</sup> Lord Listowel reminded Mahyideen that there should not be any expectation of direct help from the British Government. This advice was given following the report that GEMPAR was issuing propaganda that 'their liberation from Siamese domination will soon take place, probably with the help of the British'.<sup>5</sup> While expressing his conviction that the Thais would come to their senses and see that the Malays got a fair deal, Listowel also suggested that those who were not satisfied in Pattani should emigrate into Malaya. To Mahyideen, neither compromise was practicable, nor acceptable to the Malays. He refused to believe the Thai leaders, when they said that they might give concessions now, but thought that they later would revert to the same old system and would oppress the Malays more than ever, for he was sure that the Thais had 'pinned' their minds on making the Malays into Thais at any cost. With regard to emigrating into Malaya, Mahyideen was of the opinion that the Malays would not emigrate. He assured Lord Listowel that the majority of the Malays had decided to join Malaya by a transfer of territory not a movement of population. Unless this was done, the four provinces would be a thorn in the Thai ribs and would be a source of trouble in Southeast Asia. Mahyideen also pointed to the danger of the Communists who would take the

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4. Mahyideen-B.W.Jones, 6 March 1948, Jones Papers.

5. Notes on GEMPAR by SAC, Special Branch, 6 December 1948, CO 717/156.

opportunity to play on the feelings of the people, which would be fertile ground for them to achieve their aims.

Despite her non-interference policy in Thailand's domestic policy, the British Government thought that some steps should be taken to solve the Malay problems in South Thailand. Soon after the Khuang Government in Thailand was recognised by the British Government, Geoffrey H. Thompson, the British Ambassador in Bangkok, met the Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs, Phya Srivisar, to discuss the Malay problem in South Thailand.<sup>6</sup> While assuring the Minister that it was not the intention of the British Government to interfere in the internal affairs of Thailand, Thompson warned that the agitation in the Pattani province was a danger to relations between Thailand and Malaya, since it could be only too easily exploited by the hostile critics outside Thailand. In proof of this, he mentioned the attitude of the Malayan press. He expressed his hope that the new Thai Government would implement the recent promises made by Khuang Aphaiwong in the assembly.

Phya Srivisar, in reply realised the danger that the issue of Malay rights in Pattani would be exploited for political purposes on both sides of the border. He assured Thompson that the Thai Government would do its best to

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6. Thompson-Foreign Office, 8 March 1948, FO 371/699988 (F3615/21/40).

solve the impasses. Thompson requested permission from the Thai Minister to allow Guy Madoc, British First Secretary at the Embassy in Bangkok, to tour the four Southern provinces in order to get a first hand appreciation of the problem. The Minister agreed to the suggestion.

In his report to the Foreign Office, Thompson expressed his hope that the Malayan authorities would use their influence to curb Mahyideen's activities whom the Thais regarded as 'the chief instigator of the Malay unrest in South Thailand'.<sup>7</sup>

On March 20 Madoc set off to tour Kedah, Kelantan and the Southern States of Thailand. Madoc spent five days in Kelantan and Kedah interviewing the British officials dealing with the Pattani refugees and seven days in Songhkla discussing with Thai officials the developments in the Pattani region. Madoc however did not visit Pattani because he feared that his visit there might encourage the local malcontents to further clashes with the Thais.<sup>8</sup>

Before returning to Bangkok, Madoc went to Kuala Lumpur to discuss the Pattani problem with Gent. Both of them agreed that a detente should be found to solve the

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7. Ibid.

8. 'Report on Enquiry into Malay Unrest in South Siam' by Guy Madoc, 8 April 1948, Federal Secretariat, Federation of Malaya.

problem. The only solution that they could see was for a meeting to be contrived between Mahyideen and the authorities in Bangkok. It should be noted that in March 1948, Seni Pramoj, the Minister of Education, was in the Southern provinces to investigate the Malay complaints of oppression and injustice. However, Gent disagreed with the Thai allegation that Mahyideen was the chief instigator of the Malay unrest. He insisted that Mahyideen was against violence and unfailingly advised moderation on the Pattani Malays. It was because of this attitude that Mahyideen was losing influence among his followers.<sup>9</sup>

Madoc returned to Bangkok on April 2 and submitted his report to Whittington, the British Counsellor.<sup>10</sup> From his observations, Madoc considered that lawless acts in Pattani had been committed by both the Malays and the Thai local authorities. The Thai authorities in the provinces believed that Mahyideen was

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9. As mentioned earlier, Mahyideen, in fact, opposed Ahmed Boestaman's proposal to launch a revolt in South Thailand. He still believed that the freedom of Pattani could be achieved through constitutional means. It was because of this belief that Mahyideen sent petitions to the British Government and the United Nations to look upon the possibility of arranging a plebiscite in the four states of South Thailand. See, Political Climate in South Thailand by Menteri Besar of Kelantan, Tengku Abdul Jalal Papers; Gent-Whittington, 7 April 1948, FO 371/69992 (F6524/21/40)
  10. 'Report on Enquiry into the Malay unrest in South Siam' by Guy Madoc, 8 April 1948, Federal Secretariat, Federation of Malaya.

the chief instigator of the Malay unrest. He also mentioned the establishment of a training camp in Belum in Upper Perak to train Pattani guerillas for operations in South Thailand.

With regard to the Thai officials serving in the South, Madoc found that most of the subordinate Thai officials were inevitably corrupt and usually oppressive. This was because they were low-paid. He observed that control of these subordinate officials by senior, educated officials with high ideals was almost non-existent. Thus he was prepared to believe that the lower ranks of the police and civil service in South Thailand probably had been guilty of acts which offended the religious and national susceptibilities of intractable Malays. He feared that the more the Malays resisted the more likely they were to suffer Thai retribution. The only solution that he could see was for a meeting to be contrived between Mahyideen and the authorities in Bangkok. Madoc noted that the original invitation to Mahyideen was issued by the Thamrong Government and it might be possible, he believed, to persuade Khuang Aphaiwong to renew that invitation. In case of a meeting with the Thai authorities, Madoc stressed that Mahyideen should be told to keep his demands within reasonable bounds. He could not expect himself to be made a supreme official of government in South Thailand. He would be well advised to maintain the patriot pose, get the best bargain for his people, and retire from the stage of

South Thailand to devote himself to British Malayan politics where his ability would be welcomed.

Madoc warned that the existing situation in the four provinces was dangerous not only from the threat of heavy bloodshed but also because it presented to the newly-created Russian Diplomatic Mission in Thailand fine material for criticism of British colonial government. They could represent either Britain's heartlessness in failing to hearken to the pitiful cries of the oppressed Malay brethren in Thailand, or they could accuse Britain of encouraging the use of Malayan territory as a base for revolutionary forces operating against the Thai Government.

Finally, Madoc argued that if Mahyideen considered he could gain his ends by embarrassing the existing Thai Government, he was sadly mistaken. He warned:

'A continued state of unrest in South Siam might serve to shake the Khuang Government off its perch; and with it Mahyuddin's 'people' will topple from the frying pan into the fire, for it would most be likely that Field Marshal Pibul would then step in with that military dictatorship, which brought the Malays to the extreme of their plight before the war'.<sup>11</sup>

However, before any arrangement for a meeting between Mahyideen and Khuang Aphaiwong could be made, on April 8,

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11. Ibid.



1948, Khuang Aphaiwong was forced to resign by the Coup Group in favour of Pibul Songgram. Thus, in view of the unsettled political situation in Bangkok after Khuang's resignation, Whittington thought that Madoc's and Gent's recommendation that Mahyideen should come to Bangkok be temporarily discouraged.<sup>12</sup> However, if the Pibul Government decided to follow up the intentions of its predecessor and send a Minister of State to investigate matters in the Malay provinces, it might be possible to arrange for him to meet Mahyideen.

In his letter to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, on April 16, Whittington described the report as most disturbing because it revealed beyond any doubt that Mahyideen was (a) organising from Malayan soil a resistance movement in South Thailand; (b) carrying out an anti-Thai press campaign in Malaya and overseas; and (c) apparently in control of the GEMPAR organisation, which was concerned with making propaganda for the Malay nationalist movement in South Thailand.<sup>13</sup> Further, it was clear from the report that the Malayan Government authorities on the spot had been well aware of Mahyideen's activities, which appeared to have been allowed to continue undisturbed. Whittington said it was quite difficult for him to reconcile this situation with the assurance of the High Commissioner for

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12. Whittington-E. Bevin, 10 April 1948, Federal Secretariat, Federation of Malaya.

13. Ibid.

the Federation of Malaya that the ex-Tengku 'is counselling caution' and 'is keeping himself in the background because he does not wish to compromise the British or Malayan Governments'.<sup>14</sup>

As regards conditions in South Thailand, Whittington agreed with Madoc's conclusion that probably only a small percentage of the Malay population even in the troubled area 'have partisan sentiments in this squabble'. He also had no doubt that the Thai administration deteriorated during the Pibul regime both before and during the war. Since the war the general effectiveness of Thai rule had deteriorated even further in South Thailand, as elsewhere in the country, and the Thai border had been notoriously lawless for the previous two and half years. In these conditions, the ground was well-prepared for trouble. Whittington recalled that Mahyideen had been employed during the war in political warfare and trained as a resistance leader. No doubt he might use all these attributes to free the Pattani Malays from Thai yoke. He noted that 'if this trouble has come to a head at this time, it is principally due to the machinations of Mahayuddin, and not to any fresh oppression or reign of terror on the part of the Siamese'.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

Whittington agreed with Madoc and Gent that the first step to be taken in order to produce a detente should be to curb the actively subversive efforts of Mahyideen. This was not only to improve the local situation immediately but also to prevent His Majesty's Government from being placed at any moment in a position of the most acute embarrassment. For, though to Malayan eyes, and possibly British eyes, Mahayuddin may be pursuing a worthy cause in seeking to free his countrymen from foreign rule, to Siamese, American and other eyes, many of which are perhaps disposed to see evil in us, this movement can well be interpreted as a Machiavellian British imperialist move to acquire a slice of Siamese territory. I submit that on the facts as reported, it would not be very difficult for our enemies to make out a good case against us.<sup>16</sup>

He recalled that the Khuang Government, which had just resigned, was not unmindful of the difficulties and troubles in South Thailand. During his last day of his administration, Khuang had sent his Minister of Education, Seni Pramoj, to carry out a thorough investigation.

In view of the new allegation against Mahyideen and the failure on the part of the Malayan authorities to curb Mahyideen's subversive activities, Sir Edward Gent asked W.F Churchill, British Adviser, Kelantan, and Nik

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16. Ibid.

Ahmed Kamil, the Mentri Besar, Kelantan, to give their comments on the matter. Col. Dalley, Head of Malayan Security Service was also called to give his views. This was felt particularly urgent following the outbreak of the Dusun Nyior uprising in Narathiwat province on April 26 and 27, 1948 which had resulted in over one hundred killed on the side of the Malays.

Churchill firmly dismissed Madoc's accusation that Mahyideen was responsible for the trouble in South Thailand and that the Kelantan authorities did not take action against him although they were aware of Mahyideen's activities.<sup>17</sup> Churchill maintained that Mahyideen was not in favour of a resistance movement, which entailed guerilla warfare, because he was of the firm opinion that it was bound to fail and would only worsen the position of the Malays in South Thailand. He did, in fact, use all his influence to stop the outbreak of such warfare, which appeared likely to occur in December 1947. As regards Mahyideen's press campaign in Malaya and overseas, Churchill considered nothing wrong in it.

He also rejected Whittington's accusation that the Kelantan authorities, although aware of Mahyideen's activities, did not take action to stop him. Churchill pointed out that the State authorities would make a

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17. W.F. Churchill-Gent, 1 May 1948, Federal Secretariat, Federation of Malaya.

vigorous protest if they were made aware of that allegation of 'dilatoriness and complacency'. There was a wide gap, he said, between information gleaned by Police Officers and from underground sources and information on which criminal proceedings could be taken under Section 126 or under Section 186 of the Penal Code. A frank report of information received could not possibly be translated into direct and actual proof of 'two specific instances of direction of guerilla activities', which would enable the Police to arrest Mahyideen and to conduct a successful criminal prosecution against him. The legal implications of the whole affair seemed to be quite inadequately understood. Malaya, Churchill stressed, was still a free country and, 'as a Gestapo does not exist, Mahyideen cannot be put under lock and key and 'prevailed upon' to confess his 'sins', if any.'

He added:

'It is incredible that any responsible officer should take upon himself to make any such sweeping accusation based on flimsy grounds. If and when Mahyideen commits any illegal act for which he can be prosecuted, no influence or friends in Government circles is going to save him and he is fully aware of it.'<sup>18</sup>

He considered Madoc's statement that in Pattani 'he did not anywhere see indications of oppression or

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18. Ibid.

distress' and the conclusion therefrom 'that probably only a small percentage of the Malay population even in the troubled area have partisan sentiments in this squabble' as 'puerile in their naivete'.<sup>19</sup> He questioned whether Madoc really thought he would have the unique opportunity, on a brief visit under Thai patronage, of witnessing specific acts of oppression. Similarly, he questioned whether Madoc really thought that all those with partisan sentiments would express their views to him, an unknown European under Thai patronage.

Churchill also disproved Whittington's theory that 'if trouble has come to a head at this time, it is principally due to the machinations of Mahyideen and not to any fresh oppression or reign of terror on the part of the Siamese'. He pointed out that Ahmed Boestaman and other Communistic elements had also taken active steps to take advantage of the situation to create trouble and that Mahyideen had categorically rejected all Communistic advances of assistance. The question of 'any fresh oppression' was also arguable. He said that 'there is no doubt that the peoples of Southeast Asia are now thinking in terms of freedom, self-government and independence, either now or in future, and I am not aware that the Siamese Government has paid more than lip service, if that, to such aspirations for the Malays of South Siam.'

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19. Ibid.

Churchill concluded that Madoc's report was biased in favour of the Thais.

The Mentri Besar of Kelantan, Nik Ahmed Kamil, was also of the opinion that Madoc's allegation on Mahyideen's role was 'exaggerated'.<sup>20</sup> The Mentri Besar did not deny the fact that Mahyideen was the focus of the Pattani Malays. But Mahyideen, in his interview with the Mentri Besar in the aftermath of the Dusun Nyior uprising, had reiterated his assurances that he still advocated negotiation by constitutional means and was prepared to discuss changes with Thai authorities if they so desired.<sup>21</sup> He did not believe that the Malays would be able to achieve their objective by violent means. But he deplored the apathetic attitude of the Thai Government in not even suggesting a compromise along the line submitted by Haji Sulong on April 3, 1947. Mahyideen believed that so long as the Pattani Malays looked up to him as their representative he would be able to control them, but he feared that there would come a time when the leaders in Pattani would no longer have confidence in his ability.

Col. Dalley of the Malayan Security Service pointed out that Mahyideen was not the only person involved

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20. Mentri Besar-Gent, 3 May 1948, Federal Secretariat, Federation of Malaya.

21. Ibid.

in Pattani affairs.<sup>22</sup> Apart from Mahyideen, there were other leaders who were more extreme and hotheaded. Among them he named Tengku Abdul Jalal, Ahmed Boestaman and Dat Abdullah (Abdullah C.D.). Tengku Abdul Jalal, although a close associate of Mahyideen, was a hothead. It was reported that the latter used to state that if he had sufficient weapons he would start guerilla warfare against the Thais, though this would mean disobeying the implicit instructions of Mahyideen. Ahmed Boestaman, the leader of the banned API, had in fact organised volunteer units to help the Malays in South Thailand organise an uprising.<sup>23</sup> Abdullah C.D. one of the leading Malay Communists in the Malayan Communist Party, was also interested in South Thailand affairs. He was said to have called on the Malays in South Thailand to continue their struggle to overthrow their oppressors.<sup>24</sup>

In view of these British officials' differences of opinion on the matter, particularly on the role of Mahyideen in Pattani affairs, on the Commissioner-General's initiative, a conference was held in Singapore on May 3,

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22. 'Notes on Malay Unrest in South Siam', Malayan Security Service, 29 April 1948, Federal Secretariat, Federation of Malaya.

23. For further information on Ahmed Boestaman's role in Pattani affairs, see Ramli bin Ahmad, *Pergerakan Pembebasan Pattani (Pattani Liberation Movement)*, B.A thesis, Jabatan Sejarah, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1975-76.

24. For Abdullah C.D's statement see, Indian Daily Mail, 25 March 1948.



1948. This meeting, presided over by Malcolm MacDonald, the Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia, was attended by Sir Edward Gent, Guy Madoc from Bangkok, Henry N. Brain, Political Adviser to the Commissioner-General, Col. Dalley and W.F. Churchill.<sup>25</sup>

Brain began the meeting by giving a brief outline of the differences in opinion between the British Embassy in Bangkok and the Malayan authorities on Mahyideen. The local authorities concerned in north Malaya looked at the problem in South Thailand from the point of view of its effect on the internal politics of their own area and were satisfied so long as Mahyideen and his followers did not break the law in Malaya particularly as he was one of the most intelligent and efficient Malays in Kelantan. Looked at from the British Embassy's point of view, however, Mahyideen was a man admittedly fostering unrest in a neighbouring friendly state, with the knowledge of the British authorities. They could not understand why immediate repressive action against him was not taken.

Sir Edward Gent said that Mahyideen, as reported by the British Adviser in Kelantan and the Mentri Besar, had not been alone when emissaries of the Malay 'rebels' came over to Kelantan for 'instructions'. He was

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25. Minutes of the Commissioner-General's Conference, 3 May 1948, Federal Secretariat, Federation of Malaya.

accompanied by Tengku Abdul Jalal and Tengku Abdul Kadir. These two men were fanatically anti-Thai and were considered to be forcing Mahyideen not to object to more vigorous action. Gent said that he had been assured by the Mentri Besar of Kelantan, whom he had also asked to come and see him, that Mahyideen could not be considered solely or chiefly responsible for the Malay resistance in Southern Thailand. Gent had also sent a strong warning to Mahyideen, through the Mentri Besar, warning him that he was not to interfere in the internal affairs of a neighbouring friendly state. He thought that any more vigorous action against Mahyideen would embarrass British relations with the Malays in Malaya and irritate Malay nationalist feeling elsewhere. At all costs any suggestion that the British favoured the Thais against the Malays must be avoided. He pointed out that not only he, but also the British Adviser, Kelantan, had continually done their best to keep Mahyideen from being too deeply involved in Southern Thailand affairs. The Malayan Security Service too had contrived to prevent or persuade Malay organisations from taking an active part in the Southern Thailand troubles. He pointed out that there were very real disturbances of Malay opinion, moderate as well as left wing, and the former Thai Prime Minister, Khuang Aphaiwong himself had admitted past maladministration of Southern Thailand. Moreover, so far, the Thais had made no attempt to reply to the allegations published in the Malay press, or to carry out the Thai Prime Minister's promise in

the Council at Bangkok to remedy the Malay troubles without delay.

Madoc replied that he understood that an inspired article had been published in the Bangkok Weekly, Standard.<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that in this article the writer promised that reforms and improvements would be carried out in the Malay provinces after the political situation settled down. However, the writer still blamed the foreign elements for instigating Malay discontentment in the provinces. Madoc also noted that the reason for delay in carrying out the reforms, as stated by the writer in the Standard, was due to the political upheaval following the resignation of Khuang Aphaiwong on April 8, 1948. However, Madoc informed the meeting that the new Thai cabinet under Pibul had appointed a new Thai Commission to investigate the South Thailand affairs. The Commission would be headed by Phraya Amraridhdhamrong, a veteran administrator, and comprise four others, including Abdullah Wangputeh, Deputy Minister of Education. Madoc added that the Thai Government so far had not voiced to the Embassy any allegation of plotting in Malaya against Thailand. Such allegations had been voiced by the Press.

The meeting agreed that Mahyideen was the moving spirit behind the subversive movement in Southern Thailand,

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26. Standard, 1 May 1948.

but that more repressive measures, other than a warning to him, would only cause reaction throughout the Federation among Malays, both MNP and UMNO, so long as there was no evidence on the Thai side that serious complaints of Malays in South Thailand were being remedied. British recognition of the Pibul Government would make it easier for the British Embassy in Bangkok to impress on the Thai authorities the gravity of political unrest in South Thailand. The Embassy should also ascertain the Thai government's attitude to the suggestion that Mahyideen or other suitable Malay representatives might visit Bangkok.

The meeting considered that it would not be advisable to arrange for a journalist to visit the area, since a report favourable to one side would irritate the other. The meeting also rejected a proposal for a combined British-Thai fact-finding commission to tour the area.

Malcolm MacDonald, the Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia, in his telegram to the Secretary of State for Colonies on May 5, spelt out the meeting's appreciation of the situation in South Thailand. He expressed his hope that the British Ambassador in Bangkok would impress on the Thai authorities the gravity of political unrest in South Thailand. He also hoped that the British Ambassador could ascertain the Thai Government's attitude to the suggestion that Mahyideen or other suitable Malay

representatives might visit Bangkok.<sup>27</sup>

Commenting on the conclusion of the meeting, A.M. Palliser, Officer in charge of Thailand affairs at the Foreign Office, agreed with Whittington that some steps should be taken to curb both Mahyideen and the Malay organisations from participation in Pattani affairs.<sup>28</sup> The presence of these two forms of subversive influence in the Malay states in South Thailand would increase the potential danger of the Pattani situation. There was not only the risk of conflict between Mahyideen's agents and the Thais, but also the possibilities of friction between Thailand and Malaya and also the prospect of armed strife between the followers of Mahyideen and those of the Left-Wing Malay Nationalist Party.

As far as the Left-Wing influences were concerned, Palliser thought they could be best be combated by vigilant police activity on both sides of the border and by passing information on their movements and plans to the Thai police authorities. Palliser thought it desirable that Mahyideen's intentions should be forced into the open. He strongly welcomed the suggestion that the latter should visit Bangkok or alternatively meet the Thai Minister of State for Moslem affairs at the border, if such a meeting

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27. Commissioner-General - Colonial Office, 5 May 1948. FO 371/69992 (F6613/21/40)

28. Minute by A.M. Palliser, 13 May 1948, FO 371/69992 (F6613/21/40).

would be more acceptable to the Thais. An effort should then be made to get the clearest possible statement from Mahyideen of what he thought should be done for the Pattani Malays and to give full publicity to everything that was done by the Thais. A visit by an independent correspondent should also do good.

On May 6, Whittington called on Mom Priditheppong Dewakul, the Thai new Foreign Minister, on the resumption of normal relations.<sup>29</sup> The Counsellor impressed on the Minister the importance which the British Government attached to the improvement of conditions in South Thailand. He also broached the suggestions that Mahyideen might visit Bangkok or make contact with the pacification mission which was then in South Thailand. The Minister agreed to give full consideration to this matter.

Meanwhile, after touring the troubled region in the Southern provinces, on May 7, Abdullah WangPuteh, the Deputy Minister of State for Education, crossed the border to Kota Bharu for talks with Mahyideen.<sup>30</sup> Abdullah WangPuteh presented himself as an emissary of Pibul Songgram, the Thai Prime Minister. Abdullah WangPuteh told Mahyideen that Pibul was prepared to negotiate with

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29. Whittington-Gent, 6 May 1948, Federal Secretariat, Federation of Malaya.

30. Singapore-Foreign Office, 18 May 1948, FO 371/69993 (F7165/21/40).

the leaders of the South Thai Movement on settling the Malay problems before the position worsened and that Pibul was prepared to hold a conference at which representatives of the South Thai Malay Movement had equal status with Thai Government representatives. He hoped Mahyideen would agree to come to Bangkok to represent the Pattani Malays.

The Colonial Office was pleased with the prospect of a meeting between Mahyideen and Thai authorities. 'There is every advantage in facilitating negotiations between Mahyideen and Siamese authorities if repeat if PHIBUN'S initiative is an honest attempt at a just solution to this problem.'<sup>31</sup> Eventually, the British Counsellor in Bangkok, Whittington, was invited by the Foreign Office to give their views as to the best way of conducting talks between Mahyideen and the Thai authorities. The Foreign Office argued that Mahyideen was the most reasonable of all those involved in the agitation in South Thailand.<sup>32</sup> If, as he appeared to fear, he was losing power to the more extreme Left Wing elements also at work in the provinces, the British Government could be faced with a much more difficult and uncontrollable situation in which they would be unable to help as much as they should like. There were Left Wing elements, it argued, including those persons who

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31. Colonial Office-Singapore, 25 May 1948, Federal Secretariat, Federation of Malaya.

32. Foreign Office-Bangkok, 25 May 1948, FO 371/69993 (F7486/21/40).

had filtered from Sumatra and, unlike Mahyideen, would seek to make political capital in Malaya out of their knowledge; while Mahyideen was pro-British and amenable to reason, those elements were neither.

The other danger was that UMNO would be forced to take up the cause of the Pattani Malays. The left-wing elements associated with MNP and the banned API headed by Ahmed Boestaman were capable of causing a good deal of trouble, while it would be a serious embarrassment if UMNO, which was the major Malay party and largely represented both on the Federal Legislative Council and the State Councils in the Malay States, became actively interested in Pattani affairs. The Foreign Office also pointed out that as a result of the new constitution of Malaya, the Malays for the first time since the liberation were taking an active part in the Government of the country and that the British Government must take into account the feelings of the Malays respecting those of the same race in Pattani.

On the assumption that Pibul agreed to a conference with Mahyideen, the Foreign Office's preliminary view was that Mahyideen should be accompanied by a responsible officer of the Malayan Federation as well as by any adviser of his own whom he might care to bring, as it was obviously important that there should be someone present in the negotiations who could speak with authority on the views of the Federation Administration. The Foreign



Office felt that was most likely to be achieved if the talks were kept as informal as possible.

On May 21, Whittington, approached Mom Priditheppong Dewakul to enquire about the reported Abdullah-Mahyideen meeting.<sup>33</sup> The Thai Minister, however, told him that he had not heard of the meeting. Reporting on Mom Priditheppong Dewakul's attitude, Whittington was doubtful whether Pibul had made such an offer of a conference with Malay leaders in the South Thailand Movement. It might be that Abdullah WangPuteh exceeded his instructions in quoting Pibul as he was reported to have done. Abdullah might possibly, as a result of a suggestion he made to Pibul in early May, have been instructed to make contact with Mahyideen privately. Whittington was pretty sure, in view of the subsequent attitude of the Pibul Government, that at that time they had not worked out any careful scheme of a possible meeting between Abdullah and Mahyideen such as that suggested in the Malayan Security Service's report earlier. Nor did he consider the Thais were in any mood to treat with Mahyideen whom they regarded as the chief instigator of the Malay unrest.

Whittington also expressed his astonishment at the

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33. Whittington-Foreign Office, 21 May 1948, FO 371/69993 (F7369/21/40); Whittington-Foreign Office, 27 May 1948, FO 371/69993 (F7590/21/40).

Foreign Office's suggestion that Mahyideen should be accompanied to Bangkok by an Officer of the Malayan Federation. He reminded the Foreign Office that Thailand was an independent country and that the suggestion would quite rightly be taken by them as a most offensive and unwarranted interference with their domestic affairs. The suggestion of the presence of a Malayan Officer would immediately arouse suspicion, already dormant, that there was a veiled British attempt to gain control of the Southern Malay provinces. He did not consider such suspicion would be entirely groundless. The Commissioner-General himself had confessed, at the meeting in Singapore on May 3, that the people in Malaya might have private sentiments and that 'it is a great pity the Southern States of Siam were not included in Malaya after the war.'<sup>34</sup>

The Foreign Office expressed its regret at the change of attitude on the part of the Thai Government. Regarding the suggestion that the Malayan official should accompany Mahyideen, it explained that the suggestion was made under the impression that Pibul wanted a full dress conference with him to settle the whole problem.<sup>35</sup>

Because of the Thai Government's indifference,

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34. See, Minutes of the Commissioner-General Conference, 3 May 1958, Federal Secretariat, Federation of Malaya.

35. Foreign Office-Bangkok, 28 May 1948, FO 371/69993 (F7590/21/40).

even antagonism, Malcolm MacDonald informed the Foreign Office of his decision not to send the suggested mission to Bangkok.<sup>36</sup> He also decided to drop the idea of stopping in Bangkok on his way to Hong Kong on June 7 or on his return trip on June 14. This decision was made for two main reasons: firstly, he felt that the Thai Prime Minister might be suspicious and resentful of any approach made to him and, secondly, he feared that such a visit might arouse undesirable speculation in Malaya concerning the object of the visit. Whittington's telegram to him recently seemed to confirm strongly that such a visit would be likely to do more harm than good at present. He also decided to delay his intention of sending a purely personal message to Pibul expressing his concern at the situation which had arisen in South Thailand. In that personal message, he had proposed to point out that though the problem was wholly within the jurisdiction of the Thai authorities, it also had international repercussions. The problem had to a certain extent caused some trouble to the Malayan authorities and therefore tended to affect Anglo-Thai relations.

MacDonald warned both the Foreign Office and Whittington in Bangkok that the situation in South Thailand could be easily exploited by the Malay extremists in Malaya, if it remained unsettled. This in turn must have

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36. MacDonald-Foreign Office, 4 June 1948, FO 371/69993 (F8103/21/40).

its effect on moderate Malay political leaders, particularly UMNO. Unless the situation improved, Dato Onn, the President of UMNO, would be forced by his followers into making some kind of statement on the matter. Otherwise, UMNO would lose ground to the extremists. MacDonald mentioned that Dato Onn had in fact proposed to go to Bangkok to discuss the matter with the Thai authorities. However, on his advice, the idea was also dropped. Instead MacDonald hoped he would be able to discuss the whole issue with Direck Jayanama, former Thai Ambassador in London, when the latter visited Singapore in mid-June on his return to Bangkok.

MacDonald also expressed his hope that Whittington would accept his statements in the spirit in which they were offered. They were purely academic and innocent reflections on a little bit of past history. However, he personally believed that it was a pity that circumstances made it impossible for territories in South Thailand inhabited by Malays to be joined with Malaya after the war. This would have substantially solved a number of problems, including the Pattani Malay unrest that they were facing at the moment. MacDonald also voiced his fears that this problem was likely to be a continuing, and possibly increasing, source of embarrassment not only to the Thai authorities but also to the Malayan authorities, and therefore to general British interests in Southeast Asia. However, he realised fully the strength of the arguments

which were presented by the Foreign Office when the matter was considered at the end of the war. He assured Whittington that there was no question whatever about the loyal adherence of all officials concerned in the Malayan service to Her Majesty's Government policy.

Whittington, in response to MacDonald's telegram, replied that he did not believe that MacDonald's brief visit to Bangkok would be connected in Thai minds with interference in Thailand's internal affairs.<sup>37</sup> Such a visit would be described as a transitional call made for convenience. He agreed to arrange an informal meeting with Pibul, whom he thought would surely be pleased and reassured that the British could still be sympathetic to him. On such an occasion, it would be natural to discuss matters of common interest, including the problem of Pattani Malays. However, he did not approve the suggestion to send a personal message to Pibul as it might be more pointed and liable to offend susceptibilities than any discussions which might take place on the occasion of a visit. A message, in his opinion, would also be much less effective. He agreed that much benefit might accrue from discussing the situation with Direck Jayanama. Not only could the Malayan point of view be explained to him, but he would probably be able to explain the Thai standpoint more lucidly than had previously been done.

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37. Whittington-Foreign Office, 7 June, 1948, FO 371/69993 (F8103/21/40).

MacDonald agreed with the advice given by Whittington. In his telegram to Whittington, MacDonald expressed his willingness to visit Bangkok later.<sup>38</sup> The best plan, he said, was to see how the conversation with Direck Jayanama went and what the situation would be when the latter returned to Bangkok. After that it might be helpful if MacDonald came to Bangkok for a brief visit. That visit would be one of a series of visits which he was paying to the different capitals in East Asia. The purpose of the visit to Bangkok was to make certain contacts with Pibul Songgram and members of his government and to hold informal discussion on various matters of common concern, for example, rice supplies, Communism in Southeast Asia and others. The problem of Pattani would be one of the items among the several aspects of common concern. Such a visit, added MacDonald, might be helpful for the purpose of assuring Pibul of the British readiness to work in friendly cooperation with him.

Pibul's decision not to call for a conference with Mahyideen also caused disappointment to the Colonial Office. In his letter to Paul Grey of the Foreign Office, J.B Williams, Assistant Secretary, did not believe that by merely warning Mahyideen they should achieve an end to the

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38. Nanking-Foreign Office, 12 June 1948, FO 371/69993 (F8322/21/40).

agitation.<sup>39</sup> The danger was that in place of him some much less manageable person would take the lead and an even more serious situation develop. The Colonial Office felt strongly that it was not enough just to allow the situation to drift. It recognised that the British Government had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of Thailand, but Williams reminded Grey that it was not those in London who were affected by the situation but the Malays in Malaya. It was quite unrealistic to suppose that their feelings would be governed by the strict law of the position. All they knew was that people whom they had always regarded as of the same stock as themselves were reported to be suffering ill-treatment. It was the Colonial Office's opinion that to remain disinterested in the matter would be likely to worsen and not improve relations with Thailand.

Meanwhile, since no meeting was to be held between Mahyideen and the Thai Government, Williams expressed strongly the Colonial Office support for the opening of the British Consulate in Songkhla. This might improve border relations.

#### Direck Jayanama in Singapore

On June 16 1948, Direck Jayanama visited Singapore as the official guest of the British Commissioner-

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39. Williams-Grey, 8 June 1948, FO 371/69993 (F8190/21/40).

General.<sup>40</sup> MacDonald took the opportunity to discuss the Pattani problems with Direck. He explained to him that the Pattani problem was liable to cause considerable embarrassment in Malaya and it might affect the friendly relations between Malaya and Thailand. The Malayan authorities recognised the fact that it was an internal matter for Thailand but it was also of concern to Malaya. MacDonald hoped that the Thai Government would feel able to introduce into those provinces any administrative or other changes which would make the Pattani Malays content and deprive the extremist elements both in Thailand and Malaya of alleged grievances which they could exploit to their mutual disadvantage. Direck replied that he fully understood the dilemma faced by the Malayan authorities and agreed to convey MacDonald's sentiments to Pibul when he reached home.

Dato Onn was present at the meeting with Direck. Dato Onn told him about the problems he had to face as the President of UMNO.<sup>41</sup> His followers had pressed him to make a declaration on the subject of friendship to Pattani so as to prevent the Communist elements among the Malays from monopolising all the political issues. So far, he had succeeded in refusing to do anything of that kind. He had

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40. MacDonald-Foreign Office, 22 June 1948, FO 371/69993 (F8768/21/40).

41. Dato Onn bin Jaffar was the founder and first president of UMNO.



explained to his followers that the Pattani problem was not only an internal matter for Thailand but also that such a declaration would offend the Thai authorities and be unhelpful to the Pattani Malays. At the beginning of the meeting Dato Onn agreed, on Direck's suggestion, to prepare a memorandum to be submitted to Pibul. However, on the advice of MacDonald, the idea was dropped.<sup>42</sup> It was felt that it was improper for Dato Onn to submit the memorandum through Direck as he was considered to belong to Pridi's group.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, MacDonald himself was planning to visit Bangkok in late November and Pattani problems would be one of the issues to be discussed with the Thai Government.

#### The Emergency and the Pattani problem

The situation along Malayan-Thai border became more critical after the outbreak of Communist insurgency in Malaya in mid-June 1948.<sup>44</sup> To forestall the possibility that the Communists might use Thai frontier areas as their sanctuary, the Malayan Government sought Thai Government cooperation to prevent the Communists from establishing

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42. MacDonald-Foreign Office, 22 June 1948, FO 371/69993 (F8768/21/40).

43. Ibid.

44. For a detailed discussion on the Communist insurrection in Malaya see, Anthony Short, The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960, London, 1975.

themselves along the Thai-Malayan border. Accordingly, plans for close cooperation between Thai local authorities and Malayan authorities in operation against the Communists were agreed. Early in September, a state of emergency was declared in the area which was followed by the reinforcement of Thai police forces on the frontier.

These developments, however, worsened the situation in the Malay provinces. A press report stated that more Malays had fled into Malaya because of a new wave of persecution carried out by the local Thai authorities. Utusan Melayu, in an editorial, expressed its fears that the 'declaration of a state of emergency' in the four Southern provinces might be used to suppress the Pattani Malays, who were in revolt against the Thai authorities. The paper went to say:

'The Siamese government has introduced emergency regulations on the grounds of combating the Communists, who are alleged to be present on the Siam-Malaya border. But it must be borne in mind that the Malays of Patani have also been accused by the Siamese Government as Communists. Does the Siamese Government intend by declaring a state of emergency in those Malay provinces to legalise its action in suppressing the Malays?'<sup>45</sup>

The Times reported on September 10 that eighteen Malays had fled from the four Southern provinces into

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45. Utusan Melayu, 6 September 1948.

Malaya bringing the story that 'a new phase in the persecution of Malays in Southern Thailand' had begun after the visit of Lt General Sook Chatakrob, Thai Minister of Defence.<sup>46</sup> The Times also alleged that the Thai authorities were more interested in suppressing the Malays than the Communists who were reported to be present in the locality. It reported:

'A correspondent who talked to these Malays on the bank of the Golok river today says their story is that they fled from the town of Teluban on Friday night after a Malay had been seriously wounded by the Siamese police. They expressed the fear that the Malays, and not the Communists, will be the target of the Siamese in border actions. The men also brought the story of several hundred Chinese employed on a rubber estate at Telok Rengah 30 miles inside Siam, many of whom, when not working, wear uniforms with three white stars on the breast pockets. They carry sten guns, tommy guns and rifle, with hand grenades hanging from their belts.'<sup>47</sup>

This apprehension was shared by Mahyideen who said in Kota Bharu that he was worried about the situation in South Thailand.<sup>48</sup>

Cunyngham-Brown, on his appointment as the acting British Consul in Songkhla, was instructed by the British Embassy to check the authenticity of the press reports of

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46. Times, 10 September 1948.

47. Ibid.

48. Mahyideen-B.W. Jones, 3 September 1948, Jones Papers.

the alleged persecution of the Malays. Shortly after his appointment, Cunyngham-Brown toured the Malay provinces. He went to Kota Bharu where he collected information and took down statements from various runaways from Thai administration. In his report he noted that:

Of the very many Malays from Siam who had recently taken up their abode in Kelantan I thought it best to select only those who came from a very limited area, in order to reduce their stories to some sort of control and corroboration; and therefore chose the immediate surroundings of the towns of Narathiwat and Saiburi - or Bangnara and Taluban, as the Malays would say. Within that limited area I collected the names and details of no less than 66 Malays who had been killed by the Siamese police since the beginning of 1946 until now; there being, as they explained, many more whom they had probably forgotten and many who are missing and possibly killed, but in regard to whom there is no actual evidence of death. It is perhaps worth bearing in mind that these allegations emanate from a small area only - they do not include the heavy Malay death rolls that I heard about, but disregarded, from inland districts and from all along the frontier; and it has certainly been necessary for me to remember that all the allegations and statements that I collected in Kelantan were hearsay only - and were moreover already suspect as being evidence of people at odds with Siamese law.

Summary justice - or an ignorant and venal policeman's version of it - dealt out on the spot from the business end of a service rifle, no appeal for 80% of the border population to any higher court, and a negligent, corrupt and harsh administration, appear to be making a fine mess of the country just north of the Malayan frontier. Whether that mess is or is not the ideal forcing ground for Communist propaganda - for attentive ears to any suggestion for an entirely different sort of administration that promises relief - is a matter of opinion. The British are

not making any constructive suggestions for their betterment (I believe in general the majority of people in the border countries of Siam still feel that we let them down most callously after the war) - but are the Communists who seem to be busy enough in most places? In short, the whole border country is clearly in a highly receptive condition to any infection that may be floating about - and will continue to be so until the Siamese leopard changes his spots.'49

In conclusion, Cunyngham-Brown said he did not believe that the Malayan authorities would be able to get real cooperation from the Thais against the Communists while the Malay discontent persisted. He feared that if the Malays were pressed too hard they might be forced to make common cause with the Communists.

Geoffrey H. Thompson, the British Ambassador, however, considered Cunyngham-Brown's report as 'unreliable' because it was based on unreliable sources - the Pattani Malay refugees - who were naturally anti-Thai in sentiment.<sup>50</sup> He blamed also the Malayan authorities for allowing discontent to be fanned by the British Malayan officers and others from British territories, in the belief that at the end the British would come to their help. The belief was fading and in their disappointment, the Malays concerned, as pointed out by Cunyngham-Brown in his report,

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49. C. Brown-Thompson, 11 October 1948 in Thompson-Dening, 14 October 1948, FO 371/70000 (F15181/21/40).

50. Thompson-Dening, 14 October 1948, FO 371/70000 (F15181/21/40).

seemed inclined to join the Communists.

Thompson's allegation against their officers irritated the Malayan authorities. The Malayan authorities had several times denied that their officers encouraged the anti-Thai movement. In fact, this issue had been discussed and settled between the Malayan and Embassy officials in Singapore in May 1948.

Kuala Lumpur-Embassy relations became more strained when Cunyngham-Brown was suspended from duty and asked to leave the post immediately on October 21. The reason for his dismissal was because Cunyngham-Brown did not ask Thompson's approval when sending a cover-note to Kuala Lumpur recommending, Thompson alleged, the British takeover of South Thailand as the only way of relieving the distress of the Pattani Malays.<sup>51</sup> Sir Henry Gurney, the new High Commissioner for Federation of Malaya, felt very distressed at the way in which one of his officials had been treated. He said that Cunyngham-Brown was not informed of the reason for his suspension from duty and had been given no opportunity of defending himself. He requested the Colonial Office to request an explanation from Thompson for his action.<sup>52</sup>

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51. Thompson-Foreign Office, 22 October 1948, FO 371/69999 (F14816/21/40).

52. High Commissioner, Malaya-Colonial Office, 4 December 1948, FO 371/70000 (F15511/21/G).

In his letter to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Thompson considered Cunyngham-Brown's recommendations as 'so outrageous' because they could only lead to the gravest consequences, including major military commitments.<sup>53</sup>

'This country under its present (or indeed any) leadership would never acquiesce in a British invasion or cession of territory under force. Moreover, any action on lines proposed would be catastrophic to the East and, I submit, most harmful to our relations with the United States. Also, it would be a literal godsend to Russia. Are we really to deal with Siam as Hitler dealt with Czechoslovakia? And where is Malaya to get her vital rice if we deliberately turn Siamese into bitter enemies?'<sup>54</sup>

Thompson pointed out that the Thais might have been guilty of many excesses towards the Malays, but the former had also been subjected to much deliberate provocation. Furthermore, the disaffection in those areas had been to a very large extent inspired and organised from Malaya with the knowledge and indeed, the approval, of certain British authorities. To prove his point, Thompson quoted a report from the 'Pan Malayan Review of Political and Security Intelligence' of October 13 which revealed that the Malays in South Thailand were made to believe that they would receive British support for armed rebellion

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53. Thompson-Foreign Office, 22 October 1948, FO 371/69999 (F14816/21/40).

54. Ibid.

against the Thai authorities. In fact, a splinter group of GEMPAR known as KRIS had issued a well-made metal badge carrying the words, in English, 'NEW MALAYA', to its members, as well as to the Malays in South Thailand.<sup>55</sup> The distribution was said to be part of a scheme connected with the invasion of Thailand by British troops although British Advisers and Chief Police Officers, said the report, had made it quite plain that there could be no armed aid for Malays in South Thailand 'as the matter stands at present'.

Thompson commented that while it was gratifying to observe that British Advisers and Chief Police Officers had made it plain to the agitators that there could be no armed help for the Malays in South Thailand, it would be noted that their advice was apparently qualified by the words 'as the matter stands at present'. It would interest him to know what that qualification meant. Apart from that, the intimate association which apparently existed between the British authorities in Kelantan particularly and persons actively creating disaffection in the territory of a foreign state with which the British Government were

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55. The 'Cross Krieses' or 'New Malaya' came into existence after the Dusun Nyior uprising. It was formed by the anti-Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen's group in GEMPAR who was dissatisfied with his moderate attitude. It was believed that 'Cross Krieses' was headed by Nik Mahmood bin Nik Majid. The aim of 'Cross-Krieses' was no different from GEMPAR i.e to liberate South Thailand from the Thai rule and amalgamate it with British Malaya. See, Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen, 'Comment on L. MacDonald's, the Daily Mail correspondent regarding the 'Cross Krieses' Movement, n.d in Tengku Jalal Papers.



in friendly relations and upon whose economic collaboration for rice exports Malaya depended, left, in his opinion, 'a very nasty taste in the mouth'. He warned the Foreign Office that unless those British officials could be made to understand the wider issues at stake, they were certainly heading for grave complications for which the officials in question would bear a heavy responsibility.

At a meeting in the Colonial Office on October 26, 1948 which was attended by MacDonald and Foreign Office officials, Paul Grey and A.M Palliser, the question of Cunyngham-Brown's suspension and Thompson's allegations on the attitude of the Malayan authorities towards the Malay problem in South Thailand were discussed.<sup>56</sup> MacDonald pointed out that Thompson's suspicions of Malayan authorities concerning Thailand were entirely baseless. He hoped to have a further talk with Thompson and would try to clear up their differences once and for all. With regard to Cunyngham-Brown's case, he was sorry that the method of dealing with Cunyngham-Brown had been quite so abrupt and a number of persons' susceptibilities thereby offended.

Commenting on the issue, A.M Palliser said:

'Although Mr MacDonald is, of course, entirely sincere in his protestations and it is clear that all the Senior Officials, both civil and military, in Malaya have no sinister designs upon Siam, I have no doubt that amongst the Junior officials on the

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56. Thompson-Foreign Office, 26 October 1948, FO 371/69999 (F15031/21/40).

border there is inevitably a good deal of anti-Siamese feeling: just as in Siam, although in Bangkok everyone declares their willingness to cooperate with the Malayan authorities and to give liberal treatment to the Pattani Malays, in South Siam itself corruption is rife and a certain amount of oppression undoubtedly takes place.

'The solution to this, however, clearly lies in a better understanding between our Embassy and the Malayan authorities - and the 'Foreign Office set-up in the Cathay Building.' Unless Thompson is satisfied in his own mind that no one who matters in Malaya wants to turn Siam into a British colony, he will find it hard to put our case to the Siamese; and unless the Malayan authorities make it clear to their Juniors that the Siamese are an independent people whose independence has to be respected, the Malays will continue to receive covert support from ignorant and prejudiced officials.'<sup>57</sup>

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, after consultation with the Colonial Secretary and MacDonald, replied to Thompson that the matter would be investigated, but that meanwhile he was assured that it was not the British policy to encourage or incite the Malays across the border in Thailand, and least of all to consider armed invasion.<sup>58</sup> He also authorised Thompson to inform the Thai Government that the reports of subversive activities in Malaya would be immediately investigated, but that such activities would have no kind of support either from Her Majesty's Government or from the Colonial authorities. On

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57. Minute by A.M Palliser on Scrivener-Foreign Office, 25 October 1948, FO 371/69999 (F15515/21/40).

58. Foreign Office-Thompson, 23 October 1948, FO 371/69999 (F15511/21/40).

November 4, Sir O. Sargeant, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, telegraphed to the British Ambassador in Bangkok.<sup>59</sup> Thompson was asked to give an explanation for Cunyngham-Brown's dismissal from his post in Songkhla. Sargeant agreed that it was within Thompson's right to relieve Cunyngham-Brown of his duties; in any case Cunyngham-Brown was wholly incorrect in writing as he did to Sir Henry Gurney and MacDonald since as Consular Officer any recommendations or suggestions he made should be to the Ambassador. Despite his explanations to the Colonial Office authorities, Sargeant still feared that they would not be content with it. To solve the matter, Thompson should discuss his action personally with Gurney and MacDonald. At the same time they could also discuss Thai border policy. The best procedure was for Thompson to attend the Conference of United Kingdom and Administrative Representatives in Southeast Asia which was to be held in Singapore in mid-November.

#### **Thai Government policy towards the Malays**

Meanwhile, on October 19, Thompson discussed with Pibul Songgram the alleged persecution of the Malays by the local Thai authorities.<sup>60</sup> He told Pibul that those reports

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59. Foreign Office-Bangkok, 4 November 1948, FO 371/70000 (F15719/21/40).

60. Thompson-Foreign Office, 6 November 1948, FO 371/70000 (F15719/21/40).

had caused some concern to the Malayan authorities, with consequent damage to relations with Thailand. While he personally thought that many of those reports were exaggerated he was finding his role as defence counsel for the Thais increasingly difficult. It was high time, he argued, for the Thai Government to speak out openly and frankly. The whole situation should be investigated on the spot by responsible authorities and their findings published. Should such an investigation reveal abuses then those should be corrected. As things stood, bitter enemies of the Thais were constantly vocal while the Thai Government themselves remained consistently quiet.

Pibul assured Thompson that steps would be taken to solve the Malay problem in the South. In the meantime his cabinet had decided to form a 'Siamese Security Commission of the South'.<sup>61</sup> One of the tasks of the Commission was to ascertain the facts in the Malay provinces so that accurate information regarding the general situation might be available for publicity. He had no objection to the attachment of Captain Dennis, the British Consul at Songkhla, to the Commission in any tour of inspection it undertook.

Following the discussion, Thompson wrote a personal letter to Pibul seeking amplification of his

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61. Ibid.

remarks.

My dear Prime Minister,

I have been pondering deeply over the part of our conversation yesterday that touched upon the question of Malays in the Southern provinces of Siam, and I think it may be useful if I make my position in regard to this matter absolutely clear. It is, quite simply, that I view with growing concern the increasing effect upon all (gp. undec.) officials and others in Malaya, of a constant stream of rumours and reports of alleged harsh treatment of Siamese Malays by local authorities in the border districts.

2. Let me say at once that admittedly the condition of these people, inhabitants and subjects of Siam, is not, legally speaking, any concern of the authorities in Malaya. At the same time, Your Excellency and I, charged as we are with the maintenance and development of good relations between our respective countries, cannot either of us afford to ignore any factors that may react adversely upon those relations; and, in this way, I think we have both to face the ugly fact that rightly or wrongly, the reports of ill-treatment of southern Malays, whether these reports be true or false, are creating a lot of unfriendly prejudice against the Siamese in Malaya. Furthermore those reports also unhappily find some credence in the United Kingdom. I greatly fear that if they continue to circulate unchecked much longer, serious and unnecessary misunderstandings may arise to complicate Your Excellency's task and mine.

3. It is my personal belief, which I have expressed to my Government on more than one occasion, that tales of alleged Malay sufferings in South Siam are greatly exaggerated and moreover that there is a good deal of deliberate mischief making going on. Be all this as it may the fact that I have no personal experience nor knowledge of conditions in the South, inevitably militates against my being able effectively to calm the emotions quite sincerely aroused in some British quarters

by these melancholy stories. It is for this reason that I ventured to urge upon Your Excellency yesterday the urgent need for the Siamese Government to tackle the whole problem openly and frankly, and to let the world know about their attitude. As things stand, Siam is suffering from harmful publicity which is never answered.

4. In all these circumstances, it was with much relief that I understood Your Excellency to say yesterday that the Cabinet were considering the appointment of regional committees in certain provincial areas and that the Southern Committee would inter alia investigate and report upon the position in Malay districts. I also understood Your Excellency to intimate in the above regard, that the said committee would be authorised to avail itself of any assistance that Captain Dennis, the British Consul at Songkhla, might be able to extend; and that this officer might indeed accompany the Committee when on tour through the affected districts.

5. This evidence of Your Excellency's intention to satisfy yourself about the facts of the situation in the South, comes at an important moment because Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner-General in Malaya, is at present in London in connexion with the Conference of Commonwealth Ministers. I have, therefore felt it my duty to inform my Government of the tenor of our conversation yesterday and I now await with anticipation the letter which, Your Excellency will recall, it was agreed (gp. undec. ?Prince) Warakan should write to me in clarification of plans which Your Excellency has in mind.<sup>62</sup>

On November 3, Pibul replied. He assured Thompson that the welfare of the Malays in the four Southern Provinces would be placed under special consideration of

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62. Thompson-Foreign Office, 20 October 1948, FO 371/69999 (F14674/21/40).

the Thai Government.<sup>63</sup> Earnest efforts would be made to correct the erroneous impression that they did not enjoy the same rights and privileges as all Thai nationals. Based on the reports submitted by the Commission to the government, several reforms would be implemented to satisfy the aspirations of the Malays in the Southern Changwats. These reforms covered three major aspects: Administration, Education and Military Services.

Broadly, the new measures promised that officials appointed to the Southern Provinces would in the future be well-versed in Islamic customs and traditions and a high Muslim official (the Chularajamontri) was to be appointed to advise the Government in Islamic matters. They also included the changing of the calendar to the Muslim weekend; aid for construction of mosques; observance of Islamic law in all matters of marriage and inheritance; establishment, at government expense, of a Central Islamic Institute with the boarding facilities for intermediate and high school education; a special curriculum in Malay language in primary schools; and equality of entrance into the Thai army, navy and police. As regards the military service, the Malays had the same rights and obligations as the other inhabitants of Thailand. The most important aspect of these reforms was the guarantee of equality of Muslims with Thai nationals and guaranteed freedom to

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63. Thompson-Foreign Office, 4 November 1948, FO 371/70000 (F15476/21/40).

follow the Islamic faith.

Pibul Songgram hoped that these reforms would dissipate any misunderstanding and prejudice which resulted from deliberate mischief-makers, rumours and exaggerated stories. However, he was still of opinion that the principal sources of such propaganda were Muslim leaders residing in Malaya.

Reporting to the Foreign Office, Thompson argued that Pibul's letter fully supported his contentions that the Bangkok Government was not animated by any desire to persecute the Malays nor to tread upon their religious susceptibilities.<sup>64</sup> The measures relating to local employment, education, military service and respect for Islamic customs and traditions were indeed admirable. In any oriental country however and indeed in many others, allowance must be made, Thompson argued, for the inefficiency and corrupt practices of native functionaries stationed in wild country remote from Ministerial control. In this particular instance, the situation had been envenomed by subversive propaganda persistently carried on among Pattani Malays, probably ever since the Japanese collapsed, by persons residing in the territory, such as Mahyideen, in hope of attaining certain personal aims and ambitions.

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64. Ibid.



Thompson added that this agitation had done much harm, for it had not only led Pattani Malays to adopt aggressive tactics, but also to look for British support. The inevitable result had been harshness and worse on the part of the local Thai authorities whose attitude could scarcely have been improved by their well-founded suspicions of the sympathy of many British officials and others in Malaya for Malay irredentism in South Thailand.

In all the circumstance and in view of the imperative necessity to avoid quite unnecessary and dangerous complications in the border zone, Thompson hoped the Thai Prime Minister's letter would be studied in London and in Malaya with the care it merited. He also hoped that the investigation promised by the Foreign Office recently would be pressed. Ever since the problem of the Pattani Malays began to assume menacing proportions in early 1948, the British Embassy in Bangkok had worked hard for a detente. Having regard to subsequent development and in general to the wide issues raised by the situation in Southeast Asia as a whole, Thompson thought it reasonable to expect their efforts would now be effectively seconded in Malaya itself.

Despite Pibul's concessions to the Malays in South Thailand, certain Malayan newspapers remain sceptical that it would be implemented in the remote region of the South. Singapore Free Press sneered at the announcement, saying:

'Marshal Phibul Songkhram's own record has not been such as to inspire the belief that Pattani Malays could expect sympathy from any government which he leads, for he has been renowned for his ultra-nationalistic outlook and his support of the 'assimilation policy'.<sup>65</sup> GEMPAR issued a statement criticizing the concessions as 'insincere', emphasizing that 'the Malays in Southern Siam demand the return of Malay sovereignty in the four Southern states.'<sup>66</sup>

### Kuala Lumpur Meeting

Soon after the United Kingdom's Southeast Asia Diplomatic conference in Singapore on November 6-7, 1948, Thompson and his senior officials from the Embassy flew to Kuala Lumpur for a meeting with the Malayan authorities on Malayan-Thai border problems.<sup>67</sup> The meeting was held in King's House, Kuala Lumpur on November 16, 1948. The meeting was attended by Malcolm MacDonald, the Commissioner-General, Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner for the Federation of Malaya, G.F. Thompson, The British Ambassador, Major-General C.B. Boucher, the General Officer Commanding officer for Malaya, Major-

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65. Singapore Free Press, 23 November 1948.

66. Singapore Free Press, 14 December 1948.

67. Thompson-Foreign Office, 11 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F15940/21/40); MacDonald-Foreign Office, 17 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F16259/21/40); MacDonald-Foreign Office, 26 November, 1948, FO 371/70002 (F17593/21/40).

General J.M Kirkman, the Chief of Staff to Commander-in-Chief, FARELF, P.S Scrivener, the Deputy Commissioner-General (Foreign Affairs), Sir A. Newbould, the Chief Secretary, Federation of Malaya, Colonel W.N. Gray, the Commissioner of Police, Federation of Malaya, Captain Dennis, British Consul at Songkhla, Colonel Heslop, the Military Attaché, Bangkok, and W.F.N Churchill, the British Adviser, Kelantan.

The Commissioner-General opened the meeting by asking Thompson to make a statement about the position as he saw it in Bangkok, to be followed by Sir Henry Gurney who would set forth the situation as the Federation authorities saw it. Thompson began by spelling out the instructions he had received in London in March 1946 on the eve of his departure to Bangkok to take up his post as a British Minister in Bangkok. His instructions were:

1. To avoid all military commitments in Thailand.
2. To get all the rice out of the country he possibly could, and
3. To get British commercial interests re-established.

In carrying out his work and seeking to achieve concrete results, he had no weapons beyond the confident relations between himself and the Thais and between himself

and the Americans. So far, by the goodwill of the Thais, the rice procurement had been settled. Agreements also had been reached with the Thais on oil, tin and teak. In addition to that the Thai Government had also agreed to buy the Burma Railway. They also assumed and paid in full the service on their foreign debt. Another consideration arose from the Communist menace. Despite the misunderstandings on the border, he had tried to keep the Thais on the Western side. The only way to do so was to maintain the confidence of the Thais in his good faith. They were vulnerable geographically and there would probably be repercussions from the developments in China. Thailand was also facing rather unsettled internal political conditions. Although Pibul's position was secured, his regime was still menaced by Pridi's followers. It was to British interests to see that there should be stability in Thailand.

As regards the American angle in this, in 1946 the Americans affected to be deeply suspicious of British economic and political aims in Thailand. Unless the Americans and the British could maintain a united front on all important matters, neither of them could get anywhere as the Thais could run from one to the other, telling each what the other one said. Their tactics were to encourage rivalry between them. Therefore he had to satisfy the American Ambassador that he had no ulterior aims on Thailand.

The importance of confidence was illustrated by what happened in April-June 1946 when military operations were carried out by British forces in Thailand's southern territory to deal with the bandits along the border. By the end of May the operations had grown to a divisional level. There had been general outcry and strong representation about it in Bangkok as no-one had known exactly what had been going on. It had been a question of searching houses, surrounding towns and villages, interfering with traffic and so forth. The operations were called off by the then Commander-in-Chief, General Stopford. Thompson warned that the Thais were always suspicious of foreigners and especially in South Thailand where there were enormous deposits of tin which the British were alleged to covet.

Sir Henry Gurney, on his part, assured Thompson that it was not the intention of the Government of the Federation of Malaya, or its British officers to be concerned with furthering the interests of Malays in Thailand. He gave the assurance that, since he had been in Malaya, there had been no British Officer who either had given, or was giving, or would give, any help to the irredentist Malay elements in Thailand. He fully appreciated that, as the Ambassador had said, the Thais were apt to be suspicious of the British, but he hoped the British need not be suspicious of the Federation as well. In this connection, he had personally been at some pains to

go up to the border area and ascertain for himself that the allegations that there were Malayan officers building up Malay confidence that the British would support their liberation from Thai rule were untrue. He also reminded Thompson that the Federation of Malaya was not merely a British interest. It was Malay territory. Therefore it was not easy for the British in Malaya to take a line parallel with that of the British in Thailand. In Malaya he was acting as the head of a Government, and not purely as a representative of the British Government, and this Government was responsible particularly to the people of Malaya.

The Federation Government was concerned with removing the Communist concentration in the border area. His information was that within some ten miles of the border, particularly on the Kelantan side, there were between 1,500 and 2,000 Chinese Communist bandits. As long as they remained there, they created a state of uneasiness and general unhappiness and were a threat to the security of the Federation. The Government of the Federation had a duty to their people to do their best to have these Communists eliminated.

At this point, MacDonald suggested that an effort should be made to remove any suspicion which existed in Bangkok of the motives, actions and policy of the Federation. He agreed whole-heartedly with the Ambassador

as to the importance of establishing close cooperation and a constructive relationship with Thailand. A great deal was owed to the Ambassador for the excellent relations he had established with the Thai Government. He also had successfully established a close confidential relationship with the Americans. But the Ambassador and his colleagues in Bangkok did seem to feel a suspicion that, not necessarily in high places but perhaps lower down, the British in Malaya were either giving encouragement to the Malay dissident elements or were not discouraging them from doing things on the border to embarrass the Thais. He assured Thompson that the Federation Government had been insistent that nowhere should encouragement be given to the Malays. Sir Edward Gent, he said, had been firm about that. No encouragement had been given to Mahyideen. In fact the instruction had been to tell Mahyideen to keep quiet and to use his influence with his people to tell them not to start an uprising.

Thompson told the meeting that in seeking his objectives as an Ambassador he had in mind the interests of Malaya, which had in the past suffered greatly from events in Thailand. But during his two and a half years in Bangkok, he had to work to a constant background of Malayan reports of the suffering of Malays in South Thailand, which lately seemed to have become somewhat emotional, and an intermittent press campaign. He was not in Thailand to protect the Thai Malays, who had never been under British

control or protection. He had seen a report in which it was said that they now anticipated British military support, and there was the badge which had recently been manufactured. Such things were sometimes difficult to explain to the Thais.

In reply to a question, W.F Churchill, the British Adviser, Kelantan, said that the organisation which had issued the badges had broken away from Mahyideen. With regard to the press, the Commissioner-General said that the press must be free to say what they felt. They were able to give the press guidance, but whether or not they would take it was up to them. However, the authorities should endeavour to see that they did not increase their difficulties. Thompson, while appreciating the fact that the press was free, thought they should produce accurate information. For instance, Morrison of the 'Times' had been sending back to London tendentious reports on Thailand. He asked where Morrison got the material.

Gurney replied that the trouble was that he got his material from actual facts. If the Thais would stop doing what they were doing, there would not be this outburst. It was difficult to keep the press quiet when there was some justification for it. Thompson asked the High Commissioner if he were convinced that the reports of the treatment of the Malays in Thailand were not exaggerated. The High Commissioner replied that he thought



they were exaggerated.

Churchill added that in the past two or three months he had spoken to 25-30 people, both men and women, who had come over the border. Few of them had been able to give direct reports of atrocities, but some had. His impression was that, though there were a number of exaggerated tales in circulation, there had been a certain number of brutal murders and abductions of women, especially in the Belukar Semak area.

Gurney then raised two points. He asked whether there was anything more that could be done to prevent activities in Malayan territory aimed at provoking trouble in Southern Thailand, and secondly, on the other side of the border whether there was any way of ensuring that the Malays in Southern Thailand did get fair play. For instance, were the badges manufactured in Kota Bharu? Churchill said that he did not know but he thought the badges were made somewhere in Malaya. When he had first heard of them and the GEMPAR society, he had taken great trouble to go round immediately to see Tengku Abdul Jalal, who he thought was connected with it, and told them to keep absolutely quiet.

MacDonald then asked Churchill for a brief survey of the organisations and their background. Churchill first mentioned Mahyideen who, he thought, could not be called an

organisation. Mahyideen had been in the service of the Kelantan Government and was now a pensioner. He was inclined to let his heart rule his head. More than a year ago money had been collected, in Southern Thailand, for him to help the Pattani Malays by bringing prominence to their sufferings. This resulted in the newspaper articles published in Singapore. Sir Edward Gent, the late Governor of the Malayan Union, had written to the British Adviser about those articles, asking him to point out to Mahyideen that he was doing a very great disservice to the Pattani Malays. Both the Mentri Besar of Kelantan and the British Adviser saw Mahyideen and, with some reluctance he agreed to calm down. In November 1947, Mahyideen was in Singapore and had thought of going to Bangkok, but he did not go and since then had done nothing. As his name had been frequently mentioned in Bangkok, especially at the trial of Haji Sulong, as having encouraged the revolt, he published on April 28, 1948 a notice to the South Thailand Malays asking them to do nothing whatsoever, and it was believed, he himself had done absolutely nothing. The refugees who had been to him had been turned away as, he said, he had no money for them. He was now very discredited with them. Because he was so discredited and because of the apparent futility felt by the rank and file of their natural leaders, they had turned to Tengku Petra and Tengku Abdul Jalal. MacDonald said that Mahyideen and the others must be made to realise that there was no question of assistance coming to them from the British authorities, either civil

or military, in the Federation. The Pattani Malays were in Thai territory and Thailand was an independent sovereign state and the British could not interfere with Thai sovereignty. Churchill said that he and his assistant had stressed this point at every opportunity.

Thompson enquired why those Pattani leaders could not be 'told' rather than just 'asked' not to do these things. Gurney replied that they were, in fact, 'told'.

Thompson then asked about the badges. He wanted fullest information about them as these would no doubt get into the hands of the Thais and Americans and he would have to explain them. Gurney thought that the badges might have been issued privately and without any official authority. He added that it might have been issued for use in Southern Thailand, probably by an organisation in Southern Thailand who wished South Thailand to be joined to the 'British Malaya'.

The Commissioner-General admitted that a certain amount of friction was inevitable in an Oriental country where there were religious difficulties. But British officials in Thailand should use any influence they had with the Thai authorities to get a policy adopted which would make the Pattani Malays more contented in Southern Thailand, because of the reaction in the Federation - which was not British territory but for which Britain was the

protecting Power. At present, although the left wing of UMNO had constantly urged Dato Onn to make political capital from the cause of the Pattani Malays, he had consistently resisted that agitation. He had heard Dato Onn, without prompting, using the argument that it was no business of the Government of the Federation 'to champion the cause of a minority in another country'. But if the situation got so bad that the local left wing got the lead over Dato Onn and the other moderate leaders, a great problem would arise in the Federation. In view of the possible reactions in the Federation, if the Ambassador could use his influence to get better treatment for the Malays in Thailand, he would be helping British interests there.

Thompson said that no one in Thailand was getting a fair deal. Those in north-eastern Thailand were just as subject to corrupt local officials as those in the South, but the position in the South was of great interest to the British as it was a potential source of difficulties to Anglo-Thai relations. His powers were limited but he had endeavoured to persuade the Thai Government in Bangkok to take this issue seriously. He had extracted the letter from the Thai Prime Minister and it was now essential to keep them up to the mark and gradually to seek improvement.

Captain Dennis added that in Thailand there was a Southern Security Council, but that was more concerned with

the Communist issue and did not concern Malays. However, all bandits and robbers, whether Malays or Chinese, would receive the same treatment and their villages might be burnt down. He emphasised that in a sovereign state the British could not stop the authorities from trying to get rid of bandits, and said he did not think the Malays were singled out for special treatment.

Gurney said that information of this sort was useful as there was a firm conviction on the part of the Malays that they were being persecuted.

MacDonald asked Gurney whether he considered the Thai Prime Minister's letter a satisfactory statement. Gurney replied that, in so far as he had studied it, it was satisfactory as long as the Thais did what they said they would do. MacDonald then suggested that Captain Dennis could watch to see if its terms were carried out. If they were not, the Ambassador could draw the attention of the Bangkok authorities to this failing. Thompson agreed to do so. Sir Alec Newbolt added that the Pibul letter would help to influence the opinion of certain responsible Malays, if there could be some indications that the Thais were prepared to go some way to meet the Malays.

The meeting then discussed border cooperation with the Thais. The Ambassador assured the meeting that the Thai Government policy was to cooperate with the British

along the border. The effectiveness and implementation of that policy was very difficult as the Thai policeman was miserably paid and did not want to fight at all. But it was unlikely that the Thais would allow the British to cross the border to clear up the Communist menace for them. It was agreed that it would be most useful if there could be a joint military discussion between British and Thai officers at Songkhla. MacDonald agreed to discuss this matter during his visit to Bangkok in late November.

The meeting appeared to be a successful one as it not only removed the tension between Thompson and Gurney regarding the Cunyngham-Brown case but also reviewed the Pattani Malay problems. Thompson did not hesitate to express the view that he had probably been precipitate and wrong in his action in suspending Cunyngham-Brown from his duties at Songkhla. On the Malayan side, a similar concession was made. It was agreed that Cunyngham-Brown was wrong in addressing a letter to MacDonald and Sir Henry Gurney which he was not prepared to pass to Thompson.

As regards the Pattani Malay problem, Thompson warned that so long as the Malayan authorities allowed the exiled leaders, such as Mahyideen, to carry out their anti-Thai activities, the situation in the four provinces would remain troublesome. It would only provoke the Thai authorities to take repressive measures against them. So far the Malayan authorities had done nothing to curb those

activities. Only when those steps were taken would the Malayan authorities be able to rely on Thai cooperation against the Communist terrorists who infested the common border.

#### MacDonald-Pibul Talks

Soon after the Kuala Lumpur meeting, MacDonald made an official visit to Thailand. This was the first time after the war that a high level British mission visited Thailand.<sup>68</sup> It was hoped especially that the visit would further strengthen Malayan-Thai relations, particularly at the time when cooperation was strongly needed to fight against the Communists along their common border.

On December 2, 1948, a conference was held in Bangkok between the British side led by MacDonald and the Thai Government headed by Pibul Songgram.<sup>69</sup> Pibul assured MacDonald that his Government was willing to cooperate with the Malayan authorities in anti-Communist measures in the South. To prove this he mentioned that the Thai General Officer Commanding 5th District had already established good personal relations with the British Consul, Captain

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68. Bangkok Post, 30 November 1948.

69. Thompson-Foreign Office, 2 December 1948, FO 371/70001 (F17042/21/40).

Dennis. He suggested that Captain Dennis should attend meetings of the 'Siamese Security Commission of the South' once a week. He also agreed with MacDonald's suggestion that a conference should be held in Songkhla between Malayan and Thai Military as well as civil authorities on border problems.

As regards the Pattani Malays, Pibul still blamed the activities of the Pattani exiles in Kelantan for creating disaffection in South Thailand. MacDonald, for his part, gave a very clear and frank exposition of the whole problem as seen in Malaya. In the course of his remarks, MacDonald gave his assurances about the British determination to respect the territorial integrity of Thailand and dealt in the most convincing manner with the allegations that sympathies with the Pattani Malays were partly inspired by their desire to occupy or otherwise to take over tin-producing areas. He congratulated the Thai Prime Minister on his recent declaration of policy towards the Malays but indicated politely that this policy would be judged by the extent to which it was effectively applied by the local authorities. He also stressed that British officials were seeking to prevent disaffection from being organised from Malayan territory and, in short, made every effort to dissipate any premature suspicions of British good faith.



MacDonald's talks with Pibul seemed to clear away a few remaining causes of possible misunderstanding between Malaya and Thailand. The talks also reflected the desire on both side to cooperate more effectively towards solving the border problems.

### Songkhla Meeting

The Pattani problem was discussed again between Thai and Malayan officials at the Songkhla conference on January 6-7, 1949.<sup>70</sup> The item on the Pattani problem was under the responsibility of the Civil (Political) Sub-Committee. This Committee was presided over by Phya Amorit Damrong, the Thai Regional Commissioner. The British representatives consisted of W.F Churchill and his assistant, Lawton, Whittington, British Counsellor, Bangkok and Captain Dennis, the British Consul, Songkhla. The Thai side was represented by Phya Amorit Damrong, the Regional Commissioner, and the Governors of Songkhla, Pattani, Yala Narathiwat and Setul.

The discussion on Pattani Malays separatism was introduced by Phya Amorit Damrong, who outlined the Thai Government's deep concern over the activities of some of the leaders of the irredentist movement who had their base

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70. Thompson-Bevin, 13 January 1949, FO 371/76289 (F1326/1061/40).

in Kelantan. In response, Churchill gave a detailed explanation. Churchill assured the Thai representatives that Mahyideen had kept quiet and had done nothing at all save grant interviews and distribute food to needy refugees. He had also become discredited in the eyes of the anti-Thai agitators on account of his passive attitude and counsel of non-violence. He had disassociated himself completely from such organisations as GEMPAR and NEW MALAYA. Tengku Abdul Jalal was not working with Mahyideen. He also was not active but, Churchill imagined, he might turn to violence as he was hot-headed. Churchill said he could not guarantee Tengku Abdul Jalal's conduct. Tengku Petra was, in Churchill's opinion, an elderly man, slow and stupid, lacking in energy, who was not apparently doing anything and unlikely to take action.

As regard Chaem Promyong or Haji Shamsuddin, Churchill informed the meeting that he had advised the Federal Government to put him in restricted residence away from the Thai border whatever his activities might be. The Kelantan authorities were on the watch for, and ready to take action against, anyone who might be caught fomenting false hopes of Malayan armed assistance for dissident Muslims from South Thailand or inciting those people to violence. Churchill classed GEMPAR and NEW MALAYA as 'catch-penny' political societies whose activities were devoted chiefly to collecting funds which the organisers misappropriated. Both these organisations were moribund.

He concluded by stressing that if at any time any evidence was produced of subversive activities against Thailand by any one living in Kelantan, the Malayan authorities would take the strongest action possible.

The meeting also discussed methods of improving the understanding of Thailand by Malayan press and public opinion. This matter was raised by the Thai delegates who asked what assistance it was possible for the Malayan authorities to give in curbing the tendentious and offensive articles which appeared from time to time in the Malayan press. The Malayan delegates explained that there was freedom of the press in Malaya and that the British and Malayan authorities themselves were often the subject of 'scurrilous and objectionable attacks', about which they could do little, from the same source. They also mentioned the lack of effective publicity from the Thai side.

To overcome the problem, the Thai Government was advised to organise a publicity campaign in Malaya by establishing a competent information officer at Singapore. There should be closer liaison between the official publicity organisations of the Thai and Malayan governments. Churchill thought that the Malayan publicity Department might be able to make effective use of suitable Thai material, if such were supplied. The Thai Regional Commissioner expressed his hope that the Malayan Government might take up a more actively pro-Thai position in its

official publicity. Selected Malayan newspaper correspondents should be invited to visit South Thailand and other parts of Thailand. Correspondents should also be invited to the Southern provinces from Bangkok.

Soon after the conference, Thompson advised the Kelantan state authorities to take action against 'a clique of leaders of the irredentist movement settled in Kota Bharu'. He argued:

'... whatever may be the opinion of the Kelantan authorities as to the innocence of their present activities, the existence of this clique must obviously be a most disturbing influence and, in the eyes of the Siamese, is the chief cause of disaffection in the 'Malay' province of South Siam'.<sup>71</sup>

Apart from taking action against Chaem Promyong or Haji Shamsuddin, Thompson considered that similar action should also be taken against Tengku Abdul Jalal and Tengku Petra.

Thereafter, the Kelantan state authorities began to take action against the Pattani leaders in Kelantan. Nai Chaem Promyong or Haji Shamsuddin, a close associate of Pridi Banamyong and a former Chularajamontri, was under police supervision in Pasir Puteh district for twelve months from January 1949 before he was extradicted to

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71. Ibid.

Thailand in early 1950.<sup>72</sup> Similar orders were made against Tengku Abdul Jalal and Tengku Petra. Tengku Abdul Jalal was placed under restrictions under the Restricted Residence Enactment in Perak from February until July 1949, when he was allowed to leave and stay in exile in Singapore. Tengku Petra and some of his followers were placed under restricted residence in Pasir Puteh district, 60 miles from the Kelantan-Thai border. As for Mahyideen, he retired from Pattani politics after increasing pressure from the Federal and State authorities. On April 30, 1954, Mahyideen died a frustrated man.

As for Haji Sulong, he was finally put on trial in Nakornsithammarat province on February 24, 1949. The trial ended in a fairly mild sentence. The court dismissed charges of sedition, but it imposed a seven-year sentence on him for 'libelling the government' in pamphlets distributed to the local population.<sup>73</sup> He made an appeal, but to no effect. He was jailed, however, for only three years and six months, and was released to return to Pattani in 1952 on the understanding that he would not involve himself in politics.<sup>74</sup> In 1954, Haji Sulong had mysteriously disappeared. The prevailing opinion among the

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72. Malaya-Bangkok, 10 February 1949, CO 717/156.

73. High Commissioner, Malaya-Bangkok, 31 March 1949, CO 717/156.

74. Bangkok Post, 1 March 1954.

Pattani nationalists was that Haji Sulong had been killed by Thai Police under General Phao Siyanond, the Director-General of Police.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, with the restrictions imposed on the Pattani leaders by the Kelantan state authorities and the subsequent dissolution of GEMPAR in early 1949, the political movement among the Pattani Malays in Malaya became dormant. The sudden death of Haji Sulong and Mahyideen, the two well-known Pattani leaders, had added a further blow to the Pattani movement. As for the Thai Government, the crisis seemed to have passed. The Thai Government presumably hoped to reconcile the Muslim community by what it considered to be great improvements in the general conditions of the region. However, strong resentment still prevailed among the Malays in the South.

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75. Gage-Foreign Office, 7 December 1954, FO 371/112264 (DS1015/24).

## CHAPTER SIX

### MALAYAN-THAI BORDER COLLABORATION AGAINST COMMUNISTS: POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The Malay trouble in the Pattani provinces tended to fade into the background with the development of a more serious disorder in Malaya in June 1948. The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) began an armed revolt against the British Malayan authorities with a view to replace them with a Communist People's Republic.<sup>1</sup> This led to the declaration of a state of national emergency in Malaya on June 18, 1948. With the outbreak of the emergency, the situation along the Thai-Malayan border became more critical. The Malayan authorities assumed that, when defeated, the Malayan Communists might infiltrate into Thai territory from Malaya and, prior to that, might use it as a base for operations.<sup>2</sup> As the land border between Malaya and Thailand was long and ran through thick jungle, it was impossible for the Malayan security forces to prevent incursions of men or the supply of weapons and materials from Thailand into Malaya.<sup>3</sup> It was to this end that Thai cooperation was felt necessary. This chapter and the next

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1. Anthony Short, The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960, London, 1975. p. 90.
  2. 'Paper on Malays in Siam', in Colonial Office-Kuala Lumpur, 18 March 1949, CO 717/156.
  3. Anthony Short, op.cit. p. 373.

will focus on the official negotiations and agreement which took place between Britain and Thailand in regard to the border collaboration against Communist terrorists.

### Early Malayan-Thai Border Collaboration

A few weeks after the declaration of a state of emergency in Malaya, Malcolm MacDonald, the British Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia, telegraphed Whittington, the British counsellor at Bangkok, asking him to invite Thai collaboration in operations against the Communists along the frontier region.<sup>4</sup> Close border cooperation between Malaya and Thailand was felt necessary in order to restrict the operations of the Communists and eventually to render them completely inoperative. As regard to the Malayan security operations, MacDonald hoped that the Thai government would not take too seriously a view of possible minor incidents such as occasional involuntary crossings of the ill-defined border by the Malayan patrols. The Thai Government was fully prepared for direct cooperation with the British Malayan authorities at the frontier to combat Communist terrorists.<sup>5</sup> They also agreed to take lenient view of occasional crossings of the

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4. Singapore-Foreign Office, No. 763, 9 July 1948, CO 537/3695.

5. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 436, 12 July 1948, CO 537/3695.



ill-defined border by the Malayan forces during operations.

In spite of this goodwill, it seemed to the Malayan authorities that the local Thai authorities on the frontier were ineffective in controlling the movement of guerillas to and across the border and also in preventing the Chinese Communists from organising and training recruits in the Thai border area.<sup>6</sup> The Times of July 17 reported to the effect that many thousands of Communists were trying to cross the border into Malaya from Thailand. This report however was discounted by the British Embassy at Bangkok. The Embassy believed that, although individual terrorists might well be finding their way into Malaya from Thailand, there was no reason to suppose that any large-scale movement of Communists was afoot.

Sir Alec Newbolt, the acting High Commissioner, decided to send a delegation under the leadership of H.P. Bryson, the acting Secretary for the Federation of Malaya, with Major-General C.B. Boucher, the G.O.C. Malayan District, Air Vice-Marshal Sanderson, A.O.C. Malaya, and high ranking Police and naval officials, to Songkhla for meeting with Thai officials of equal standing and with

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6. The Times, 17 July 1948; The Times, 25 August 1948; Singapore-Foreign Office, No. 774, 13 July 1948, CO 537/3695; Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 443, 14 July 1948, CO 537/3695; Foreign Office-Bangkok, No. 321/322, 17 July 1948, CO 537/3695; Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 451, 19 July 1948, CO 537/3695.

authority to make decisions' on border cooperation.<sup>7</sup> If the meeting was not possible at Songkhla, Newbould said he was prepared to send the delegation to Bangkok.

Whittington, however, disagreed with Newbould's plan as he himself and the Thais had all along had in mind the establishment of effective contacts across the border between the Malayan and Thai civil and military officials working at the frontier. 'Without knowing what you have in mind', Whittington told Newbould, 'I cannot see that any advantage would be gained by meeting an equivalent array of Siamese high ranking officials, either at Songkhla or at Bangkok, especially as my impression is that headquarters of various services in Bangkok are woefully lacking in accurate information about what goes on on the border. On the contrary the proposed visit would certainly give rise to liveliest speculation probably of an undesirable character, and might well frighten the Siamese.'<sup>8</sup>

Before taking any decision about Newbould's suggestion, Whittington proposed to send Guy Madoc, First Secretary at British Embassy in Bangkok, to Kuala Lumpur to explain on what basis they envisaged cooperation with the Thais could be obtained. Whittington felt that the Malayan

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7. Singapore-Bangkok, No. 480, 3 August 1948, CO 537/3695.

8. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No 479, 3 August 1948, CO 537/3695.

authorities might have in mind cooperation on a much wider scale which might involve some arrangement with Thailand that would allow British or Malayan forces to operate in Thai territory. He reminded MacDonald that any approach of that kind to the Thai authorities would be met with a rebuff which it would be easy for them to justify.

'I trust therefore that there will be no question of asking Siam to turn a blind eye to this or that improper activity by British or Malayan forces operating along the frontier. They will not agree to do so, and with justification for after all trespass by armed forces of another country is surely one of the most flagrant violations of a nation's sovereignty.'9

MacDonald however assured Whittington that no authority in Malaya, either civil or military, had ever contemplated making to the Thai government proposals to allow British or Malayan forces to operate in Thai territory.<sup>10</sup> The Malayan authorities were only interested in requesting the Thai Government to take a lenient view of accidental crossing of the ill-defined frontier by the Malayan forces during operations, including aircraft on reconnaissance.

Madoc arrived in Kuala Lumpur on August 6, 1948

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9. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 489, 6 August 1948, FO 371/69996 (F10942/21/40).

10. Singapore-Foreign Office, No. 877, 11 August, FO 371/69996 (F11221/21/40)

for discussions with the Malayan officials on border matters. At the meeting with Madoc, Newbould raised the question of the ineffectiveness of the Thai local authorities in dealing with the Chinese Communists on the Thai side of the border. The report made by the European Police officer on the border, confirmed by several other sources, indicated that there were large concentrations of armed and uniformed Chinese along the Thai side of the border, particularly in the Golok river area.<sup>11</sup> Newbould believed that their presence constituted a serious threat to Kelantan, about which the Malayan authorities could do nothing but which compelled them to divert to that area troops badly needed elsewhere. Efforts by the Kelantan officials to persuade the Thai police in the area to take action against the Communists had borne no fruits. Newbould believed that the Thai officials were intimidated by the Communists. It was agreed that a strong representation should be made to the Thai Government asking for immediate action.

In view of the dangerous situation along the border as a result of the state of emergency in Malaya, it was decided to appoint a Malayan Liaison Officer to be stationed at Songkhla pending the re-opening of the British

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11. Federation of Malaya-Secretary of State for the Colonies, No. 955, 10 August 1948, CO 537/3695.

Consulate.<sup>12</sup> Newbould thought that cooperation between Malayan and Thai authorities on the spot would thereby be more effective. After consultation with Madoc, the Malayan authorities agreed to appoint Cunyngham-Brown, a Senior official of the Malayan Civil Service, as acting Consul rather than as a Liaison Officer pending the arrival of Captain Stratford Dennis, the Consul-designate, in late October, 1948.<sup>13</sup> Captain Dennis was an ex-Naval Attaché at British Embassy in Bangkok.

Madoc and David Watherston, the Chairman of Internal Security in the Federation of Malaya, left for Songkhla on August 11 to request the Thai local authorities to take immediate action against the alleged Communist concentration along the Narathiwat-Kelantan border.<sup>14</sup>

The report about the alleged Communist concentration along the Kelantan-Narathiwat border had caused much concern to the Colonial Office. J.B. Williams, Superintendent Assistant Secretary, considered it 'as a serious development'. A request was made to the Foreign Office to make urgent representations to the Thai

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12. Singapore-Foreign Office, No. 878, 11 August 1948, FO 371/69996 (F11147/21/40).

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

Government.<sup>15</sup> Immediately, on August 10, Whittington was asked to make an immediate representation to Pibul on the need for adequate steps against those Communist terrorists. Whittington was also asked whether he thought the Thai police and army in the southern provinces were capable of dealing with the terrorists.<sup>16</sup>

On August 12, Whittington handed an aide-mémoire to the Thai Foreign Office regarding the reported concentrations of the Communists near the Golok river area.<sup>17</sup> In the evening Whittington was granted an interview with Pibul. Pibul told Whittington that instructions had already been given to the Thai local authorities to take actions against all illegal activity on the Thai side of the border. He thought there must be some mistake on the part of the Thai police to explain their not taking action. The Director-General of Police, Lt-General Luang Chart, also knew nothing about the Communists' concentration in the area. Pibul assured Whittington that he would make an immediate investigation into the matter and would see that his instructions regarding prohibition of illegal activity were carried out.

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15. J.B Williams-Brigadier C.R. Price, 10 August 1948, CO 537/3695.

16. Foreign Office-Bangkok, No. 343, 10 August 1948, CO 537/3695.

17. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 507, 12 August 1948, FO 371/69996 (F11183/21/40).

On Whittington's request for additional Thai armed reinforcements to the affected area, Pibul replied that there was no necessity for this as the police had already been strengthened and the Ministry of Defence had arranged for military and naval units to go to Narathiwat too. He would consider further steps as soon as he knew the result of the investigation.

Regarding the Foreign Office's enquiry about the capacity of the Thai police and army to deal with the Communists, Whittington was of the view that as long as the Thai police remained alone at Golok river they would not be able to take very effective steps against a determined enemy if the latter were at all numerous.

He noted that,

'Taking into account the absence of any Siamese reputation for fighting, the quite incompetent administration and the woeful lack of intelligence now apparent in Bangkok about what is going on in South Siam, I fully agree to the present need for taking all possible precautions on the Malayan side against incursions from Siamese territory'.<sup>18</sup>

Whittington's reply, which was not altogether reassuring, caused grave anxiety to the Malayan authorities. It seemed clear to them that however willing

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18. Ibid.

the Thai authorities in Bangkok might be to cooperate with the Malayan authorities and to deal with the terrorists organizing themselves in Thailand, the Thai authorities on the spot were clearly intimidated by the Communists and were unwilling to take any action against them. Thus no matter to what extent Pibul might offer his cooperation and however willing the Thai Government might claim to be cooperative with the Malayan authorities, for instance the appointment of a Malayan Liaison Officer to be Acting Consul at Songkhla, the fact remained that Chinese Communists were marching about quite openly in the Thai border villages. The Times of August 25 even carried a report to the effect that two terrorists shot dead by Gurkhas in the Pauh district of Kedah were found carrying Thai travel permits and subscription lists.

On this MacDonald wrote:

'Viewed in its broad nominal aspect, the situation is that we here in Malaya are engaged in resisting a Communist threat to the peace of South East Asia and not only to peace of Northern Malaya such as would be presented by movement back and forth across the frontier of ordinary bandits. Operations now being carried out are therefore as much in defence of law and order in Siam as of law and order in Malaya. Any failure of the Siamese authorities to deal with our common enemy on their side of the border by vigorous and effective ground and air action considerably accentuates the threat to the area as a whole. At best it will be a serious cause of increased loss of lives and of delay in achieving victory in Malaya. At



worst it will cause far more serious  
and prolonged trouble for all of  
us'.<sup>19</sup>

He requested Whittington to suggest to the Thai authorities the importance of taking action against the Communists not only with the police but also with army and air forces units. The Malayan authorities, he stated, were prepared to act in close liaison and give the Thais any assistance that they could give. However, the Thais should not, he hoped, use the force which they built up to make trouble with the Pattani Malays that would only increase their common difficulties. MacDonald also proposed the possibility of inviting the Thais to allow the Malayan authorities in liaison with them, to deal with the resistance discreetly in Siam. This suggestion was made in the belief that the Thai authorities were not effective in dealing with the Communists and the increasing threat posed by the Communists in Malaya.

In reply, Whittington reminded MacDonald that it was wrong for him to talk of the Communists as 'a common enemy'.<sup>20</sup> The Communists, he said, had not so far extended their aggressive campaign to include Thailand and the Thais were not at war with the Communists. So far the Thai

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19. Singapore-Foreign Office, No. 914, 24 August 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12008/21/40).

20. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 549, 28 August 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12008/21/40).

authorities took action against the Communists only on the traditional legal basis: those who were guilty of (a) violating the immigration law and (b) carrying unlicensed firearms. The offensive action demanded by the British in the South, except in strict pursuit of maintenance of law and order, would lead them into all sort of difficulties.

`It would call certainly forth a cry from the French for similar action against Vietnam activities on the north eastern border; it might incite Chinese Communists in north eastern towns and in Bangkok to subversive action; it would give an opportunity for agitation to every discontented party in Siam at a time when political affairs are none too stable. Furthermore it would obviously embarrass Siamese relations with the Soviet Legation, and possibly with the Burmese Embassy. In short, the result might be a free for all which would plunge this country into a condition far worse than Malaya, a condition with which Police and Armed forces of the country might well not be able to cope and would produce a state of affairs in this part of the world far worse than what we have now. Everything points to the fact that, for the present, the 'enemy' intends to keep quiet throughout Siam and it is my belief that it is to our immediate advantage that he would remain so. Let us therefore do all that we can to urge Siam to prevent illegal activity and to maintain law and order, but let us at the same time cease to think about 'discreet' action by British armed forces in Siamese territory. I cannot conceive that any serious operations of this kind could take place without the whole world knowing, and if the Siamese Government connived without their consequently exposing Siam to the dangers which I have indicated above. Our view here is that most

important step to be taken is to install Cunyngham-Brown at Songkhla without delay.'<sup>21</sup>

### Thai mission to the border

On August 27, 1948 Pibul sent a high-powered mission headed by Lt. General Sook Chatakrob, the Minister of Defence, to investigate conditions in the border provinces.<sup>22</sup> It was said that at the Cabinet meeting in Bangkok on August 12, after Whittington made the representation on the Communists concentration along Kelantan-Narathiwat border, Pibul went 'off the handle'.<sup>23</sup> He proposed to sack every police and civil administration officials in South Thailand. The reason was that while the British Embassy several times had passed to him categorical information of movement of terrorists on Thai soil, not a single report of that nature had originated from the Thai authorities. Thus the high-powered mission to Songkhla amounted to an internal commission of enquiry.

The visit of the mission had galvanised the local

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21. Ibid.

22. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 25 (saving), 18 September 1948, FO 371/69998 (F13048/21/40).

23. 'Memorandum of Interview with Director-General of Police on 27 August 1948' in R. Whittington - P.S. Scrivener, No. 139/13/48, 28 August, 1948. FO 371/69997 (F12294/21/40).

Thai authorities into action.<sup>24</sup> One 'pincer' operation by Thai and Kedah police was carried out successfully on August 28. Extensive arrangements were also made for further cooperation in these operations. Instructions were given to the Thai local authorities to establish the closest liaison and cooperation with Malayan authorities on the frontier.

Meanwhile, the Director-General of Police in Thailand, Lt. General Luang Chart, informed Madoc that, as a result of their investigation of the border area, they found no signs of Communist concentrations along Kelantan-Narathiwat border as alleged by the Malayan authorities.<sup>25</sup> Madoc blamed the Malayan authorities for sending unreliable information, which was never graded for accuracy, to the Thais. He feared that if the Malayan authorities continued to pass to the Thais inaccurate information, or information which was out-of-date, and 'consequently start them off on wild goose chases into that extremely difficult jungle-tangle, such little enthusiasm as they may possess will soon be exhausted'. He suggested that in future the Malayan authorities should substantiate their belief in the reliability of a certain piece of information by providing

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24. Ibid.

25. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 575, 7 September 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12503/21/40).

an official guide, preferably a Police Officer, to accompany the Thai Police party charged with investigating the report.

Luang Chart was quite enthusiastic about this idea in so far as it would dispel any lurking suspicions in the minds of the Malayan authorities that the Thais did not take any action against the illegal activity on their side of the border.

The Thai Director-General of Police also reminded Madoc that Thailand was not at war with the Communist terrorists and as such the Thai authorities could not attack them with armed forces. As far as he understood, those Communist terrorists had not yet committed any offence punishable with death. The terrorists were presumably guilty of (a) violating the Immigration Laws, and (b) carrying unlicensed firearms. Madoc expressed his hope that this did not mean that Thailand would 'pull her punches' even in such action as she could lawfully take for violations of the Immigration and Firearms Acts. They also discussed the difficulty of Thai terrain and the lack of adequate roads, railways and telegraphs in South Thailand which had hampered their efforts to take an effective action against illegal activity on the frontier. Luang Chart hoped that, as a result of the Thai mission to Songkhla, more police outposts might be built on or near the principal mountain passes into Malaya.

Soon after the return of the Thai mission to Bangkok, Colonel Heslop, the British Military Attaché at the Embassy in Bangkok, and his American colleague, Colonel Thorpe, were jointly invited by the Thai Minister of Defence to tour the border provinces.<sup>26</sup> This invitation was made perhaps to dispel any suspicion on the part of the Malayan authorities particularly that the Thai local authorities on the frontier were not taking effective action against the Communist terrorists.

During his brief tour of the region between 8-13 September, 1948, Col. Heslop had discussions with Thai Military and Civil authorities on Malayan-Thai border problems and the necessity of mutual cooperation in their common interests. It seemed to Heslop that the Thai local authorities were aware of the repercussions which Malayan operations might have on their future. They had been galvanised into action and this, Heslop believed, had been stimulated by the recent tour of the Minister of Defence and by the knowledge that any shortcomings would incur Pibul's displeasure. Thai Police and Military were working together and were learning that their patrols should be synchronised with those of the Malayan authorities.

However, despite their willingness to cooperate

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26. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 585, 14 September 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12731/21/40); Bangkok-Foreign Office, No 589, 15 September 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12812/21/40).

with the Malayan authorities against the Communist terrorists, Heslop found out that the Thai Military and Police were hampered in their task by the lack of weapons and equipment. Heslop recommended that the Thai authorities should be asked for requirements of machine carbines, trucks of an American carrier type and radio/telephone sets. To facilitate the exchange of information with Malayan authorities, Heslop suggested that the Malayan authorities should supply them with five sets of quarter-inch grip maps of the border area. He also suggested that Malayan reports of insurgent movements requiring Thai action should not be passed on unless they were graded C.3 or above. This was because most of the Malayan reports of insurgent movements and concentrations on the Thai side were exaggerated and this included the reported concentration of Chinese insurgents at Sungai Golok.

Meanwhile, in early September 1948, a British Consulate was established in Songkhla. This consulate was allowed by the Thai Government to have direct radio contact with the British Embassy to Bangkok and the Malayan Federation Government in Kuala Lumpur, in order to facilitate anti-terrorist operations. Cunyngham-Brown arrived at Songkhla on September 16 to take his post as Acting Consul pending the arrival of Captain Dennis, the

### Arms for Thailand

On September 14, Geoffrey F. Thompson, the British Ambassador, called upon the Thai Prime Minister.<sup>28</sup> This was the first time Thompson had established personal contact with Pibul after the latter came to power. Thompson spoke to him about terrorist agitation in Malaya and the determination of His Majesty's government to put down a movement that was in no way inspired by nationalism. To this end military reinforcements of high quality were being sent to Malaya. Already there were signs that the terrorists were retreating northwards. It was essential that terrorists groups taking refuge in Thailand should be drastically dealt with. The cooperative attitude so far displayed by the Thai authorities was greatly appreciated in Singapore and in London and His Majesty's Government confidently expected that the collaboration already in being would be strengthened and developed.

Pibul Songgram assured Thompson that the Thai Government would do their best to work closely with Malayan authorities, both civil and military. He also agreed to

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27. Minute by A.M Palliser on Bangkok-Foreign Office, 17 September 1948, FO 371/69998 (F13180/21/40).

28. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 589, 15 September 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12812/21/40).



appoint a Thai Liaison Officer in Kuala Lumpur to be attached to G.O.C Malayan District and welcome any other arrangements designed to facilitate cooperation. Pibul also mentioned that his military and police were hampered by a shortage of weapons and motor transport. To this Thompson replied that if the British Government could help over equipment they would certainly do so. It was agreed that this subject should be discussed directly between Military Attachés and the Thai Minister of Defence.

Later, Pibul Songgram gave his personal assurances in writing to Thompson about his government's policy to cooperate with the Malayan authorities against the Communists.

'As regards the disorders in the South, the Siamese Government on their part are fully alive to the menace and danger which have been pointed out in your Excellency's aide-mémoire, that is why measures have been taken to collaborate in the work of suppression as is evidenced at the present time and I can assure you that we shall extend the necessary cooperation to the best of our ability. I venture to hope, however, that whatever we may be called upon to do our efforts will be given due sympathy and understanding from your Excellency, for the Siamese Army and Police Forces greatly lack armaments as well as vehicles for the performance of our task. Nevertheless, I am confident that the disturbing incidents on the Siamese side of the border will not spread

much further'.29

Looking at the Thais' efforts, Thompson was satisfied that it was the policy of the Thai Government to cooperate with the authorities in Malaya in fighting the terrorists in the border zone. In his letter to Malcolm MacDonald on September 16, Thompson noted:

'it will, however, be appreciated that in Oriental countries, the flesh is sometimes weak, however willing the spirit. While assessing goodwill at its maximum value, we must not be too impatient nor intolerant if miracles of execution fail to materialize. I can only add that I and my staff will continue to exert ourselves to the utmost to secure effective collaboration in the defeat of the thugs who are the common enemy of both the countries'.30

On October 1, the Thai Minister of Defence submitted a list of the requirements of the five Thai battalions stationed in the Southern provinces.<sup>31</sup> He hoped that the British Government could assist in making good the deficiencies faced by the Thai military and police. Thompson, however, could not guarantee that his request could be met 100%. However, Thompson added, the Military Attaché was to proceed to Singapore on October 4 to confer

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29. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 602, 21 September 1948, FO 371/69998 (F13204/21/40).

30. Thompson-MacDonald, No. 204/13/48, 16 September 1948, CO 537/3695.

31. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 626, 1 October 1948, FO 371/69998 (F13659/21/40).

with Commander-in-Chief, FARELF, and others and he would take full particulars of what was wanted and would, Thompson hoped, be able on his return to indicate what could be done to help Thailand reequip her five infantry battalions in South Thailand.

On October 4, Col Heslop, the British Military Attaché in Bangkok, went to visit General Headquarters FARELF and Headquarters Malayan District to discuss with Commander-in-Chief FARELF and General Boucher, G.O.C Malayan District, ways and means of improving cooperation with the Thai Forces on border operations and also to discuss the advisability or otherwise of helping the Thais with an issue of arms and equipment and to consider a suitable scale for such an issue.<sup>32</sup> During Heslop's talk with the military authorities in Singapore and Malaya, it was generally agreed that cooperation with the Thais was essential to a successful outcome to their operations against the Communists in Malaya. That could be achieved by a policy of persuasion coupled with friendly advice, material help and constructive criticism. Heslop impressed upon them that the Thais were alive to the situation in South Thailand and had taken several steps to meet it. To Heslop, it was immaterial whether all those moves by the

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32. 'Report on visit G.H.Q FARELF, HQ Malayan District and Siam-Malaya border' by Col. Heslop, 14 October 1948' in Thompson-M.E. Dening, No. 145/13/48, 14 October 1948. FO 371/69999 (F15181/21/40).

Thais were activated entirely by self interest or not.

Heslop argued:

'The fact remained that we were offered a measure of ready cooperation by an independent Sovereign State and it was in our interests to exploit this to the full. We would achieve nothing by a dictatorial or destructively critical attitude. We might achieve something by persuasion, material help and advice. To my mind our choice was obvious'.<sup>33</sup>

Despite their willingness to cooperate, however, the Thai military and police were hampered in their task by the lack of arms and equipment. Heslop suggested that the military authorities should help the Thais with an issue of arms and equipment.

The military authorities agreed that there would be obvious military advantages in helping the Thais. In their view, the propriety or otherwise of equipping the Thai army and police in South Thailand from British sources was a matter for decision at the Foreign Office and War Office. However such decision must be guided by certain factors:

- a. The Thais might not use the arms supplied to them for the purpose of fighting the Malayan terrorists but might use them to oppress the

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33. Ibid.

Pattani Malays. This would be most embarrassing for the British politically if the Pattani Malays got the impression that they were being oppressed with the help of arms from British sources.

- b. Through sheer incompetence the Thais might lose their weapons in action against the terrorists. If that happened the British would indirectly reequip the terrorists with the arms which they so badly needed.

As to (a) Heslop agreed that it was a political issue for decision at top level. Personally he felt that it was a risk worth accepting. 'In any case if the Siamese forces were used to suppress a movement against their established Government they could hardly be blamed if they used whatever arms they had at their disposal. In any case the scale of arms recommended was very modest and would be limited to units in South Siam'.<sup>34</sup>

As to (b) Heslop agreed with the opinion of the military authorities that the risk under that heading was justifiable only provided that they could guide the Thai police and military in jungle tactics and techniques in the light of British practical experience.

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34. Ibid.

An agreement was reached with military authorities at FARELF and the G.O.C Malayan District that the British Government should supply sufficient arms to re-equip the five battalions operating on the Thai-Malayan border. The military authorities also agreed to train the Thai military and police in jungle tactics and the handling of weapons, and if requested by the War Office, FARELF would do all possible to help supply at any rate a proportion of the arms and equipment required, except for the motor transport. On returning to Bangkok, Heslop submitted his recommendations to the British Ambassador for his consideration.

Meanwhile, Thompson also received a report from Cunyngham-Brown, the acting British Consul, regarding the situation in South Thailand.<sup>35</sup> Contrary to Heslop's findings, Cunyngham-Brown alleged that the Thai military and police were more interested in repressing the local Malays than operating against the Chinese bandits on the Thai side of the border. He alleged that in the immediate surroundings of the towns of Narathiwat and Saiburi alone no less than 66 Malays had been killed by the Thai police since the beginning of 1946. Cunyngham-Brown was of the opinion that the Malayan authorities would not be able to

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35. Cunyngham-Brown-Thompson, 11 October 1948 in Thompson-M.E Dening, *ibid*; It should be noted that Cunyngham-Brown was suspended from his post on October 29, 1948. See chapter Five for a brief discussion of the incident.

get real cooperation from the Thais against the Communist terrorists while Malay discontent lasted and while the Thais remained uncertain of their future behaviour. He also expressed his fears that if the Malays were pressed too hard they might be forced to make common cause with the Communists who would not fail to exploit it to their advantage.

Although on reading Cunyngham-Brown's report, Thompson at first had second thoughts about Heslop's proposals, he seemed to have decided on balance that the British Government should supply arms to the five Thai infantry battalions in South Thailand. In his letter to M.E Dening, Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, on October 14, Thompson argued:

'In coming to this conclusion we did not ignore the risks involved and, in particular, we appreciated the certainty that if arms were lent, some of them would inevitably fall into the hands of terrorists or other undesirables. Also, we realized that if the Malays in the Southern provinces persisted, with the encouragement they have undoubtedly received in the recent past, and may still be receiving from their brethren across the border, to make things difficult for the local Siamese authorities, then these arms would be used against them. Nevertheless, we felt that these risks would be worth taking in the general interests of reasonably effective Siamese cooperation on the

Thompson blamed the Malayan civilian authorities for allowing discontent to be fanned by Mahyideen and others from British territory by the device of implying that in the end the British Government would come to their help.<sup>37</sup> He assured M.E Dening that it was not the intention of the Thai Government to take repressive measures against the Malays in South Thailand.

Thompson also blamed the Malayan local authorities on the frontier for spreading sensational reports about the alleged terrorist concentrations along the Thai-Malayan border, which were largely exaggerated.

He added:

'This, however, did not prevent their being taken very seriously at the time, so much so indeed that I am inclined to believe that they may have resulted in the Toh Moh bombing(38) and in the more or less simultaneous consideration of 'discreet operations' and accidental

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36. Thompson-M.E Dening, No. 145/13/48, 14 October 1948, FO371/69999 (F15181/21/40).

37. Ibid.

38. On August 12, 1948 RAF bombed the Toh Moh mining settlement following an alleged report of Communists concentrations in the area. As a result of the bombing, the Malayan Government had to pay compensation to the Thai government of about £350,000.



bombings in Siamese territory'.<sup>39</sup>

He expressed his hope that reports from native agents would be checked and graded. Otherwise, they might cause unnecessary alarm and despondency and, incidentally strengthen the already widespread and rather unthinking ill-feeling against Thailand so prevalent in British circles in Malaya.

Paul F. Grey, Head of Southeast Asia Department of the Foreign Office, after consultation about the supply of arms to the Thai forces with MacDonald, felt that the British Government should go ahead with the supply of arms to the Thai forces inspite of the possible risk involved.<sup>40</sup> In his letter to Brigadier C.R Price, Ministry of Defence, Grey enquired whether the arms suggested could be supplied to the Thai Government.

'As you will see from Heslop's report, FARELF made him no direct offer of equipment but said that, if the War Office made enquiries of them, they thought that they would be able to supply at least a proportion of the required equipment, with the exception of motor transport, which the Americans may be able to supply. We would like to go further with Thompson and the Colonial authorities but feel that meanwhile we should ask

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39. Singapore-Bangkok, No. 914, 8 November 1948,  
FO 371/69996, (F11173/21/40).
40. P.F Grey-Brigadier C.R Price, 10 November 1948,  
FO 371/70000 (F15181/21/40).

you to let us know in principle whether the arms suggested could be supplied.'41

Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner for Malaya, insisted that the supply of arms to Thailand should be contingent upon an undertaking being given that the arms would be effectively used for the purpose of suppressing the Communists along the border and not in order to suppress the Muslim minority in South Thailand. He was concerned that it would create the impression in Malaya that the British Government were providing arms to the Thai Government for use against fellow Muslims in South Thailand.<sup>42</sup> In fact, the Malayan press seized on these events to express its fear that the opportunity might be used to suppress the Pattani Malays.<sup>43</sup>

Gurney noted that some 2,000 Chinese Communists in scattered parties were in the immediate vicinity of Thai territory. Although those forces did not constitute a serious threat or immediate threat to Malayan territory,

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41. Ibid.

42. Singapore-Foreign Office, No. 1150, 10 November 1948, FO 371/70000 (F15872/21/40).

43. The Straits Times, 6 September 1948. Eighteen Pattani Malays who fled into northern Malaya expressed the same opinion as the Malayan newspaper that the Malays, and not the Communists, would be the target of the Thais in border actions. They also asserted that a new phase in the persecution of Malays in the four provinces had begun. See the Times, 10 September 1948.

Gurney believed they represented a potential source of trouble. Gurney felt that Thompson must be very badly informed as to the true state of affairs on the border and as to the ability and willingness of the Thais to do anything effective themselves in that area.<sup>44</sup>

To ensure some degree of control over the use to which the arms supplied by the British would be put, P.C. Scrivener, the British Deputy Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia, suggested that in return for the supply of arms, the Thai Government might be asked to receive a military mission.<sup>45</sup>

Thompson however thought that Gurney's more limited proposals specifying the use of arms against Communists would be possible to achieve if the Malayan authorities could give a guarantee that they would do their best to prevent disaffection among the Pattani Malays being organised from British territory.<sup>46</sup> With regard to

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44. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 667, 11 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F15940/21/40). Thompson informed Gurney that as a result of the investigations made by the Thai authorities in the area they found no concentration of the Communists terrorists as claimed by the Malayan authorities. He believed that the report emanated from native agents who feared they would not be rewarded if they returned with little to say.

45. Singapore-Foreign Office, No 1150, 10 November 1948, FO 371/70000 (F15872/21/40).

46. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 759, 11 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F15940/21/40).

Scrivener's suggestion of a British military mission to Thailand, Thompson felt that would be possible if the Malayan authorities could ensure that the suggested mission might not be considered by the Pattani Malays as the vanguard of British military support they were said to be expecting.

The question of the supply of arms to Thailand was also discussed with considerable interest at the Colonial Office. Rees-Williams, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office, disagreed with the proposal to supply arms to Thailand. He minuted that the Colonial Office should press for a stoppage of arms supplies to Thailand.

'In the larger sphere I am concerned to see that arms are to be supplied to the Siamese. My information is that the Siamese are, as they have been for many years, hostile to us and untrustworthy. The F.O. perhaps guided by the enthusiastic Mr Thompson, has not listened to us in this matter. The present Prime Minister was also Prime Minister when the Japanese were in Siam. The Chinese still as ever run the commercial life of the country. The Communists draw large sums, as protection money, from the rich Chinese. We should I think press (1) for a stoppage to all arms supplied to Siam (2) for a more helpful attitude on the part of his Embassy; they should realise that we are responsible for Malaya's foreign policy and policy with regard to Siam should approximate to that of Malaya's if she were independent; otherwise there is political exploitation no better than economic

exploitation.

Even Capt Dennis, who is obviously also parti Pris & a sufferer from consulitis, admitted that he was told by the Governor of South Siam that the Malays were to 'some extent suppressed'. This is our case.'47

O.H Morris, Principal at the Colonial Office, however, argued that there was no question of stopping arms to Thailand since no arms were being sent.<sup>48</sup> He suggested that the Colonial Office should represent to the Chiefs of Staff that any supply of arms in the future should be conditional on the giving of the undertaking by the Thais as insisted upon by Gurney.

On November 24, J.D Higham, Assistant Secretary at the Colonial Office, wrote to P.F Grey expressing the High Commissioner's view that no arms should be supplied without adequate safeguards, since to give the Thais the means wherewith to tackle the possibly more congenial task of suppressing the Pattani Malays would only aggravate the Malayan frontier difficulties.<sup>49</sup>

'It is not inconceivable that, if the Pattani Malays are driven to desperation (despite the well-meaning edicts issued by the central

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47. Minute by Rees-William, 8 November 1948, in CO 537/3684.

48. Minute by O.H Morris, 20 November 1948, in CO 537/3684.

49. J.D Higham-P.R. Grey, No. 52849, 24 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F15181/21/40).

government of Bangkok) a situation might arise which could not be favourable to communist purposes. I am writing now to emphasise that, if the Chiefs of Staff agree that arms may be released, the Colonial Office should be given full opportunity to discuss the whole policy of supply of arms; we regard it as important too that we should be kept in touch with any negotiations with the Americans on this subject.<sup>50</sup>

On November 30, the Foreign Office was informed that the British Chiefs of Staff had considered their recommendations and had raised no objection to the supply of arms and equipment to Thailand.<sup>51</sup> They also saw no reason why conditions should be imposed on the supply of available equipment, unless there were political considerations. All the arms and equipment recommended by Heslop were available except for certain special types of rifles and motor transport.

It should be noted that the State Department also was recommended by its Military Attaché at Bangkok to equip the Thai forces in South Thailand. However, despite their desire to equip the Thai forces, the State Department said that they would not be able to help unless the Thais definitely applied to purchase surplus United State stores since no enabling legislation to the effect had been

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50. Ibid.

51. P.R.M. Waterfield-P.F. Grey, No. COS 2010/30/11/8, 30 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F16876/21/40).

passed.<sup>52</sup>

The mounting Communist victories in China against the nationalist forces and the consequent imminent threat that it might pose to Southeast Asia, particularly Malaya, had made the question of supplying arms and equipment to the Thais' five infantry battalions more urgent. The Conference of the United Kingdom and Administrative Representatives in South and East Asia in Singapore on November 8, 1948, concluded that the Communist victories in China would further increase Communist activity in Malaya and in Southern Thailand.<sup>53</sup>

The situation in China did not fail to influence the Colonial Office view on the question of the supply of arms and equipment to Thailand. In fact, O.H Morris, the principal at the Colonial Office, was asked to prepare a paper on Anglo-Thai relations as they affected Malaya. Morris concluded that the British Government, in collaboration with the United States, should strengthen Thailand so as to enable her to deal more effectively with disorder in any part of the country. The suggestion that arms and equipment should be provided for five battalions

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52. Washington-Foreign Office, No. 5358, 26 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F15179/21/40); Foreign Office-War Office, 10 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F15181/21/40).

53. Singapore-Foreign Office, No. 1252, 10 December 1948, CO 537/3696.

in South Thailand should be accepted.<sup>54</sup>

Commenting on Morris's paper, Higham advised the Colonial Office to take a broader view and not attempt to insist that arms issued to the Thai army should be for the primary purpose of improving security on the Malayan frontier but recognise that they would strengthen the Pibul Government against Communist pressure in general.

He added:

'I am, of course, aware that Pibul is not a man in whom undue confidence can be placed and that the possibility cannot be excluded of Pibul compromising with the Communists for sake of retaining a stable regime in Siam, and I think we must, therefore, back him in full.'<sup>55</sup>

However, before giving their approval, Higham noted that the Colonial Office should satisfy itself that the Malayan authorities had no objection to the supply of arms and equipment to the Thai Army.<sup>56</sup>

On December 13, Higham informed J.O Lloyd of the Foreign Office of his proposal to send a telegram to Gurney asking for his approval of the supply of arms and equipment

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54. Minute by O.H Morris, 29 November 1948, CO 537/3696.

55. Minute by J.D Higham, 15 December 1948, CO 537/3696.

56. Ibid.



to the Thai army.<sup>57</sup> Higham proposed to suggest to Gurney the possibility of using the promise of arms as a means of forcing the Thai Government to take active measures against the Communists. He also suggested that the supersession of the security articles of the Formal Agreement of 1946 with Thailand might be used as a bargaining point in the question of arms for Thailand.<sup>58</sup>

J.O Lloyd, in his reply on December 16, recognized that the Malayan authorities were in favour of giving arms and equipment to Thai forces.<sup>59</sup> With regard to Higham's suggestion to use the promise of arms as means of forcing the Thai Government to take more active measures against the Communists, Lloyd felt that such a proposal would only cause resentment amongst the Thais. On the other hand, he believed if arms were supplied to them it would increase morale and fighting efficiency among Thai troops concerned and would lead to a more vigorous prosecution of the anti-Communist offensive.

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57. Higham-Lloyd, 13 December 1948, CO 537/3696.

58. These security articles required Thailand to collaborate fully in all international security arrangements approved by the United Nations or its Security Council (Article 6). Thailand also was not allowed to build a Canal across Thai territory linking the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Siam without the prior concurrence of the British Government (Article 7). During this time the Thai Government was asking for the revision of the Formal Agreement.

59. Lloyd-Higham, 16 December 1948, FO 371/70002 (F17670/21/40).

Lloyd also rejected the suggestion to use the supersession of the security articles of the Formal Agreement with Thailand as a bargaining point in the question of arms for Thailand. He thought that such effort would be politically most undesirable and would certainly produce unfortunate reactions among the Thais.

Higham accepted both of Lloyd's suggestions.<sup>60</sup> On December 18, Higham asked Gurney for his approval of the supply of arms and equipment to the five Thai battalions stationed in South Thailand.<sup>61</sup> Gurney replied that he did not wish to press his original objection to the issue of arms and equipment and was content to rely on the Anglo-Thai Conference to be held at Songkhla on January 6 to work out proposals to ensure that the arms were used in the right way.

In view of Gurney's agreement, Higham hoped no objection would be raised in the Colonial Office to the proposal for immediate action. 'As far as motor transport is concerned the Siamese will either have to look to civilian supplies in this country or attempt to purchase transport in the United States. Any arrangements about the employment of these arms by the Siamese should be worked

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60. Colonial Office-High Commissioner, Malaya, 18 December 1948, FO 371/70002 (F17670/21/40).

61. Minute by J.D Higham, 22 December 1948, CO 537/4233.

out between experts from the two countries at the forthcoming conference at Singgora.<sup>62</sup> J.J. Paskin, Assistant Secretary, was also prepared to inform the Foreign Office that the Colonial Office would acquiesce in the supply of arms to Thailand.<sup>63</sup>

Rees-Williams, however, agreed to the supply of arms and equipment to five Thai infantry battalions in South Thailand only with reservations. He minuted:

'I consider, however, that we should only agree the F.O. selling (not giving) the arms provided there is an undertaking that they are not used against the Pattani Malays & that if there is any sign of them being so used further supplies, or supplies contracted for but not delivered, will be cut off at once.'<sup>64</sup>

The Foreign Office was duly informed about the Colonial Office's decision that every precaution must be taken to ensure that arms given to the Thais were definitely used for the suppression of Communism, and not against the Moslem minority in South Thailand.

On January 1, 1949, Thompson was informed about the British Government's decision to supply arms and equipment to the five Thai battalions on the understanding

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62. Ibid.

63. Minute by J.J. Paskin, 22 December 1948, CO 537/3684.

64. Minute by Rees Williams, 23 December 1948, CO 537/3684.

that those arms were not destined to be used for the repression of Pattani Malays.<sup>65</sup> Thompson was asked to inform the Thai Government that they could purchase from the United Kingdom the arms and wireless equipment. However, they could not supply from military sources any of the transport required by the Thais except the civilian type vehicles or reconditioned surplus service vehicles. Alternatively, it was suggested the Thai Government could attempt to purchase transport in the United States.

Thompson, however, did not approach the Thai Government as instructed but instead suggested that the British should first ascertain from FARELF whether the latter could, if authorised, supply what was required from stocks available. Thompson also insisted that those arms and equipment should be supplied on a loan basis.<sup>66</sup>

The Foreign Office, however, disagreed with Thompson's latter suggestion.<sup>67</sup> It noted that demanded payment arrangements had been made with other countries and therefore it was not prepared to establish a precedent in the case of Thailand. Furthermore, Thailand was not

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65. Foreign Office-Bangkok, No. 3, 1 January 1949, FO 371/70002 (F17961/21/40).

66. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 29, 14 January 1949, FO 371/76289 (F2380/1191/40).

67. Foreign Office-Bangkok, No. 40 20 February 1949, FO 371/76289 (F2561/1191/40).

considered to be so badly off financially that she cannot afford to pay for even the limited quantity now required. Indeed she has large sterling balances not only to purchase civilian equipment for her own rehabilitation but also to re-equip her armed forces with modern equipment and so help to improve their fighting efficiency.<sup>68</sup>

Thompson replied that in advocating such positive action, he did not suggest that the British Government should supply the Thai forces with weapons and equipment free, gratis and for nothing.<sup>69</sup> Thai reactions to the British arms offer showed clearly, however, that cash payments for such material were looked upon askance in Bangkok, where there had been from the beginning apprehension over the cost of anti-terrorist operations in the South. The British, on the other hand, were reluctant to consider even a small deal on anything but a cash basis. Thompson suggested that the Foreign Office should consider the possibility of supplying arms and equipment from their monthly payment for rice. This would spare the Thais the need to make cash outlays while enabling the British to secure immediate payment.

The Foreign Office agreed that Thailand, if she

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68. Ibid.

69. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 139, 22 February 1949, FO 371/76289 (F2844/1191/40).

agreed, could make its payment for arms and equipment by setting it against their monthly payment of rice.<sup>70</sup>

### Bangkok Talks

Meanwhile, in late November 1948, MacDonald flew to Bangkok for a conference with Premier Pibul and other high ranking officials of the Thai Government on border cooperation. In an effort to gain the complete and unqualified cooperation of the Thai Government, MacDonald reiterated assurances that British harboured absolutely no designs on the Southern States of Thailand, a current Thai concern.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, the Malayan Government were seeking to prevent disaffection from being organised from Malayan territory. Pibul assured MacDonald that his Government was willing to cooperate with the Malayan authorities in anti-Communist measures in the South. It was agreed that a Malayan-Thai conference be held at Songkhla in early January 1949 to discuss practical problems of cooperation in the suppression of terrorists.

### Thai-Malayan Conference at Songkhla

The conference was held at Songkhla on 6 and 7

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70. Foreign Office-Bangkok, 25 February 1948, FO 371/76289 (F3231/1191/40).

71. For details on MacDonald-Pibul talks, see chapter Five on 'The Malay Unrest in South Thailand'.

January, 1949. The Malayan delegation was led by Major-General Sir Alec Boucher, General Officer Commanding Malayan District, while the Thai side was led by Major-General M.L Chuang Seniwongs, General Officer Commanding 5th District. Colonel Thorpe, the United States Military Attaché, also attended the conference as an observer. Col Thorpe was described by Thompson as 'anglo-maniac and is besides inclined to harbour suspicions of our aims and objectives in the south'.<sup>72</sup> In his opinion, Col. Thorpe's presence in the Songkhla conference would diminish his suspicious attitudes towards the British and also encourage the Thais in their anti-terrorist cooperation with Malaya.

After a preliminary exchange of courtesies, the conference broke up into three committees so that as much work as possible could be done in the limited time available. The Military Committee was led by Major-General M.L Chuang Seniwongs, the Civil (political) sub-committee was presided over by the Regional Commissioner, Phya Amorit Damrong, and the Police Committee was chaired by Police Colonel Phichit, Police Chief of the Southern Region.

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72. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 840, 16 December 1948, FO 371/70002 (F17957/21/40).

## Proceedings of the Military Committee

Before undertaking discussion of items on the agenda, Major-General Boucher was asked to address the meeting generally on the situation from his point of view. He explained that his operations were based and depended upon complete integration between the Services and Police. The difficulties imposed by any international boundary in the theatre of operations had to be accepted and the desirability of mutual cooperation between the Thai and Malayan authorities was in the circumstances obvious. He believed that personal contacts and a frank exchange of views for practical implementation were prerequisites to success.

Major-General M.L Chuang responded by stressing that so far the operations in Thailand were directed against law breakers, whatever their nationality, and not against persons merely because they happened to be communists. Within these limitations he promised full cooperation. He also stressed that so far the operations against law breakers had been undertaken by the police or, in one or two cases, by combined police and marine forces. Army units had not been committed and it was not his policy to commit them until and if the Police wanted that help.

After this brief introduction, the meeting proceeded to discuss agenda items. Summarily the main



concern of the Military Committee was to discuss practical means to deal with the terrorists. To ensure a successful operation against the terrorists, several arrangements were agreed.

a. Intelligence

It was agreed that intelligence and exchange of information would continue to be fully given. Methods of 'speeding up' exchanges were considered and decided upon as follows:

1. Local contacts would be through Police.
2. Normal reports of major importance and where the time factor was not vital would be exchanged direct between the two commanders i.e Commander North Malaya District with Headquarters at Taiping and the Thai G.O.C. 5th District at Kor Hong. Transmission would be via Headquarters Malaya District and the British Consul at Songkhla.
3. It was agreed to introduce a system of 'SIT REPS' (Situation Reports) fortnightly which would be exchanged between the G.O.C 5th District and Commander North Malaya District through the British Consul at Songkhla.

b. Air Photography

The Air Officer Commanding Malaya, Air Vice-Marshal Sanderson, who also attended the meeting, offered to assist the Thai authorities on request with photo reconnaissance of any specified areas on the Thailand side in which the Thais might suspect terrorist concentrations. The Thais accepted the offer. The Royal Air Force aircraft were allowed to fly over Thai territory as far as the 7th. parallel of latitude for reconnaissance purposes.

c. Combined Operations

The meeting agreed that there should be no question of joint operations undertaken by Malayan and Thai Military forces. All that military Commanders could hope to achieve was joint planning when it was envisaged that the enemy were likely to cross or recross the border. In such cases operations would be synchronized so as to close the gaps and thus give the terrorists no haven of refuge. For security reasons reports of impending operations would not be forwarded until 24 hours before commencement.

d. Training

General Boucher explained briefly the functions of the Jungle Warfare School at Johore Bharu and the British Military Attaché confirmed that a special course for Thai

officers only had been arranged for the period 29 January - 26 February 1949. It was hoped that certain new arms and equipment would be supplied to Thailand from British sources. If those arms were supplied, instruction in their use would be provided either at the FARELF Training School or by sending instructors to Songkhla.

e. Interrogation Reports

It had been agreed by the conference that interrogation of prisoners on the Thai side was a police affair. General Boucher pointed out that he had no comment to make on that provided the requirements of 'Military intelligence' were also observed e.g the military were concerned to establish that a prisoner had been questioned by both Police and Military Intelligence Officers. The Director-General of Thai Police agreed to ensure that both aspects of interrogation would be observed by his police and the meeting accordingly decided that Thai police interrogation, if conducted on those lines, would meet requirements. All reports from Thai sources would be sent to Malayan Police Headquarters at Alor Star and G.O.C Malayan District would have a Military Intelligence Officer there to examine reports jointly with the Police authorities.

f. Coastal Patrols

General Boucher and the Air Vice-Marshal Sanderson outlined the procedure obtaining in Malayan coastal waters and asked if similar measures existed in Thai waters. It was agreed that representations would be made to the Thai Naval authorities to ensure that similar patrols were being carried out and that both the east and west coasts should be patrolled, the former having priority.

g. Illegal Immigration

General Boucher outlined the obvious advantages to him as a military commander of the introduction of national registration in Malaya and asked if similar measures existed in Thailand. The Thai Director-General of Police said in reply that registration of aliens had been required by law for a considerable period and that with those limits steps were being taken at the moment to tighten up the procedure considerably. He hoped that national registration would become law in Thailand.

Col. Heslop, who was present at the Military Committee meeting, observed that the meeting was a successful one. However it remained for decisions to be implemented and a quick 'follow up' in all cases was

imperative.<sup>73</sup>

### Proceedings of the Police Committee

The Police committee was chaired by Police-Colonel Phichit, the Thai Police Chief of the Southern Region. William Nicol Gray, the Federation Commissioner of Police, Guy Madoc, First Secretary at the British Embassy in Bangkok and Livingstone, a Malayan Intelligence Officer, were the Malayan delegates at the meeting.

Gray opened the meeting by describing the build-up of the Communist terrorist offensive in Malaya. He mentioned the increasing risk of movement by terrorists to and fro across the border. Though the police strength in the frontier areas would be increased on the Malayan side by 600 men, Gray could not guarantee that such efforts would stop all trans-frontier movement. On intelligence, Gray agreed on the fullest possible exchange of intelligence but he emphasised the need for a very high degree of security. He considered that only wireless communication would be secure from 'tapping' by the enemy. He said that Malaya was greatly increasing her police radio network, but equipment was still in short supply. Regarding the control of immigration, Gray pointed out

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73. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 11, 8 January 1949, FO 371/76289 (F371/1061/40).

that, both for lawful and unlawful cases, it was an obvious necessity. On the issue of combined operations, Gray said he was anxious to start, but a high degree of security in planning was essential. Gray also welcomed the attachment of Thai police at the FARELF Jungle Training School at Johore Bharu for training in fighting and living in the jungle. He said that selected police officers would be attached to Police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur so that they might see the whole working of the drive against the terrorists. The Thai Director-General of Police accepted the offer. On the question of interrogation of terrorists, it was agreed that any terrorists who were arrested by, or who surrendered to, the Thais would be sent to Nakorn Srithammarat for detention pending a decision on their case. It was agreed that the Thai Police should send to the Malayan Police at Alor Star copies of the statements of such terrorists, together with finger prints and descriptions. If the Malayan Police decided that they would like to interrogate any such terrorists, they would be permitted to send an officer into Thailand for that purpose. The Thais undertook that the terrorists would be held at Songkhla for a week or two before sending them to Nakorn Srithammarat. This would give the Malayan Police an opportunity to carry out the interrogations at accessible Songkhla. Similar trans-border interrogation rights would be reciprocated by the Malayan Police.

Lt. General Luang Chart, the Thai Director-General

of Police, warned that the efficient handling of intelligence was hampered by lack of rapid communications. There was only one Police radio transmitter/receiver in operation in South Thailand. He hoped to get more apparatus that year. Outside the towns of Songkhla and Haadyai there was no telephone communication. The telephone between the Thai Police District headquarters at Sadao and the Malayan Police sub-station at Changlun had broken down. Gray undertook to have that inspected and repaired from the Malayan side. It was also suggested to link the South Thailand Police Headquarters at Songkhla with the Kedah Police headquarters at Alor Star. Both parties agreed that the Songkhla Consulate radio installation provided a valuable link with the Malayan Police radio system.

Luang Chart complained politely that intelligence supplied from Malaya often proved misleading. To support this, he referred to a Malayan report on the alleged Communist concentrations near Sungai Golok. It was suggested to Luang Chart that, as that patrol had been carried out four months ago, concentrations might be found if a fresh patrol was laid on. It was agreed that a Thai patrol should go through the area. As the intelligence had been supplied by the Malayan side, it was agreed that Malayan Police officers should accompany the patrol as guides and observers. As the supply problem was very difficult in such country, Gray said that he would arrange

supply drops from the Malayan side. He said he might also be able to supply a mobile wireless unit with operators, so that the patrol might be in constant touch with Kota Bharu Police wireless station, and then through the Consulate installation to Police Headquarters at Songkhla. He would also try his best to supply other aids such as mosquito repellent and anti-malaria drugs.

It was agreed that the planning of the operation would be carried out between the Chief Police Officer Songkhla and the Chief Police Officer at Kota Bahru. The Chief Police Officer Songkhla might be conveyed by air to a planning conference at Kota Bharu. The Thai delegates suggested that the Bentong area also might be combed by a similar joint patrol. Gray agreed to this.

Gray described the method by which the Malayan Police screened a whole village-cordoning off all approaches and subjecting all the inhabitants to interrogation. The Thais pointed out that - lacking a state of emergency they had no authority for such drastic action. However they thought it would be possible to work on similar lines with the excuse of checking up on alien certificates. A legal restraint arose from the fact that the Thai Parliament had not yet passed a bill imposing complete national registration.

Luang Chart suggested that patrols of Thai Police



should meet patrols of Malayan Police at agreed times and places on the frontier that were to be worked out in detail by the respective authorities. The Thais considered that this arrangement would facilitate control of illegal immigration.

Madoc looked on the Songkhla meeting between the police officers of the two countries as a considerable success. Agreement was reached and promises were made which opened the way for a considerable degree of cooperation. But Madoc warned the Malayan authorities that they were dealing with an administration which was decreasingly efficient the further it extended from Bangkok.

‘We have had conferences in the past at which promises were made at the Bangkok centre which were not put into operation in the South Siam periphery. In this case the promises were made by the Bangkok head (Luang Chart) in the presence of the local Chief of Police Songkhla, and because of that it should prove difficult for the Songkhla Chief of Police to neglect his responsibilities.

Moreover, after previous conferences, the Malayan side too, failed to put the agreed plans into full effect. I am sure that in this case the Malayan side will set a good example to the Songkhla Siamese authorities by carrying out their responsibilities with enemy and despatch. I am sure they will have to prod the C.P.O Songkhla into action, and the sooner the prodding begins the more

effective it is likely to be.'74

The conference also considered political matters, particularly the Pattani Malay problems. As this issue has been discussed in the last chapter, it is sufficient to say that the Thai and Malayan Governments agreed to cooperate in solving the Malay problems in the South. The Thai Government agreed to implement reforms promised by Pibul Songgram recently while the Malayan authorities agreed to curb the subversive activities by certain elements in Malaya against the Thai Government.

The conference ended on January 7, 1949. Both Sir Henry Gurney and Thompson were satisfied and agreed that the conference was very successful one and worthwhile in most respects. Gurney commented:

The Songkhla Conference seems to have been very successful in its military and police aspects...the Police on both sides appear to have got together, established personal relations and planned some joint operations against the Chinese bandits. This is wholly admirable. The Military delegates also did some useful things in arranging to take Siamese here for training and to use R.A.F planes for photography, but as the Siamese military forces are not engaged in anti-bandit operations and it is apparently not intended that they should be, their sphere of agreement does not take us very far.

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74. Ibid.

We fully recognise here the importance of tempering our impatience with Siamese inactivity with tolerance and appreciation of the wider issues involved. Perhaps it is not always clear to the Siamese that the Federation Government is not a H.M Government and the Malay Rulers are partners, so that it is not always reasonable or fair to assume that it is the British who are responsible for any cause of complaint.<sup>75</sup>

The first tentative result of the Songkhla Conference was the successful launching of a joint operation of Thai and Malayan forces on the frontier in early February 1949. This operation was carried shortly after the Gurkha forces were ambushed by a band of Communists at Badak in Kedah on January 13, 1949.

#### Assistance to the Thai Police

A discussion similar to that about supplying arms to the Thai Army was also developed in the respect of equipping the Thai police. The British Consul at Songkhla, Captain Dennis, after discussions with Madoc and P. Andrew, Malayan Liaison Officer, first made the latter recommendation.<sup>76</sup> Dennis also suggested that a training scheme should be arranged to improve the efficiency of the Thai Police. It was also desirable to appoint a permanent

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75. Henry Gurney-Thompson, 13 January 1949, FO 371/76289 (F2301/1061/40).

76. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No, 125, 16 February 1949, FO 371/76289 (F2479/1061/40).

Malayan Police Liaison Officer at Songkhla and a similar officer of the Thai Police at Alor Setar.

Thompson strongly supported these recommendations on the ground that it would make Malayan-Thai collaboration against Communists in the border area more effective.<sup>77</sup> He asked the Commissioner-General for a policy decision on the supply of arms and equipment to the Thai Police on the scale suggested. He suggested that payment should be made by deducting its value from the monthly payment for exported Thai rice.

Sir Henry Gurney's attitude was encouraging. He strongly supported the Ambassador's recommendation on the strengthening of the Thai Police.<sup>78</sup> With regard to the proposal to provide arms and transport, the High Commissioner noted that it was important to ensure that this equipment would be used in border areas as agreed with Malayan Police against their common enemy. He suggested the procedure should be that it would be issued on a loan basis through the Malayan Police Liaison Officer to be attached to the Thai Commissioner of Police Ninth Area, and that the issue should be made in stages. The High Commissioner made it clear that the equipment could not be

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77. Thompson-MacDonald, No. 17, 22 February 1949, CO 537/4750.

78. Gurney-Secretary of State for the Colonies, No. 277, 28 February 1949, CO 537/4756.

supplied from Malayan Police sources and he suggested that in any case it would be right and proper that the loan should be from His Majesty's Government.

A.M Palliser advised that the Foreign Office should agree to the supply of these arms.<sup>79</sup> On the question of loaning the equipment, he believed that the Thais would oppose it. For that reason, he suggested, Sir Henry Gurney should be advised to drop the loan idea. He also felt that if the arms were issued in stages to the Thai Police in the area by a Malayan Liaison Police Officer, that would constitute an adequate safeguard against the arms being diverted to other areas. Both the Liaison Police Officer and Captain Dennis would be able to report on the distribution of weapons and if that did not proceed satisfactorily in the initial stages further deliveries could be suspended.

J.D Higham of the Colonial Office also supported the policy of supplying equipment to the Thai Police. Such a policy was, in his view, an essential complement to the satisfactory control of the frontier on the Malayan side by the Frontier Force. He agreed with A.M. Palliser that the suggestion of loaning equipment be dropped. He argued:

'Financially, of course, a loan to Siam is not an attractive proposition

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79. Minute by A.M Palliser, 12 March 1949, CO 537/4756.

since it is pretty obvious that the prospects of the recovery of any equipment turned over to the Siamese are, to say the least, slim. The cost of the arms now being made available to the Siamese army ... is being credited against HMG's liability in respect of payment of rice supplied by Siam and the Ambassador suggests that a similar procedure might be adopted here. I should myself have thought that the issue of these arms through the police and Liaison Officer would be adequate safeguard that they would be used in the frontier area and I do not think we can strongly support the loan basis proposed by the High Commissioner, particularly as the Foreign Office do not appear to be pressing the point on political grounds.' 80

J.J. Paskin, Superintendent Assistant Secretary at Colonial Office, also supported the arming of Thai Police.<sup>81</sup> He considered this as not inconsistent with the policy of the Colonial Office, since, quite independently of the efforts to obtain the cooperation of the Thai Police in dealing with the Communists who crossed the Malayan-Thai border, the Malayan Government was in fact proceeding with the arrangement for the efficient control of the frontier, on the Malayan side. 'We know', he said, 'that both Colonel Gray and the High Commissioner attach the greatest importance to the development of combined operations, which clearly cannot be as effective as we should like them to be

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80. Minute by J.D Higham, 10 March 1949, CO 537/4756.

81. Minute by J.J Paskin, 12 March 1949, CO 537/4756.

unless Siamese police are adequately equipped.<sup>82</sup>

In his letter to J.V.B Jervis Read of the War Office, Higham emphasised the importance of reequipping the Thai police as recommended by the Malayan authorities and the British Embassy in Bangkok in order to ensure successful operation against the Communists along the Malayan-Thai border.<sup>83</sup>

The War Office agreed to the issue of arms and equipment to the Thai Police subject to certain conditions. The War Office required repayment for the expendable stores issued on loan.<sup>84</sup> These repayment and hire charges could be pressed through the British Military Attaches for agreement by the Thai government and deducted from the monthly rice payment. The War Office also agreed with the High Commissioner's proposal that some form of guarantee should be obtained that the arms would in fact be used on anti-bandit measures on the Thai-Malaya border.

On March 22, FARELF was instructed by the War Office to issue, from its stocks, arms and equipment,

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82. Ibid.

83. J.D Higham-Col. Jervis Read, 15 March 1949, CO 537/4756.

84. War Office-FARELF, No 2577, 22 March 1949, CO 537/4756.

vehicles, as required by the Thai Police.<sup>85</sup>

On March 28, 1949, Thompson submitted an aide-mémoire to the Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs making an offer to supply arms and equipment, on payment, for five battalions of Thai troops based at Haadyai, in implementation of the government's policy of anti-terrorist cooperation in the zone of the Malayan border.<sup>86</sup> He also offered to make available, if desired, to the Thai Police forces in the South additional arms and equipment. Itemised lists of the arms, equipment and supplies available for issue on payment, in the case of expendable stores, or hire, in the case of inexpendable stores, were to be forwarded later. The Malayan Government also were willing to consider facilities for the training of Thai police in jungle warfare and also disposed to favour the appointment of a permanent Thai Police Liaison Officer at Alor Setar together with the reciprocal appointment of a Malayan police Liaison Officer in South Thailand.

The Thai Minister was also reminded that the offers were made on the predicated assumption that their policy of cooperating with the Malayan authorities in

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85. Ibid.

86. Aide - Mémoire to the Thai Government, 28 March 1949.  
CO 537/4756.



combating Communism in the border areas would be implemented. The Aide-Mémoire also called for an assurance of continued collaboration.

On April 27, the Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs replied.<sup>87</sup> In regard to the proposed supply of arms and equipment for the five Thai battalions stationed in the South, the Ministry of Defence would 'cordially accept' the offer and would make all necessary arrangements with the British Military Attaché. As for the offer of additional arms and equipment for the Thai Police forces, the Thai Police Department agreed to consider the purchase of such arms if itemised lists and statement of costs could be supplied to the Thai authorities for consideration. On the facilities for training, the Thai Police Department would consider the offer 'when circumstances require'.

As regards anti-terrorist cooperation, the Thai Minister assured the Ambassador that the Thai Government would collaborate as far as possible in suppressing Communists along the border and no withdrawal of Thai troops and police from the South was contemplated.

On receipt of this reply, on April 30, Thompson submitted to the Thai Ministry of Defence particulars of

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87. Aide - Mémoire of 27 April 1949, Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CO 537/4756.

costs of arms for five Thai battalions for consideration.<sup>88</sup> On May 7, the Thai Ministry of Defence informed the Embassy of their agreement to purchase items from FARELF stocks at a total cost of £6,527.6s.8d: 30 2-inch mortars with 1,000 bombs; sten guns with 100,800 rounds; 16 Radio/Telephone sets No. 38 with 320 'battle' battery; 15 part worn No. 22 Radio/Telephone sets and 804 rifle grenades.<sup>89</sup> However, the Ministry rejected the suggestion that payment be made through deduction of the sum involved from monthly rice accounts. They preferred to settle the bill direct.

On June 1949, arms and equipment for the five Thai infantry battalions were shipped to Bangkok.

### Military Mission

While the question of equipping the Thai army and police in the South was being considered by the British authorities, the British Commander-in-Chief, Far East, suggested to the British Chiefs of Staff that a Military Mission be established in Thailand.<sup>90</sup> In their view, with the establishment of the British Military Mission in

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| 88. | Bangkok-Foreign Office,       | No. 325, | 2  | May | 1949, |
|     | CO 537/4756.                  |          |    |     |       |
| 89. | Bangkok-Foreign Office,       | No. 339, | 7  | May | 1949, |
|     | CO 537/4756.                  |          |    |     |       |
| 90. | Foreign Office-Bangkok,       | No. 361, | 20 | May | 1949, |
|     | FO 371/76290 (F7313/1061/40). |          |    |     |       |

Bangkok, advice could be given to the Thais, particularly in the training and use of British weapons and equipment and the coordination and timing of operations on each side of the border. The British Chiefs of Staff supported the proposal. On March 10, 1949, the Ministry of Defence submitted the proposal to the Foreign Office for their consideration.<sup>91</sup> On April 28, 1949, R.H Scott wrote to Thompson about the possibility of sending a British Military Mission to Thailand and asked for his opinion on the matter.<sup>92</sup>

Thompson, however, reacted coolly towards the proposal.<sup>93</sup> While agreeing in principle that the appointment of such a Mission at the appropriate time might be useful, Thompson concluded that the time was not yet ripe. He believed that, for reasons of amour propre, the Thais were becoming more and more allergic to the employment of foreign advisers in any capacity, except as specialist technicians. A Service Mission, whose task it would be to go beyond instruction in the handling of new weapons into the sphere of strategy and tactics could only, he was afraid, be regarded as a humiliating imposition by senior Thai officers, at any rate unless or until some

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91. Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee-Foreign Office, 10 March 1949, CO 537/54462/3.

92. Ibid.

93. Thompson-R.H Scott, 13 May 1949, CO 537/54462/3.

situation arose indicating clearly that their country and the Anglo-American powers had definitely thrown in their lot with each other, and must coordinate their efforts. Thompson's view was that they had not yet reached that point. There was small indication that either Britain or America were even contemplating any major aid, military or otherwise, to Thailand. The assistance which the British had agreed to supply to the Thai army and police deployed in the Malayan border zone was on a tiny scale only and primarily intended to enable the Thais to help Malaya.

There were also political factors involved. Pibul was afraid of Chinese aggression, whether in the form of internal disorder created by the local fifth column or invasion, or both, and it was for that reason that Pibul was angling for Anglo-American support. The immediate acceptance of a British Services mission might, in Pibul's view, constitute a provocation to China, a risk which could not be incurred as long as Thailand did not receive military assurance from Britain and the United States of support in the face of growing danger from outside and inside. Therefore Thompson suggested that the idea of a Mission be kept in cold storage pending developments, and that meanwhile they should concentrate on keeping the Thais on the alert in the south.

Despite Thompson's reaction, the Chiefs of Staff continued to press for the establishment of a Mission at

the earliest possible date.<sup>94</sup> They considered that such a mission was highly desirable because it would assist coordination of anti-bandit operations on the Malayan border, apart from helping the Thais to secure British military requirements. The Foreign Office urged Thompson to reconsider his attitude to the mission.

Thompson, however, still held to his view that the offer of such a mission would probably not be acceptable to the Thais at the moment.<sup>95</sup> He could not be certain exactly how Pibul would react if it were raised with him. However, he had no objection to sounding Pibul informally, but there would be little hope of persuading him to accept a mission unless the British Government were prepared to bear the cost.

The matter was brought to the Chiefs of Staff Committee in London on June 1, 1949, for consideration. The Chiefs of Staff Committee agreed to bear the expenses provided that the numbers of British Air and Naval Attachés and their staff at the British Embassy in Bangkok were kept to a minimum.<sup>96</sup> They believed that the mission would get off to a good start only if full preparations had been made before hand and if in particular a full forecast had been

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94. Foreign Office-Bangkok, 13 May 1949, CO 537/54462/3.

95. Bangkok-Foreign Office, 15 May 1949, CO 537/54462/3.

96. Foreign Office-Bangkok, 2 July 1949, CO 537/54462/3.

made of the likely requirements in arms and equipment of the Thai forces and British ability to meet them.

In view of this limitation, Thompson was quite ready to sound Pibul informally.<sup>97</sup> But he reminded the Foreign Office that if they were prepared to persuade the Thai Government to accept an advisory mission, an essential pre-requisite would be for the British to give the Thais an assurance that the material help that they were ready to grant would be on a substantial scale and at reasonable prices. So far, there had been little evidence of either.

Thompson considered that the best means of extracting from Thailand a fairly accurate forecast of their needs was to persuade them to appoint a special committee, to which the British Military Attachés could be attached, to formulate their requirements. Furthermore, the British Government should seek American clearance about the suggested establishment of a Service Mission. This was because he believed that, in the event of war, Thailand was to be in the United States sphere of command. And also because unless the Americans, especially in the Service authorities, were fully in agreement with the British policy, their local Attachés would lose no opportunity of making capital out of their possible failures or shortcomings, while generally viewing their mission with

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97. Bangkok-Foreign Office, 8 July 1949, CO 537/54462/3.

suspicion and jealousy.

Malcolm MacDonald, the British Commissioner-General, agreed with Thompson that the scheme should be advanced with the blessing of the United States Government.<sup>98</sup> However, he reminded the Foreign Office that the function of the mission should be purely advisory, and the Thai Government would be free to accept or reject the advice and assistance the mission offered.

The Chiefs of Staff agreed that the United States Government should be informed of their desire to establish a service mission in Thailand.<sup>99</sup> After the State Department had been consulted, it would be advisable for Thompson in his approach to Pibul to describe the purposes of the Mission as being to assist the Thais in building up their armed forces and also to advise and help them as might be necessary in repressing anti-Communist operation should such operations develop in Thailand. As regards the supply of equipment, the Chiefs of Staff considered that reasonable requirements should be met in due course, especially if the Thai demands were realistic and in keeping with the size and role of the Thai forces. It was important for Thompson to impress on the Thai Government the necessity for making firm demands for equipment. As

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98. Singapore-Foreign Office, 16 July 1949, CO 537/54462/3.

99. Foreign Office-Bangkok, 16 August 1949, CO 537/54462/3.

regards the appointment of a special committee to formulate Thai requirements, the Chiefs of Staff felt that such a committee should be set up if possible in advance of the establishment of the mission.

Meanwhile, on August 16-18, the new British Commander-in-Chief, Far East, Major-General Sir John Harding, made a brief informal visit to Bangkok on his way back to Singapore from Hong Kong.<sup>100</sup> During his short stay there, General Harding discussed with Thompson and his advisers the supply of arms to the Thai army. He also had some conversations with the Thai Prime Minister and his advisers, and also with the United States Ambassador.

General Harding recognised the strategic importance of Thailand to British interests. Although under no illusions as to the ability or will of the Thais to resist external aggression by superior forces, General Harding agreed with Stanton, the United States Ambassador, and Thompson that the British and the Americans should make joint efforts to assist the Thais in strengthening their military, air and police forces. This could be done through supply on attractive terms, of light arms and equipment of various kinds, including transport, and training facilities, in the hope that this would reinforce

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100. Bangkok-Foreign Office, 18 August 1949, CO 537/54462/3.



the determination of the Pibul Government to combat any attempt to impose a Communist regime by internal revolt or disorder.

In considering how best to implement help to the Thais, General Harding, Stanton and Thompson discussed the pro and cons of a Service Mission in Thailand, as proposed by the Chiefs of Staff.<sup>101</sup> They agreed that the proposal should be dropped for reasons explained by Thompson earlier. Furthermore, the many benefits expected by its proponents to accrue from such a mission might be obtainable by other and less formal means. It was suggested that a Special Committee should be appointed by the Thai Minister of Defence, on which the British and the United States Military Attachés would also serve, to examine detailed requirements, recommend priorities, and suggest sources of supply. They believed that such a committee should also be used to influence Thai Military developments towards the most suitable form of anti-Communist defence and to do so without a shock to the Thai amour propre likely to be inflicted by the Mission.

The establishment of the special committee was agreed in principle by Pibul and the Thai Commander-in-Chief of the Army. The Thai Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Pote Sarasin, asked Thompson to write to him

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101. Ibid.

personally with regard to the proposed Committee. For the rest, General Harding promised to help in every possible way in lending instructors, ordinance experts and specialist officers generally, should Thailand require their help for short specified period. In addition, he considered also the importance of building up a feeling of mutual confidence and understanding between FARELF and the Thai army by repeating for the latter the special course at the FARELF Training Centre and by offering to attach officers to British units engaged in jungle operations.

The Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff were duly informed about the joint recommendations of Thompson, Harding and Stanton for the establishment of the special committee rather than a Military Mission.<sup>102</sup> The Chiefs of Staff however were not prepared to commit themselves on the new proposal to set up a special committee instead of a Mission until they had heard the American views on their earlier suggestions. They also pointed out that the special committee was not entirely of the pattern they approved. They had intended that any committee which was set up should do more than prepare the ground in supply matters before a mission was established.<sup>103</sup>

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102. Ibid.

103. Foreign Office-Bangkok, 24 August 1949, CO 537/54462/3.

On August 28, Thompson wrote to Pote Sarasin, Thai Minister for Foreign Affairs, proposing the establishment of a small military committee to consider the requirements of the Thai armed forces as agreed in principle by the Thai Prime Minister during the Harding-Pibul talks recently.<sup>104</sup> Despite their earlier agreement, however, the Thai Government decided not to establish the proposed special committee. Their reason was that there already existed a committee set up by the Thai Ministry of Defence to study and draw up the requirements of the Armed Forces. Thompson believed that, the Thai Government, for reasons of their own did not wish formally to agree to the British Attaché or his United States colleague being officially attached to one of their committees, though they were ready and anxious for him to participate in its deliberations as and when necessary. This attitude, in his opinion, was dictated by internal political considerations and was in accordance with the traditional hesitation of Thailand to enter into any formal military commitments with foreign powers.

The State Department also perceived that there was no need at that time for a military mission nor for a joint United States-United Kingdom membership in a Thai military committee.<sup>105</sup> The Department agreed with the Thai

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104. Bangkok-Foreign Office, 8 September 1949, CO 537/54462/3.

105. State Department-Bangkok, No. 613, 31 October 1949, 892.20/-8-1549. Record Group 59.

Government that the present arrangement of consultation between the Thai Defence Ministry Committee and the United States-United Kingdom Military Attachés was practical and convenient and should be continued. The establishment of such a Mission or Joint Committee would arouse the expectation that it would be followed by large quantities of military supplies which might not be forthcoming. Furthermore, the Thai Government was already cooperative regarding the Communist issues and had demonstrated its willingness in a practical way when there was real need, as indicated by its policing activities along the Malayan border. The small quantity of weapons which might be released to the Thai Government in the foreseeable future might not even warrant a military mission or a joint committee, as adequate supervision would be maintained by the United States and United Kingdom military attaches.

In view of the Thai reaction and the State Department view, the Chiefs of Staff decided not to pursue the matter further.<sup>106</sup> Thus the proposal for the establishment of a Military Mission or joint committee in Thailand was dropped.

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106. Ministry of Defence-G.H.Q FARELF, 23 September 1949, CO 537/54462/3.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE PRACTICALITIES OF BORDER COOPERATION: MALAYAN-THAI POLICE BORDER AGREEMENT

After the Songkhla conference in January 1949, Malayan-Thai border relations were cordial. In May 1949, further steps were initiated by the Malayan authorities to increase border cooperation against the Communists. The Malayan proposal involved the reciprocal freedom of crossing the border by the Malayan and Thai Police. After several months of negotiations, on September 1, 1949, the Malayan-Thai Police Border Agreement was signed in Bangkok.

As result of the intensive military, air and police operations carried out in Malaya, there were signs by May 1949 of a general movement of Communists towards the Thai border.<sup>1</sup> Among those terrorists were included a number of prominent leaders and the indications were that they would succeed in joining the Chinese Communists in Betong.

The Federation authorities believed that a situation might develop in which several hundred terrorists might escape into Thailand pursued by British and Malay forces. It was believed that those Communist fugitives

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1. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 361, 20 May 1949, FO 371/76290 (F7313/1061/40).

might reach the border in an exhausted and demoralised condition, and in need of rest to refit. It was believed that if they could still be harried and pursued by the Thai forces after crossing the border, many might surrender, but otherwise they were likely to settle down and become a permanent menace both to the maintenance of order on the Thai side of the border and to the security of the Federation of Malaya.

The Commissioner-General of Police in Malaya, Colonel W.N Gray, paid a brief informal visit to Songkhla on May 16, 1949. Accompanied by Captain Dennis, the British Consul, Gray conferred with General H.L. Chuang, the G.O.C 5th District.<sup>2</sup> The latter, however, did not feel able to offer any effective cooperation, mainly on the grounds that the retreating Communists had not undertaken any hostile action against Thai interests. However, according to General Luang Chart, Thai Director-General of Police, the main reason for their reluctance to take action was that they feared that it might provoke reprisals from the Chinese community there.<sup>3</sup>

To overcome the difficulties, Thompson advised Gray to discuss the issue with General Sakdi Senanarong,

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2. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 20 (saving), 16 May 1949, FO 371/76290 (F7002/1061/40).

3. Ibid.

who was at that time on an official visit to Singapore, hoping that on his return to Bangkok, he would cause appropriate orders to be issued to General Chuang.<sup>4</sup> General Sakdi Senanarong was the chief aide-de-camp to the King and also the Director of Military Intelligence. It was said that he was close to the Thai Prime Minister.

Subsequently, Gray saw General Sakdi Senanarong at Bukit Serene and discussed the whole situation along Malayan/Thai border again. In the course of that meeting, Colonel Gray suggested the possibility of permitting the police on both sides of the frontier to cross freely into Thailand and Malaya respectively in pursuing the Communists, provided that they reported to the nearest police or frontier control post on the other side.<sup>5</sup> Except in cases of hot pursuit of wanted terrorist fugitives, arrest would be a matter for the Police of the country concerned.

As an illustration of the advantages conferred upon Communists under the existing conditions when both Thai and Malayan police were prohibited from crossing the border except with special permission, Gray explained that it frequently happened that terrorists escaped into Thai

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4. Ibid.

5. Kuala Lumpur-Colonial Office, 19 May 1949, FO 371/76290 (F7229/1061/40).

territory where, although their immediate whereabouts were often known to the Malayan authorities, they remained unmolested until the attention of the Thai police had been drawn to their presence and a written description sent, whereas the Malay police could at once identify many of those terrorists to the Thai Police if they were allowed freely and without delay to cross the border, and at once contact their Thai colleagues. General Senanarong indicated his agreement for closer cooperation and suggested that the British Embassy in Bangkok made an official proposal to the Thai Government.

On the Foreign Office's approval, on May 20, Thompson submitted to the Thai Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs an aide-mémoire putting forward suggestions concerning reciprocal freedom of transit across the border for the two police forces engaged in anti-terrorist activity.<sup>6</sup> In the event of such an agreement in principle, the two Police forces on the border could at once settle details among themselves. Thompson assured the Thai Deputy Minister that the suggested reciprocal freedom of Police transit action across the border was not intended to be extended to members of the Federation or Thai military forces.

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6. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 361, 20 May 1949, FO 371/76290 (F7313/1061/40).



The Thai Government replied with remarkable rapidity to Thompson's aide-mémoire. The Thai Minister for Foreign Affairs informed the Ambassador orally on May 25 that the Thai Government had agreed in principle to the Malayan Government's suggestions concerning reciprocal freedom of transit across the border for the two police forces engaged in anti-terrorist activity.<sup>7</sup> Detailed application for new arrangements should be discussed and decided between the two police authorities.

On the same day, the Director-General of Thai Police met Guy Madoc, First Secretary, to discuss the matter. General Chart told Madoc that he would welcome the visit of Colonel Gray to Bangkok with a view to concluding a definite understanding without any possible delay.<sup>8</sup> On May 27, the Thai Government's agreement for Malayan/Thai border cooperation was officially confirmed in writing.<sup>9</sup> Colonel Gray arrived in Bangkok on May 30 to discuss with his counterpart, General Chart, and other senior Thai officers the working arrangements to implement the agreement reached in principle between the Thai and Federation Governments for reciprocal freedom of transit of Police across the border.

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7. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 379, 26 May 1949, FO 371/76290 (F7717/1061/40).

8. Ibid.

9. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 139, 28 May 1949, FO 371/76290 (F7717/1061/40).

During the conference on May 31, Gray outlined the present trend of the campaign against the Communists in Malaya.<sup>10</sup> Increasing pressure from the Malayan security forces was pressing the terrorists into the geographical backbone of mountainous jungle through which they were escaping towards Thailand. Documents captured by the Malayan forces showed that since December 1948 the Communist leaders had decided to form three centres of resistance, one of which was to be on the Thai-Malayan frontier. There was evidence that already the Communists had established themselves on the Thai side of the frontier where the Malayan forces were unable at present to follow them. Gray stressed that the majority of Communists could be looked upon purely as bandits and commercial robbers. Only a few of them, he said were carrying on in the interests of the Communist cause.

In subsequent discussions, it was established that Thai action against the terrorist could not be as drastic as that permitted to the Malayan forces under the Emergency Regulations. The most likely offences in respect of which the Thai police could take action against the terrorists were:

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10. Report on Meeting between Col. Gray, Commissioner of Police, Federation of Malaya, and Thai Authorities at Bangkok, 31 May and 1 June 1949 in Thompson-E. Bevin, No. 151, 3 June 1949, FO 371/76290 (F8388/1061/40).

- a. Possession of unlicensed arms;
- b. Unlawful entry into Thailand.

On an application for extradition by the Malayan authorities of a man wanted by the Malayan police for the commission in Malaya of an extraditable offence, the Thai Police would be able to execute a warrant of arrest and detention. Gray explained that, owing to the difficulty of persuading witnesses to come forward, often it was not possible to produce against a known terrorist sufficient evidence to support an application for extradition.

It was agreed that the great majority of terrorists were probably aliens under Thai law and would not possess immigration papers. Therefore the Thai police would be able to send them out of the Kingdom to Malaya.

Gray envisaged that Police action across the frontier would be of two kinds:

- a. Patrols in strength not exceeding 35 men;
- b. Combined operations on the lines of Operation Holiday which would be the result of joint planning by the Chief Police Officers of the Malayan and Thai frontier contingents concerned.

On the lines proposed in the British Ambassador's

Aide-Mémoire of May 20, Gray proposed that patrols should be permitted to proceed across the frontier of the other country. Reasons for crossing would be:

- a. to investigate urgently information received about terrorist movements or concentrations,
- b. in pursuit of terrorists escaping from Malaya over the frontier into Thailand, or vice versa,
- c. to confuse the terrorists and undermine their morale by removing the fetters on free police movement by which the terrorists had so benefitted in the past.

Lt. General Luang Chart, the Thai Director of Police, said that the proposed strength of 35 persons for patrols was acceptable to him. It was agreed that in the event of a patrol making an arrest on foreign soil, should it be very difficult to reach such a Police station, the patrol would be permitted to take the prisoner back on to its own soil and then inform the Police of the other territory. It was understood by the Conference that except in cases of operational necessity the Police of the territory concerned should be called upon to make the arrest.

It was agreed that the Chief Police Officers of

the Malayan and Thai frontier contingents would have to arrange foolproof recognition signals to be used in the event of patrols of the two countries meeting in thick jungle.

Regarding the limits to which patrols should be permitted to penetrate into the other country, Luang Chart said that he would wish to consult Colonel Faet, Chief Police Officer of Songkhla, and would also bring up the matter at a meeting of the Central Peace Maintenance Committee. This Committee was responsible for the internal security of Thailand and was directly responsible to the Ministry of Interior.

Later, on the evening of 31 May, Gray visited Pibul Songram, the Thai Prime Minister. Gray described to the Prime Minister the outline of the arrangements under discussion and the reasons necessitating them.<sup>11</sup> Pibul Songram proved to be very forthcoming. With regard to the extent of penetration into each other's territory to be allowed to Police on either side, Pibul thought that the exact distance scared him less than the establishment of effective collaboration on the ground between the two police forces.

During the Conference on 1st June, Luang Chart

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11. Ibid.

stated that the Peace Maintenance Committee had agreed to mutual crossing of the frontier by patrols.<sup>12</sup> He enquired whether the military would be used by the Malayan authorities for such work. He was told that the military element would be limited to such non-combatant personnel as Wireless Operators who would not wear military uniform. Luang Chart expressed his worries about the legal authority of the Malayan Police to make arrests on Thai soil. He was even more worried about the legal position of a Malayan policeman who chanced to kill somebody on Thai soil even in self-defence. Such a man could not be excused from the Thai form of 'Enquiry into Death' in which he would be treated as an accused person. He said that, in the case of Thai Police operating on Malayan soil, he could safeguard them by enrolling them as Malayan Special Police under the Malayan Emergency Regulations. He said that Thailand had no such regulations and that he could not even make the Malayan Police 'honorary Thai Police'. Members of the Conference were unable to suggest a solution to this problem on a legal basis, and the matter was shelved.

On the proposed limits of penetration, Gray was prepared to agree to the Thai Police penetrating to a maximum depth of 35 miles into Malaya.

Major Som, representing Colonel Faet from the

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12. Ibid.

G.O.C 5th District, said that the latter favoured penetration only as far as those Thai Police stations nearest to the frontier. Gray opposed this on the grounds that (a) it would not provide recognizable natural features as boundaries and so, for example, Malayan police advancing northwards through the jungles east of Sadao Police station would not be able to determine when they had reached the limit; (b) in such an area as Padang Besar, where there was a Police station almost on the frontier, such an arrangement would result in no penetration at all. Gray left proposals on the limits of mutual penetration with the Thai Director-General for consideration.

Based on his discussions in Bangkok with Thai Director-General of Police, Gray prepared draft orders which he proposed to issue to Chief Police Officers in Malaya. On June 8, 1949, the text of the Draft Orders was sent to the Thai Government for their comments. The Draft Orders were as follows:<sup>13</sup>

a. General

It has been agreed by the Governments of the Federation and Thailand that there will be full co-operation on the frontier between their respective police forces against terrorists, bandits and criminals. In order to give full and practical effect to this

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13. High Commissioner, Malaya - Secretary of State for Colonies, No. 676, 8 June 1949, FO 371/76290 (F8406/1061/40)

agreement, Federation Police may, under conditions set out hereunder, enter Thailand territory and Thailand police similarly may enter the Federation territory.

b. Reasons for crossing the frontier

- i. To investigate urgent information received about terrorist movements or concentrations.
- ii. In pursuit of terrorists escaping from the Federation of Malaya over the frontier into Thailand or vice versa.
- iii. To confuse terrorists and undermine their morale by removing fetters on free police movement by which terrorists have benefitted in the past.
- iv. To ensure liaison and cooperation on all police matters in the border areas of the Federation and Thailand.

c. Arrests

- i. Arrests should only be made by Federation police patrols operating in Thailand territory and by Thailand police operating in Federation territory when it is not practicable for Police of the territory in which arrest is to be made to effect the arrest themselves. If, it is possible, arrests in the Federation of Malaya should be effected by Federation police and in Thailand by Thailand police.
- ii. Federation police, having arrested person or persons in Thailand will take the prisoner to the nearest Thailand police station and hand him over to the Thailand police. If it should be difficult to reach such a police station, the patrol is permitted to take the prisoner back into its own territory and then inform the police of the other territory.

d. Object of arrest

- i. The pronounced objects are to arrest



terrorists, bandits and armed robbers and to prevent or detect illegal immigration.

- ii. Minor or petty crime will continue to be dealt with solely by the police in whose territory it occurs.

e. Condition for crossing the border

Normally, police patrols may cross into Thailand territory and vice versa as follows:

- i. The total strength of any one patrol will not exceed a total of 35 police of all ranks.
- ii. Patrols will be in the uniform of their respective forces.
- iii. Patrols may be armed.
- iv. Patrols should report to and liaise with the nearest Thailand police station at the first practical opportunity and vice versa.
- v. If it is not possible to contact Thailand police during such a patrol, the Thailand police should be informed as soon as possible after the patrol.
- vi. When it is intended that two or more police patrols should work in conjunction or effect a sweep, prior permission must be obtained from the Thailand police and the plan must be made and operation carried out by the two Chief Police Officers concerned.

f. Recognition signals

Patrols entering their neighbour's territory will be required to carry and use any recognition signals which may from time to time be arranged by mutual agreement between the Chief Police Officer, Songkhla and the Chief Police Officer, Kedah.

g. Armed Forces

The above applies to the police only and the

military are not included, the only soldiers who can cross the frontier are those few technicians e.g wireless operators who may from time to time be attached in small numbers to assist the police of either force. Units, subunits or patrols of armed forces may not cross the frontier under this agreement. Specialist soldiers attached to the police will wear police uniform.

h. Liaison Officers

Federation police may send a liaison officer to Songkhla (to be attached to the British Consulate) and to assist in detailed cooperation. The Thailand police may send a liaison officer to Alor Star as and when required and for any periods.

i. Attachment of Thailand Police to Federation Police

The Thailand police have generously agreed to the attachment to the Federation police of a group of approximately 12 Thailand police under the command of an officer or senior N.C.O to perform liaison duties and assist the Federation police. They will be quartered centrally where they can live together and will be attached as may be convenient to the Federation police patrols for assisting with the language problem and other technical difficulties.

The Draft orders were submitted to General Chart for comments. In view of Malaya's implied acceptance of the offer of a 'pool' of Thai policemen for attachment to patrols, the Director-General wished to add another clause to ensure against unfortunate incidents.<sup>14</sup> The clause was to read 'for the purpose of paragraphs b(i) and b(ii), no Malayan patrol may cross the frontier into Siam unless it

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14. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 418, 11 June 1949, FO 371/76290 (F8571/1061/40).

is accompanied by a Siamese policemen'. On b(iii), General Chart said he would prefer to consider that clause as a result of action proposed in b(i), (ii) and (iv). He did not want patrols to cross the frontier merely to confuse the enemy. He would like that paragraph to be deleted from the abstract. On paragraph b(i), for clarity in translation General Chart wished the last sentence of that clause to be put first. On paragraph c(ii), the Director-General wished to add at the end of that clause '... as soon as possible. And prisoner must be handed over to police of other territory as soon as possible'.

On Paragraph d(i), Director-General did not wish the curbing of illegal immigration to be included as an object. The Director-General wished the clause to read 'The main objects are to be to arrest terrorists and armed robbers connected with terrorist forces in Malaya'. Robber gangs who were not connected with terrorists of Malaya and who were nationals of one country would not be attacked or pursued in that country by police of the other country. Paragraph d(ii) would then read as paragraph d(iii).

On paragraph g, as Civil District Officers on crime investigations sometimes accompanied Thai police patrols, the Director-General desired that the first line of that clause should start: 'The above applies to police and permanent Court of International Justice officials only and military'. He pointed out that the last sentence of

paragraph g did not make clear what uniform was or was not to be worn. The Director-General himself would prefer: 'specialist soldiers attached to police will not wear military uniform'. Finally, the Director-General requested Gray to specify and include in his draft such safeguards as he was able to give Thailand Police operating on Malayan soil who might chance to shoot a terrorist.

Gurney agreed to the deletion of paragraph b(iii) and to the proposed amendment to paragraph c(i) and (ii). He also accepted the proposed redraft of paragraph d(i) and (ii) which reflected the spirit of their intention to deal with militant communist by all means in their power.<sup>15</sup>

On paragraph (g) Gurney had no objection to the proposed amendment but argued that to prevent accidents and facilitate recognition civil officers should wear police uniform. The last sentence of paragraph (g) should read 'specialist soldiers attached to the police will wear police uniforms'. He thought that seemed to be clearer than the proposed amendment which prevented them wearing uniform.

Commenting on Chart's b(i) and b(ii), Gurney regretted that the suggested provision that no Malayan

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15. High Commissioner, Malaya - Secretary of States for Colonies, No. 706, 14 June 1949 FO 371/76290 (F8571/1061/40).

patrol might cross the frontier into Thailand unless accompanied by Thailand policeman would nullify the effect of the Agreement because it would prevent immediate pursuit and rapid follow up of information. He suggested the addition of the words 'whenever possible' if in fact it appeared ever likely to be practical to carry out such an arrangement, except of course on 'set pieces' operations. Gurney said he would be glad to accept a pool of Thailand police for attachment to patrols wherever possible.

On Chart's proposal to include a safeguard in his draft for Thai police shooting terrorists in Malaya, Gurney replied that the Malayan authorities would be prepared to give police powers to Thailand police operating on Malayan soil for the purposes of that arrangement. It was appreciated that in view of differences in laws, the Thai Government could not be expected to give quite the same cover to Malayan police. The Malayan Government, Gurney said, did not ask that Thailand police should be accompanied when operating in Malaya. It was understood by Gray from conversation with the Director-General of Thai Police that the latter was fully agreed that in order to obtain results each police force should be given complete freedom to cross the border, which bandits neither respected nor recognised.

Gurney's views and suggestions were communicated to the Director-General of Thai Police on 14 June 1949.

However, the only real difficulty was Gurney's objection to the attachment of Thai police to Malayan patrols operating in Thai territory. In his telegraph to Gurney, Thompson said that, as he explained to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, under paragraphs 2(b) and 4, a Malayan policeman who might chance to kill someone in that country, whether terrorist or otherwise, could not avoid laying himself open to prosecution under the existing Thailand law.<sup>16</sup> General Chart, he said, was discussing the problem with the Thai Prime Minister, trying to seek a way out of that impasse. Thompson warned Gurney that if the Malayan authorities were to carry out their objective, which was that Malayan patrols should be able to operate to a distance of about forty miles within Thai territory, a compromise on that important point was almost certainly inevitable.

'It should be realised in this connection (gp.undec.) even the contemplated active operations by our police forces on Siamese soil, this government, who are under no (repeat

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16. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 428, 14 June 1949, FO 371/76290 (F8717/1061/40).

Para 2(b) - 'the position under Siamese law of a Malayan Police officer or other rank who may kill a terrorist in Siamese territory'

Para 4 - 'a possible solution might be found in posting on the Malayan side a pool of selected Siamese police from which individual policemen could be attached to patrols crossing into Siam, on the theory presumably that the presence of even one Siamese policeman with such patrols would legalise their actions on the side of the border'.

no) legitimate or other obligation to help us at all are (grps. undec.). It would be politic, I suggest, to meet them half way for there is no (repeat no) possibility of the law being amended in our favour that would be too much to expect from a legislature extremely sensitive on all matters affecting national sovereignty'.<sup>17</sup>

On June 16, Madoc was summoned by the Director-General of Police, who informed him that the Thai Prime Minister's Central Security Committee had carefully reviewed the course of negotiations.<sup>18</sup> The Committee however found that it was unable to approve any proposal that Malayan forces in hot pursuit or on urgent investigation be permitted to cross the frontier unaccompanied by a Thai police representative. However, having noted with satisfaction Gurney's undertaking to provide an adequate legal safeguard for Thai police operating in Malaya, the Committee agreed with General Chart to endeavour to supply enough Thai police to attach to all Malayan police units likely to be involved in immediate pursuit or follow-up of information.

The Director-General realised that this involved not only supplying men for some central 'pool' as offered previously, but also posting Thai Policemen to small police stations near the border where urgent pursuit into Thailand

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17. Ibid.

18. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 437, 17 June, 1949, FO 371/76290 (F8851/1061/40).

might become immediately necessary without recourse to the central 'pool' at some distant headquarters. Therefore, the Director-General requested Colonel Gray to estimate the number of men he would require. The former proposed that not less than two Thai policemen be attached to each of such minor police stations in Malaya. He also considered that not less than two and not more than three telegraphists should be attached to pre-arranged patrols across the border. However, the secondment of Thais must be looked upon as an experiment at first. Final adoption of the plan and implementation at full strength would depend upon

- a. The efficiency of the system and
- b. The reaction of Thai police to Malayan conditions.

The Director-General stated that he would pay his men the full salaries and allowances applicable to service in South Thailand. He hoped that Colonel Gray might care to consider paying the men some small sum to cover losses on currency exchange, separation from families or local cost of living.

The Committee agreed with all the other clauses of the proposed agreement. If the Malayan authorities would accept a restrictive clause which necessitated that Malayan patrols on cross border pursuits should be accompanied by



Thai Police and vice-versa, and could supply three copies of maps marked with agreed limits of penetration, agreement could be finalised. The Director-General proposed one small amendment to Gurney's suggestions that civil officers should wear Police uniform. As Thai District Officers wore a khaki uniform with badges of civil rank, they preferred to wear that instead of a police disguise, so the last sentence of paragraph (g) of Gray's draft orders would read 'specialist soldiers attached to police will wear police uniform. Civil officials should wear their uniform, but in no circumstances will wear plain clothes'.

Thompson seemed to be quite uneasy with Gurney's attitude. The main stumbling bloc was that Gurney was still reluctant to agree to any Malayan police patrol entering Thailand being accompanied by a minimum of two Thai policemen. Thompson asked Madoc to fly to Kuala Lumpur for personal discussions on that important point.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, Thompson advised R.H Scott, Head of the Southeast Asia Department at the Foreign Office, to advise the Colonial Office accordingly.<sup>20</sup>

'I naturally realise that the Siamese

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19. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 444, 20 June 1949, FO 371/76291 (F8942/1061/40).

20. Ibid.

are influenced not only by the legal difficulty of allowing foreign police to operate unaccompanied on their soil, but also by the not unnatural desire to keep an eye on their activities. From our point of view I see no (repeat no) objection to this. It might even be advantageous as militating against the possibility of such 'incidents' as occurred when the Malay Command marched into Siam in the spring of 1946 and interfered with road traffic and so forth, thereby arousing strong public protests. Mr. Madoc will make this and other points in Kuala Lumpur, but you should know about them too.

For the rest, although there is a greater understanding in Malaya today than was discernible in 1946, 1947 and 1948, of the realities underlying Anglo-Siamese relations there is still insufficient grasp of the truth that this country is not only an independent, sovereign State in name, but also in fact. There seems yet to be a tendency to regard the Siamese Prime Minister as something akin to the Sultan of Kedah or some other quasi-independent Malayan ruler, and therefore always amenable to British 'advice' if one is sufficiently persistent'.<sup>21</sup>

Scott fully agreed with Thompson that the British must not give the Thais grounds for suspecting their motives in connexion with action by Malayan police in Thai territory.<sup>22</sup> He had discussed the issues with the Colonial Office staff who agreed and who felt confident that Gurney also realised the importance of that. The Colonial Office thought Gurney's reluctance was due to anxiety lest police action might be stultified if it was

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21. Ibid.

22. Foreign Office-Bangkok, No. 304, 22 June 1949, FO 371/76291 (F8942/1061/40).

made an invariable condition that Thai police should accompany the Malayan parties in every case.

'I have pointed that even if some departure from this invariable rule is possible later, after system has been in smooth operation for some time, it is essential, if entire scheme is not to be jeopardised from the outset, that rule should be strictly observed at first: later on, after consultation with you, working of rule might be examined to see how far it, in fact, hampers Malayan police and whether it would be safe (from point of view of Thai susceptibilities) to permit occasional departure in exceptional circumstances'.<sup>23</sup>

Negotiations in Kuala Lumpur, however, failed to change Gurney's attitude. The Malayan authorities still insisted that certain restrictions to the Malayan Police's freedom of movement into Thailand would nullify the whole project.<sup>24</sup> Gurney stressed that the bandits cross the frontier without any restrictions whatsoever. Furthermore, the Malayan authorities had no desire to place any restrictions on the free movement of Thai police into Malaya. The practical difficulties pointed out by Gurney were as follow:

1. The number of Malayan policemen in Kedah, Perlis, Perak and Kelantan deployed on frontier work against the bandits totalled

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23. Ibid.

24. Thompson-R.H. Scott, 27 June 1949, FO 371/76291 (F9946/1061/40).

1,785 men. The number of police stations on and close to the frontier was 28. Gurney gravely doubted whether General Luang Chart could supply a sufficient number of suitable Thai policemen to fulfil all the requirements of such a big body of Malayan police.

2. Conditions in many of these frontier stations were such that their garrisons had to be relieved as often as once per month. On account of such frequent changes, valuable long-term personal relations between the Thai police attached to a given station and the Malayan police of that station would be constantly disrupted.
3. Conditions in some of the jungle outpost stations were so bad that Gurney anticipated serious dissatisfaction among the Thai policemen who, he understood, were accustomed to life in a Thai village.
4. Gurney stated that the Malayan police went out on most arduous jungle patrols lasting anything between four days and a month. He doubted whether the Thai police had sufficient stamina for such an ordeal, and he knew that they lacked training in jungle warfare.

5. Gurney also doubted whether General Luang Chart could lay his hands on sufficient Malay-speaking Thai police; and there were very few Thai-speaking Malay police to make up the anticipated deficiency.
6. Gurney also anticipated trouble over discipline and the authority of his Malay police over attached Thai police.

Apart from that, there were also political difficulties. Gurney doubted whether their Highnesses the Sultans would agree to having small parties of Thai police planted out in every frontier police station. The Thai authorities were likely to experience even greater difficulties in persuading their Members of Parliament and the general public that incursion of Malay police into Thai territory was warrantable under any circumstance.

The Malayan authorities were also concerned about legal difficulties. They doubted whether the Thai courts would accept the mere presence of a couple of Thai policemen, neither of whom was in executive command of a Malayan patrol, as authority for Malayan members of that patrol to kill a bandit. Gurney also pointed out that even in Malaya, if the Thai police were given the status of Malayan Special Constabulary, any policeman who improperly killed somebody would have to face a trial.

On June 23, Madoc returned to Bangkok empty handed. 'This is disappointing', commented Thompson, 'as I hoped that not only would the helpful attitude of the Siamese Government be appreciated in Kuala Lumpur, but also that Madoc would return armed with a constructive reply to the proposals of the Siamese Director-General of Police. Instead, we can only mark time so far as negotiations are concerned'.<sup>25</sup>

He added:

'My own feeling is quite simple, that if the Malayan authorities fail to take advantage of the generous facilities offered by the Siamese Government, it will be entirely their own fault. One cannot negotiate own point of view, on a basis of taking and giving nothing in return'.<sup>26</sup>

Gurney's attitude had caused some concern to the Foreign Office. This had prompted Scott to raise the matter with the Colonial Office. Immediately on June 26, the Colonial Office telegraphed to Gurney making the point that even if the acceptance of the Thai conditions limited the value of arrangements at first, small beginnings might lead to more effective arrangements later.<sup>27</sup>

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25. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 453, 23 June 1949, FO 371/76291/ (F9237/1061/40).

26. Ibid.

27. Colonial Office-High Commissioner, Malaya, No. 736, 26 June 1949, FO 371/76291 (F9237/1061/40).

On June 28, Thompson sent another telegram to the Foreign Office stressing the Thai point of view.<sup>28</sup> He argued that British patrols from Malaya would no doubt be more efficient and effective if they had complete freedom of action to operate in Thai territory. But they must recognise the Thai position, and that from their point of view it was a great concession to allow Malayan police patrols to operate in Thai territory accompanied by Thais. It was really asking too much, at any rate at that stage, to propose that their police should operate in Thai territory not accompanied by Thais.

Meanwhile, on June 26, Madoc handed a memorandum to the Thai Director-General of Police setting out proposals and objectives for the attachment of Thai police to Malayan police.<sup>29</sup> General Chart informed Madoc that he could not see his way to recommending to the Ministers any modifications of the condition that the Malayan police patrols operating in Thai territory should have two Thai policemen attached.<sup>30</sup>

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28. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 457, 28 June 1949, FO 371/76291 (F9432/1061/40).

29. Thompson-Scott, No. 269 27 June 1949, FO 371/76291 (F9946/1061/40).

30. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 486, 7 July 1949. FO 371/76291 (F10120/1061/40).

With the object of averting a breakdown in negotiations, Madoc then put forward the suggestion as agreed by Gurney, to 'one or two detachments' of Thai police being accommodated at Malayan local headquarters for attachment to patrols entering Thailand. General Chart was prepared to accept that proposal.

Madoc then enquired whether the Director-General would be prepared in addition to establish temporary police stations at strategic points on the Thai side of the frontier. General Chart said he could provide and maintain the man-power required, but he did not think he could get authority to erect additional police stations which were unnecessary under normal peace time conditions.

Madoc promised that the Embassy would ascertain whether the Malayan authorities could 'lend' to the Thai police some form of pre-fabricated buildings for use as temporary stations or could at their own expense erect on Thai soil stations similar to those emergency stations on the Malayan side of the frontier.

In his telegram to Kuala Lumpur on July 7, Thompson reminded Gurney that the idea of possibly constructing new police posts on the Thai side of the border emanated from him during Madoc's recent visit to



Kuala Lumpur.<sup>31</sup> He was quite ready, if Gurney wished, to carry on negotiations on that subject. At the same time, he warned Gurney that all the argument and manoeuvring had caused much disappointment and had given rise to some suspicions in Bangkok. He added:

'There is a feeling that we have gone out of our way to think up a whole series of objections to the plan of action which the Siamese authority rightly or wrongly regarded as not only generous on their part but capable of early and practical application, at least as an experiment. As matters have developed, we are losing valuable time and goodwill. Perhaps in the light of this rather unsatisfactory situation I feel obliged to repeat the advice that greater results are unlikely to be achieved by continued argument'.<sup>32</sup>

Realising the difficulty of getting the Thais to accommodate his objections, Gurney informed Thompson on July 7 of his agreement to go ahead with the issue of Police Orders as agreed with General Chart.<sup>33</sup>

Gurney's acceptance was received with delight by the Foreign Office. It commented:

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31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. High Commissioner, Malaya-Colonial Office, No. 791, 9 July 1949, FO 371/76291 (F10569/1061/40).

'It would have been short-sighted of the Colonial Office and of the Federation authorities to have pressed for greater freedom in Siamese territories; in addition to the major arguments against it, it might in the long run have done more harm than good to the anti-terrorist campaign'.<sup>34</sup>

On July 13, Thompson queried Gurney about the proposal to establish additional temporary police stations for the Thais on their side of the border from building materials supplied by the Malayan authorities.<sup>35</sup> He sought an assurance on this matter before Madoc discussed with General Chart the redrafting of proposed Police orders, as acceptance or rejection of that proposal would to some extent condition the regulations governing entry into Thailand by Malayan patrols. Another point which Thompson asked Gurney to clarify was the precise nature of safeguards to be granted by Malayan authorities to Thai patrols entering Malaya, as it was expected that General Chart would wish a suitable clause to be included in the draft.

Gurney, however, could not give an assurance about supplying or paying for buildings to accommodate Thai

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34. R.H. Scott-Thompson, 15 July 1949. FO 371/76291 (F10569/1061/40).

35. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 503, 13 July 1949, FO 371/76291 (F10502/1061/40).

police in Thailand.<sup>36</sup> Regarding the nature of the safeguard to be granted to Thai patrols entering Malaya, Gurney stated that it was proposed to give them Malayan police powers. Since Malayan police operating in Thailand must be accompanied by Thai police, the Malayan authorities required Thai Police operating in Malaya to be accompanied by Malayan police.

Soon after the draft orders were agreed by the Thai Director-General of Police and Sir Henry Gurney, they were submitted to the Thai Minister of Interior for final approval. On September 1, 1949, the draft orders were approved by the Thai Council of Ministers, and a statement was issued that 'an agreement has been reached between the Police authorities of Malaya and Thailand regarding procedure for joint cooperation between Police Officers of both countries'.<sup>37</sup> The Agreement provided for the reciprocal crossing of the frontier by police of each party under certain conditions. The Malayan police authorities were requested to deal direct with the Thai Superintendent of Provincial Gendarmerie of 9th District Changwat Songkhla, in matters relating to the execution of the agreement.

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36. High-Commissioner, Malaya-Bangkok. No. 162, 15 July 1949. FO 371/76261 (F10502/1061/40).

37. Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 645, 1 September 1949, FO 371/76291 (F13106/1061/40).

In his telegram to Gurney of September 1, 1949, Thompson emphasised the importance of ensuring the Malayan Police patrols crossing into Thailand were most clearly briefed on what they could or could not do. Such patrols should maintain strict discipline within Thai territory.<sup>38</sup> Unless those conditions were enforced, Thompson believed, there were bound to be unpleasant incidents likely to affect implementation of the agreement, which had been negotiated at the Federation Government's request and for the primary benefit of Malaya.

The Agreement, however, covered Kedah-Sadao region only but excluded Kelantan-Narathiwat region. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, it was feared that Malayan Police operating in Narathiwat might cause misunderstandings in territory in which there had been certain manifestations of Malay irredentism. Secondly, the Thai Police entering Kelantan might be viewed with suspicion by the local population. However, in May 1950, both sides agreed to extend the agreement to cover Kelantan and Narathiwat region. This inclusion was made following the reported landing of the Chinese Communists from Indochina in Pattani coastal area. Furthermore, the situation in Pattani area was fully under control by the Thai authorities following the detention of some of Pattani leaders in Pattani as well as in Malaya.

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38. Ibid.

Thus, after month of negotiations with the Thai Government, the Malayan-Thai Police Border Agreement was concluded in Bangkok. This agreement allowed, on a reciprocal basis, police forces of both sides to cross the border and operate, under certain restrictions, up to a defined line.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE VIETMINH THREAT: ANGLO-THAI RESPONSE AND ATTITUDE

ANOTHER important aspect in Anglo-Thai relations in early 1950s was the war in Indochina. With the victory of the Chinese Communists over Kuomintang in late 1949, the character of the Indochinese war had changed tremendously. A Chinese regime sympathetic to Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which was established in 1945, now bordered on Laos and Tonkin, parts of which were more or less controlled by the Vietminh forces. With the aid of the Chinese Communists, Ho Chi Minh was able to develop a regular army to face the French in the Indochinese war. The increasing victories of the Vietminh over the French caused much concern to the British. This concern reached a peak when Ho Chi Minh's Government was recognised by the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China in January 1950.<sup>1</sup> All these events led Britain to believe that Ho Chi Minh was the leading figure in the Communists' drive in Southeast Asia.

Given all these perceptions, it was not surprising that an aim of British policy in the early 1950s was to

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1. Robert F. Randle, Geneva: 1954, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1969. p. 3.

prevent the Vietminh and other Communist forces from achieving success in Indochina. Malcolm MacDonald, the British Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia, considered Indochina as 'the most important bastion defending the democratic cause in Southeast Asia'.<sup>2</sup> The fall of Indochina to the Vietminh would further increase Communist infiltration into Thailand and Malaya.

The Foreign Office decided to recognise the Bao Dai Government. It was hoped that international recognition would consolidate the Bao Dai position, though it was realized that the Soviet and Chinese recognition of Ho Chi Minh's regime much earlier had neutralized the psychological effect of the recognition of Bao Dai. The Foreign Office blamed the French Government for delaying the ratification of the transfer of power to the Bao Dai regime until February 1950 and thus giving the Communists the opportunity to steal the initiative. On February 15, 1950 in conjunction with the United States, the British Government recognised the Bao Dai Government and the associated States of Laos and Cambodia within the French Union.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Singapore-Foreign Office, 20 December 1949, CO 537/6027.

3. Donald E. Neuchterlain, Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1965. p. 107.

The British, however, realised that the Bao Dai Government also needed the support of the Asian nations, particularly Thailand, if it was to be seen as a truly nationalist regime. This was felt to be important because the Thais in general regarded the Vietminh movement as a nationalist rising and were sympathetic to its struggle. At the close of the 1941-45 war, discarded Japanese arms were also smuggled across the Thai border with official sanction for the Vietminh cause. Thai recognition of the Free Cambodian Government in exile in Bangkok came in September 1947, at which time raids into Cambodia from Thailand by representatives of this government were officially tolerated. Although when Pibul Songgram regained political power in April 1948, this support was considerably less positive than it had been, he did not try to prevent arms from being smuggled across the Mekong river. In part, this policy was motivated by the deep anti-French feeling which persisted in official Thai circles after the war and was reinforced after France had threatened to veto Thailand's membership in the United Nations unless former French territories in Laos and Cambodia were returned. Another reason for caution in Bangkok was that Thailand was still not convinced that Ho Chi Minh would not win, and it, therefore, did not wish to antagonize him unnecessarily, at least until it was known that the United States and Britain were prepared to support the French in this war.



In early February 1950, Geoffrey H. Thompson, the British Ambassador, approached Pote Sarasin, Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs, to consider the possibility of Thailand according recognition to the Bao Dai regime.<sup>4</sup> Pote Sarasin, however, was quite reluctant to accept Thompson's suggestion that Thailand should recognise Bao Dai. Firstly because he considered Bao Dai as not truly independent, and secondly, because he feared that recognition might incur the hostility of some 60,000 Vietnamese in Thailand. Thompson pointed out to the Minister that the Anglo-American action was to be regarded as a positive step to strengthen those indigenous elements in Southeast Asia which were directly threatened by the Communists. In particular, the decision taken by the United States to recognise Bao Dai illustrated the growth of interest in limiting the southward advance of Communist imperialism in Southeast Asia. Pote Sarasin replied that if the demarche was really designed to help the cause of the anti-communists in Southeast Asia, the great powers would have to do more than indulge in moral gestures and verbal statements. Pote Sarasin referred to the speech by Dean Acheson, the U.S. Secretary of State, which omitted to make any mention whatsoever of Thailand. Pote Sarasin conceded that his government might issue a statement to the effect that they would wish the Bao Dai regime to succeed.

4. Thompson-Foreign Office, 9 February 1950, CO 537/4325.

Meanwhile, Dr. Phillip Jessup, the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large, arrived in Bangkok in mid-February and held a three-day conference with all the United States Ambassadors in the Far East.<sup>5</sup> The diplomats discussed the serious Communist threat to Southeast Asia and considered various measures to bolster defence within the region. After the conference, Jessup discussed with Pibul Songgram and the members of his government the monolithic character of Communism and its 'total worldwide threat', as well as its activities in the countries bordering on Thailand. Ambassador Jessup subsequently asked Pibul to support the American and the British policy of extending recognition to the Bao Dai government and the newly established governments of Laos and Cambodia. The United States and Britain believed that if Bao Dai's regime were supported vigorously, the Vietminh could be stopped in their efforts to take over Indochina.

Pibul seemed to be convinced by Jessup's arguments about the Communist threat. In contrast to his Foreign Minister, Pibul and his military colleagues were in favour of recognising the Bao Dai regime. This matter caused a split in Pibul's government. While the Prime Minister and the military leaders favoured recognition, the Foreign Minister, Pote Sarasin, strongly opposed it. In the meantime a compromise was proposed in the Cabinet whereby

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5. Donald E. Neuchterlein, op.cit., p. 106.

Thailand would grant diplomatic recognition to the Kingdoms of Cambodia and Laos and withhold it from the Bao Dai regime in Vietnam. According to this plan, Laos and Cambodia would be able to serve as a type of buffer between Thailand and Vietnam, whether the latter was under Bao Dai or Ho Chi Minh.

However, Pibul overrode his Foreign Minister and decided to recognise the Associated States of Indochina-Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. On February 28, the government announced its recognition of the Bao Dai government and of the newly established governments of Laos and Cambodia - a step that precipitated the resignation of the Foreign Minister, Pote Sarasin.<sup>6</sup> It was therefore an act of considerable political courage on the part of Pibul to recognise the Associated States of Indochina. There was no doubt of the public unpopularity of this move, which was also made against the advice of his officials.

Pibul was no doubt acting for immediate advantage in the shape of increased American aid, which he expected this unequivocal alignment with the Western powers to bring. However, he should also be credited with the wisdom of having risen above the level of petty local antagonisms in cabinet. Pibul did not allow these to distract him from the implications for Thailand of a Vietminh victory in

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6. Bangkok-Foreign Office, 1 March 1950, FO 371/836554 (FF10340/6)

Indochina. This would undoubtedly engulf Cambodia and Laos as well as Vietnam, and if the whole of Indochina were under Vietminh control this would, in effect, bring the might of the communist Chinese to Thailand's border. Even without open invasion there would be boundless scope for the planning of subversive movements in Thailand, from bases in Cambodia or Laos and the likelihood of the large Vietnamese community in Thailand being roused to active rebellion.

Following the recognition of Vietnam and the French-sponsored governments of Laos and Cambodia, a number of measures were taken by the Thai Government aimed at driving the Vietnamese refugees back over the border, or restricting their residence in certain specified areas away from the border, where their movements could be more easily controlled. Pibul's action against the Vietnamese caused protestations from Peking and this further hardened Thai opinion against the Vietnamese minority group because of resentment against what was regarded as an interference in Thailand's internal affairs.<sup>7</sup>

The Thai Government also cooperated over the prevention of arms smuggling through Thailand to the Vietminh force and information on the subject was exchanged between the Thai and the French authorities. There were

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7. Annual Report for Siam 1953, FO 371/112261[DS1011/1].

also considerable improvements in the attitude of the Thai local officials in the Northeastern border areas towards the French or French-sponsored civilians and military authorities on the other side.

### The Vietminh Invasion of Laos

Despite great efforts, the French failed to defeat the Vietminh. Though a quarter of the French armed forces were employed in Indochina the military position was virtually a stalemate. In the political field, Bao Dai had not made progress as had been hoped. By 1953, the military in Indochina had changed in favour of the Vietminh. With the approaching truce in Korea, the Chinese began to focus their attention on Indochina by helping to strengthen the Vietnam forces. In early April 1953, General Vo Nguyen Giap, Commander-in-Chief of the People's Army, aided by the Vietnamese sympathisers in Northeastern Thailand, thrust into Laos in an effort to disrupt the French defence lines.<sup>8</sup> The Vietminh forces occupied Luang Prabang which was situated just about 60 miles from the Thai border. By the end of April, the Vietminh had wrested control of Northern Laos from the French, whose forces were isolated at Luang Prabang and on the Plain des Jarres, 50 miles north of Vientiane.

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8. New York Times, 4 May 1953.

The Thai Government was clearly alarmed at the Vietminh threat to its security. It was now feared that the ultimate aim was to mould northern Thailand, along with Laos and parts of Tonkin, into a new state, under Vietminh auspices. This appraisal was engendered by the announcement made by the Chinese Communist government in early January 1953 of the formation of a Thai Autonomous Region in Southeast Yunnan.<sup>9</sup> The Thai government construed the formation of a Thai Autonomous Region as the establishment of a Thai Government in exile. They regarded its appearance as the prelude to a Free Thai attack, supported by the forces of Communist China. Inevitably Pridi's name was connected with the Thai Autonomous Region, and he was said to be at the head of the alleged Free Thai Movement-in-exile in Cheli. But all these alarms proved unfounded and at no time has confirmation been found of any connexion between Pridi and the Thai Autonomous Region or any attempts by the Chinese to use this Region as a base for attacks on Thailand.

Although Pibul regarded the Vietminh invasion of Laos as 'an internal problem' of Indochina, several measures were taken by the Thai authorities along the border. Police reinforcements were sent to patrol the northeastern frontier from Chiengrai to Ubol provinces.

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9. 'Nai Pridi and the Free Thai Movement', Foreign Office Research Department, 27 March 1957. FO 371/129610 (DS1015/21).

The Thai Government began to evacuate inland all Vietnamese refugees of military age from the border area. They were moved to Phetchabun and Pattalung provinces.<sup>10</sup> By evacuating these Vietnamese refugees, the Thai Government was attempting to avoid a situation wherein the Vietnamese might readily be able to join forces with the Vietminh in Laos and possibly in Thailand in case of an actual invasion.

The British authorities were equally worried at the deteriorating situation in Indochina. Although the British officials on the spot did not believe that the Vietminh would attack Thailand, at least until after the absorption of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, they did not believe that the Thai Government would then be able to face political and ideological pressures from an established Communist regime near her border.<sup>11</sup> Firstly, there was an endemic tendency for the Thais to reinsure with the winning side, and this response was encouraged still by the Thai belief that Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist who was fighting the colonial French who were historically disliked in Thailand. Secondly, there was the presence of 60,000 pro-Vietminh Vietnamese and other dissident elements in the northeastern part of Thailand. Lastly, there was the

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10. Bangkok-Foreign Office, 1 May 1953, FO 371/106886 (FS1016/20).

11. MacDonald-Winston Churchill, 13 June 1953, FO 371/106895 (FS1043/1)

presence in Thailand, especially Bangkok, of the three million fence-sitting Chinese who might constitute a possible fifth-column.

Commenting on this situation G.A. Wallinger, the British Ambassador in Bangkok, noted:

"The end result, even if there were no direct threat to Siam's territory from across the border of Siam's frontiers, would, I fear, be the establishment in Bangkok of a fellow-travelling regime".<sup>12</sup>

He added:

"With the establishment of a new Communist-administration in Siam, rice would certainly not flow to non-Communist territories under the conditions or at the price now available".<sup>13</sup>

As a change of government of a leftist tendency in Bangkok would increase immensely the external and internal threat to Malaya, Malcolm MacDonald, the British Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia, urged the British Government to do everything possible to avert such a consequence.<sup>14</sup> The objective could be achieved, he believed, if the American and the British Governments could

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12. Notes by G.A. Wallinger, 1 May 1953.  
FO 371/106999 [FZ1195/119].

13. Ibid.

14. MacDonald-Winston Churchill, 13 June 1953, FO 371/106895 [FS1043/1].



make a declaration to the effect that they would take any necessary action to protect Southeast Asia from further Communist aggression.

The Cabinet decided that the British Government could not make any declaration as suggested by MacDonald but however was prepared to train the Thai police, especially in Special Branch work, as a contribution to securing Northeast Thailand against Vietminh penetration. Meanwhile, it was hoped in British circles that the appointment of General Donovan (Buffalo Bill) as the new United States Ambassador in Bangkok would help to stiffen Thai government resistance against the Vietminh threat.

**British Contingency Plan: the occupation  
of Songkhla Proposal**

Meanwhile, on April 26, 1953, the British Chiefs of Staff submitted a memorandum to the British Cabinet Defence Committee containing a contingency plan for the defence of Malaya against a possible Communist threat.<sup>15</sup> The memorandum was based on the assumption that the fall of Tonkin to the Vietminh would result in the replacement of the Pibul government by a pro-Communist Government, or that the Pibul Government would then show signs of active

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15. Cabinet Defence Committee D(53) 2nd meeting 26 April 1953: Defence of Malaya, CAB 131/13.

cooperation with the Communist regimes. The British Chiefs of Staff believed that if Thailand succumbed to the Communist as a result of an internal coup, the infiltration threat to Malaya might rise drastically. Should such a situation develop, the British Chiefs of Staff were convinced that the only sound action to assure the security of Malaya would be to occupy Songkhla in order to prevent Communist infiltration into Malaya and to prepare a strong defensive position, which could be held with comparatively few troops, against an attempt by the Chinese Communists to intervene in Malaya.

The Committee agreed with the British Chiefs of Staff that if Thailand succumbed to Communism the occupation of Songkhla was necessary. Nevertheless, the Committee thought that every effort should be made to obtain the consent of the Thai Government to an occupation of Songkhla. On this point the Committee was told that the Thai Prime Minister, Pibul Songgram, during his talks with the British Ambassador, G.A. Wallinger, in early December 1952, had expressed his willingness to allow the British forces to use South Thailand as 'the Pusan' of his country.<sup>16</sup> In view of this, it was thought that the Thai Government might welcome the British occupation of the Songkhla position as providing a convenient back-door to

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16. J.G. Tahourdin-C.G. Buttershaw, 8 April 1953 FO 371/106999 [FZ1195/10]

safety through which they might slip, while still remaining the nominal Government of Thailand.

The Cabinet Defence Committee, suggested that the United States Government should be informed of the existence of this plan. Mr Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister however, thought that 'there is no need for hurry and grave need for secrecy. Plans are being prepared but it may well be two, three or four months, or never before they will become urgent. Let us keep this matter in the planning stage at present'.<sup>17</sup> The Cabinet was duly informed of the decision.

#### Thailand's Appeal to the Security Council

Alarmed at the Vietminh threat to its security, the Thai Government decided to appeal to the Security Council to send an Observation Commission to Thai-Laotian border. If the appeal met with a Soviet veto, the Thai Government hoped that the case could be transferred to the General Assembly and pursued there. Prince Wan, Thai Foreign Minister, told Whitteridge, the British Charge d'Affaires, about his Government's decision and sought British Government support in bringing the Thai appeal to

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17. Minute by Winston Churchill, 2 May 1953 in Foreign Office Minute, FO 371/106999 (FZ1195/12/G).

the Security Council.<sup>18</sup> The presence of 60,000 Annamite refugees on the Thai side of the border was seen as a source of international friction which the Commission might look into and it might also indicate that the crossing of the Mekong river by Vietminh would be regarded as a direct threat to Thailand.

The Foreign Office was of the view that there might be some advantage accruing to Thailand and to the Western cause if it was possible to get an Observation Commission of the United Nations to Thailand. Not only would it help to stiffen Thailand's resistance against the Communist pressure but it would also help to discourage Communist infiltration into Thailand. On this aspect, J.G. Tahourdin minuted:

"Siam's continued independence and adherence to the Western cause are of great importance in view of her geographical situation and the dependence of the British territories in Southeast Asia on her rice. Siam, a staunch supporter of the United Nations might be discouraged if the United Kingdom opposed the first Siamese attempt to focus United Nations attention on their problem."<sup>19</sup>

The United States was also in favour of an appeal to the Security Council but the French opposed it. On May 11, M.

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18. Bangkok-Foreign Office, 7 May 1953, FO 371/106898 [FS1071/7].

19. Minute by J.G. Tahourdin, 29 May 1953 in Bangkok-Foreign Office, 17 May 1953, FO 371/106898 (FS1071/24).

Massigli, the French Ambassador in London, called on Selwyn Lloyd, the British Minister of State at the Foreign Office, requesting the British Government to dissuade Thailand from appealing to the United Nations.<sup>20</sup> The French foresaw no effective result but believed rather that it would carry the risk of involving China and bringing the war nearer. Despite the French reaction the Foreign Office stuck to its decision 'to avoid discouraging the Thais from appealing to the United Nations.'

On the afternoon of May 22, Pote Sarasin, the Thai Ambassador at the United Nations, handed to Sir G. Jebb, the British Permanent Representative at the United Nations, and at that time the President of the Security Council, the text of the proposed communication to the Security Council.<sup>21</sup> The text pointed to the invasion of Laos by 'foreign military forces' and the Thai Government's concern lest 'these forces may effect incursions into contiguous territories including Thailand'. The situation, they considered, constituted 'a serious threat to international peace and Security'.

In view of the Thai decision to bring the matter to the United Nations, Sir Oliver Harvey, the British

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20. Minute by Sir Robert H. Scott, 13 May 1953, FO 371/106898 [FS1071/17].

21. New York-Foreign Office, 22 May 1953, FO 371/106899 [FS1071/34].

Ambassador in Paris, was instructed to discuss with the Quay d'Orsay the advantages in supporting Thailand's appeal to the Security Council.

On the morning of May 24, Sir Oliver Harvey called on M de Margerie, the Assistant Political Director at the Quay d'Orsay. Harvey put the Foreign Office view that it would be in the French interest to support measures designed to avert any threat to Thailand.<sup>22</sup> Despatch of the United Nations observers to the Thai-Laotian border might restrict assistance to the Vietminh in Laos from pro-Vietminh sympathisers in Thailand. M de Margerie was sceptical about the advantages of a Thai appeal to the United Nations. He foresaw three disadvantages. They were :

- a) the danger of acrimonious debate in the United Nations involving great embarrassment to France;
- b) the danger of a Soviet veto, and
- c) a Thai appeal without practical result would demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the United Nations, notwithstanding the experience in the Korean war.

Margerie thought that if a Peace Observation Commission sub-committee were requested and agreed it would be difficult to avoid the despatch of observers to Thailand. He believed that it would not be politically

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22. Paris-Foreign Office, 24 May 1953, FO 371/106899 (FS1071/38)

feasible for the French to use their veto to prevent a discussion of related matters in the Security Council which would be contrary to their interests.

However, he hoped the Thais would confine themselves to addressing a letter to the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General of the United Nations calling attention to the 'abnormal situation' on the frontier without mentioning the source of the danger or asking for any particular attention to be taken. This would be in line with the practice adopted by the Yugoslavs when they complained about frontier violations and would make it possible for a debate to be avoided. However, since the Vietminh threat to Thailand had receded, Margerie thought that there was no apparent advantage in pursuing the matter in any case.

The Foreign Office agreed with the French that, since the Vietminh threat had receded, it would be wise for Thailand to delay its appeal to the security Council. Furthermore, it was feared that the Thai appeal would become mixed up with the Panmunjun talks on the Korean conflict. Apart from that, the unstable political situation following the fall of the Pinay Government in France was felt not to be a suitable time to raise the Thai appeal in the United Nations. The Thai Government was given the same advice by the State Department.

In view of the situation in France as well as the receding threat from the Vietminh, the Thai Government decided to postpone its appeal to the United Nations. The proposal for an appeal was not raised until June 1954 when the Vietminh resumed its intrusion into Laos and Cambodia.

In late December 1953, the Vietminh forces again approached Laos, this time taking Thakkek, a town on the central Mekong across the Thai frontier. The Thai Government met the situation by placing the nine border northeast provinces in a state of emergency and rushing reinforcements there. In early February 1954, the Vietnamese forces approached Luang Prabang and in April they invaded Cambodia.

Faced with Vietminh success, the French leaders sought a negotiated settlement on Indochina conflict. At the four-power conference in Berlin the ground work for a conference in Indochina that would negotiate a settlement of the conflict was prepared.<sup>23</sup> The French plan for a negotiated settlement was strongly supported by the British Government on the grounds that it would help to prevent the war becoming a wider conflagration. The United States, on the other hand, wanted to delay the talks on Indochina until there was a marked improvement in the military situation in order to allow negotiation from a position of

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23. Robert F. Randle, op. cit., p. 107.



strength. John F Dulles, the US Secretary of State called for the creation of an alliance that would stiffen the French will to resist. However, the French and the British responded coolly to the proposal, on the ground that it would wreck any prospect for success of the Geneva conference. Thus, without Anglo-French support, the United States was forced to delay its plan to form a defence alliance until the final conclusion of the Geneva talks. On April 26, the Geneva conference on Indochina convened.

The fall of Dien Bien Phu to the Vietminh on May 8, 1954 heightened the Thai anxieties about their security. They feared that the event marked the beginning of the French defeat in the Indochina war. They did not believe that the Geneva conference would succeed in settling the Indochina crisis but would, on the other hand, give the Communists an opportunity to extend the authority there. Thailand was in favour of the United States proposal to establish a security pact to face the Communist threat. However, in view of the Anglo-French opposition to the idea, the Thai Government, encouraged by the United States, decided to revert to its plan of June 1953 to secure the despatch of a Peace Observation Commission to the Indochina-Thai frontier.<sup>24</sup>

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24. Geneva-Foreign Office, 15 May 1954, FO 371/112274 [FS1071/3].

The British Government, at first disagreed with the plan because it feared that it would adversely affect the Geneva conference. However due to the United States insistence, it reluctantly agreed. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, the British attitude towards a Thai appeal to the United Nations had been set out as early as May 1953. While unenthusiastic about a border Commission T.G Tahourdin had reflected the British position then when he minuted :

"If, however, the Siamese are anxious to proceed with their appeal, opposition would have disadvantages."<sup>25</sup>

It was felt that support for the Thai appeal would not only bind the Thai government more firmly to the West but would stiffen its resistance against the Vietminh threat. Not less important was the consideration that Britain wanted to maintain close relations with the United States.

As expected, the French expressed their concern at the decision to appeal to the Security Council. They feared that the Thai plan might wreck the Geneva Conference. They maintained that the Thai appeal would result in acrimonious debate in the Security Council. As a compromise, the French suggested the Security Council might

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25. Minute by J.G. Tahourdin, 20 May 1953, in Bangkok-Foreign Office, 17 May 1953, FO 371/106898 [FS1071/24].

adopt the Thai proposal on the agenda and then decide to postpone the debate until the outcome of the Geneva Conference.<sup>26</sup>

At the Tripartite meeting between the British, French and American representatives on May 28, 1954, Sir Pierson Dixon, the new British Permanent Representative at the United Nations suggested that in order to minimise the danger of adverse reactions on the Geneva talks of a Thai move at the United Nations, the Thai request should be limited to asking for observers to go to Thailand only, and that the Security Council instructions to the Peace Observation Commission should be similarly limited.<sup>27</sup> Hoppenot, the French Representative, supported the plan. So did Cabot Lodge, the US representative and currently President of the Security Council. The Thai Representative was duly informed about the suggestion that observers be limited to Thailand. As a result, the broad references to 'the area' and 'the region' were removed from the Thai draft letter to the Security Council.

On May 29, Pote Sarasin, Thai UN delegate, formally requested the Security Council to place his

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26. New York-Foreign Office, 27 May 1954. FO 371/112274/[FS1071/20].

27. New York-Foreign Office, 28 May 1954. FO 371/112275/[FS1071/25].

Government's complaint on the agenda.<sup>28</sup> The Thai based their request for the sending of the Peace Observation Commission on the ground that 'it would protect humanity from the scourge of war'.

On June 3, the meeting of the security Council was convened. However, before the meeting took place, Dixon reminded Lodge to ensure that the Thai delegate's speech was restricted to requesting the despatch of observers to Thailand as already agreed.<sup>29</sup> Any resolution should also confine the Observers group to Thai territory and prevent action by it in Laos and Cambodia.

During the meeting, the Soviet representative, Tsarapkin, opposed placing the Thai appeal on the agenda. He maintained that consideration by the Council of the Thai appeal, which was tantamount to considering the question of Indochina, was not necessary in view of the Geneva Conference.<sup>30</sup> Discussion in the Security Council might hinder a solution there. The Soviet representative intimated that the United States, working with Thailand, was trying to sabotage the Geneva Conference.

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28. New York-Foreign Office, 29 May 1954. FO 371/112275 [FS1071/28]

29. New York-Foreign Office, 3 June 1954. FO 371/112276 [FS1071/54].

30. Ibid.

The French representative, in his statement, shared the concern of the Soviet Government about prejudice to the discussion at Geneva, but recognized that the request did not bring up the question of Indochina as a whole, and since it was clear from the Thai letter that observers were only requested for Thailand itself, he did not believe that consideration at that time, within those strict limits, could do any harm. He believed that members of the Council would take great care not to enlarge the scope of the discussions or do anything which would interfere with the Geneva talks.

The vote on the adoption of the agenda was then taken. The result was ten in favour and one against.

The Thai representative was then invited to present his Government's case. He argued that until 1953 the war in Indochina was fought only in Vietnam, but after that there were serious incursions into Laos and Cambodia by Vietminh regular troops. This created a threat to the security of Thailand which he wished to bring to the attention of the Security Council. He based his speech in the main on his letter to the Security Council with the exception of the part in which he made the actual request for observers. Here, he said:

"... in consequence, Mr. President, I would suggest that a sub-commission of the Peace Observation commission be established with the authority to despatch observers

to any state or any states concerned, but only to the territory of states consenting thereto. The Commission should also have the authority to visit any area in which observation is being conducted".<sup>31</sup>

He made it clear that he did not consider that Thailand's appeal would in any way interfere with negotiations at Geneva and that it was not his desire to do so.

The Lebanese representative proposed the adjournment of the meeting, saying that he was fully mindful of the need to avoid prejudicing Geneva, but that he nevertheless had voted for the adoption of the agenda. The adoption of the agenda did not mean that the Council had to undertake immediately detailed consideration of the debate on the item. It had seized itself of it, and members of the Council would doubtless need time to consider the statement made by the Thai representative. The motion for the adjournment was passed by ten votes in favour, none against and one abstention. The Soviet representative did not take part in the vote. The meeting was adjourned until 16 June.

Dixon, in his comment to the Foreign Office on the proceedings, considered the Thai statement, as quoted above, as 'unfortunate',<sup>32</sup> because it referred to despatch

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31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

of observers to any state or states concerned which consented to receive them. Although it did not commit the Council to do anything more than to send observers to Thailand, and indeed Hoppenot, in his speech made clear that this would be the proper thing to do in the view of the French Government, the British Government were clearly going to have great problems in holding the United States to their undertaking about limiting the scope of the observers when they came to discuss the text of the Thai draft resolution.

As expected by Dixon, the United States wanted the scope of the Thai resolution to be expanded so as to allow for the possibility of observers later to operate in adjoining territories. The draft resolution was as follows:<sup>33</sup>

"The Security Council, recalling General Assembly resolution 337(v) (Uniting for Peace), Part A, section B establish a Peace Observation Commission which could observe and report on the situation in any area where there exists international tension, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintainance of international peace and security; finds that there exists in the general region in which Thailand is located a condition of international tension the continuance of which is likely to endanger international peace and security; requests the Peace Observation Commission to establish a sub-commission on Southeast Asia composed of ... with authority:

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33. New York-Foreign Office, 9 June 1954, FO 371/112276 [FS1071/71A].

- (A) to despatch such observers as it may deem necessary to any part of the above region on the request or with the consent of any State or States concerned, but only to the territory of States consenting thereto;
- (B) to visit, if it deemed necessary, any area in which observation requested under sub-paragraph (a) is being conducted;
- (C) to consider such data as may be submitted to it by its members or observers and to make such reports as it deems necessary to the Peace Observation Commission and to the Security Council."

Commenting on the draft, Dixon suggested that they should try to avoid any such wide competence for the sub-commission. It would be sufficient, Dixon thought, for the despatch of observers at this time to be limited to Thailand, while authorizing the Peace Observation Commission to deal with any further application for observers. This would mean that action beyond Thailand would have to be taken in the Peace Observation Commission and not simply by the sub-commission, but it would also avoid the need for going back to the Security Council. To limit the sub-commission's sphere, Dixon proposed that the 'requests' paragraph be redrafted so as to omit mention of Southeast Asia.

Lodge agreed to a compromise draft on the proposed line. He also accepted a suggestion to cut out all general references to Southeast Asia. As regards the passage in the draft resolution that authorised action outside Thailand,



Lodge proposed a new draft which should define the functions of the sub-committee as follows:<sup>34</sup>

"(C) To consider such data as may be submitted to it by members or observers and to make such reports and recommendations as it deemed necessary to the Peace Observation Commission and the Security Council. If the observers or members of the sub-commission are of the opinion that they cannot adequately accomplish their mission in relation to Thailand without observations or visits also in states contiguous to Thailand, then they are to report to the Security Council or the Peace Observation Commission for further guidance on this matter."

Dixon agreed with the new draft as it would delay the question of observers being sent outside Thailand for many weeks.

Before the Security Council meeting on June 16, Dixon discussed the draft resolution with Lodge, Hoppenot and Pote Sarasin. They all accepted the draft.

The Security Council met on June 16. Pote Sarasin submitted his draft resolution which referred to General Assembly resolution 377 (V) (Uniting for Peace), Part A, section B, establishing the Peace Observation Commission, and asked that the Council request the Security Council to set up a sub-commission of three or four members to send

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34. New York-Foreign Office, 11 June 1954, FO 371/112277 [FS1071/81].

observers to Thailand and make reports and recommendations as thought essential to the Peace Observation Commission and the Security Council.<sup>35</sup> If the Commission thought it could not carry out its task well without visiting Thailand's neighbour, it should report to the Commission or the Security Council for necessary instructions.

In a brief statement, Pote Sarasin drew attention to the phraseology of the last sentence of the resolution, which differed from the suggestion he had made earlier that the sub-commission should be given authority to despatch observers to any part of the general area of Thailand on the request of any state or states concerned. He pointed out that this important change was not the Thai Government's choice, but was the result of a compromise in deference to other's wishes that the scope of the activity of the Peace Observation Commission be limited at least for the time being. Despite this compromise, he considered that the observers should be as close as possible to the disturbed area and that any attempt to deprive the sub-commission of the possibility of visiting the trouble spot would be almost reducing it to impotence.

Delegates from New Zealand, Turkey, Columbia and China indicated their general support for the draft

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35. New York-Foreign Office, 18 June 1954, FO 371/112277 [FS1071/97].

resolution. The Chinese delegate however expressed his doubts as to the wisdom of the compromise to which Thailand had referred. In a brief intervention, Dixon explained that the Thai apprehensions were natural and understandable in the circumstances, and that it was commendable that the Thai Government should have brought its anxieties to the attention of the Council. The British Government, he said, viewed the appeal with sympathy and considered the Thai proposal as reasonable and moderate. The constraint in the last sentence of the draft resolution seemed to him a wise provision.

Lodge described the Indochina conflict as the latest attempt of Communist imperialism. The threat to Thailand had increased and the Vietminh troops were equipped with modern weapons. He supported the Thai request and urged the Council to act with all speed in sending observers to Thailand. The threat to Thailand originated beyond her borders. On the basis of the last sentence of the draft resolution the Security Council or the Peace Observation Commission would be in a position to authorise the sub-commission to extend its functions. Without such provision, it might be prevented from fulfilling its mission. The observers should first be authorised to visit the area where the threat existed and if their reports bore out the Thai estimate, the position could then be reconsidered.

The Council adjourned until Friday June 18. After the meeting, Dixon discussed with Lodge and Hoppenot the tactics to be adopted at the June 18 meeting. It was agreed that they should all firmly discourage any attempt, for example by the Chinese, to amend the draft resolution and should endeavour to bring the matter to a vote on Friday. They also agreed that in the event of a veto there should be an interval for consultation before proceeding to the General Assembly and in the meantime the item should be left on the Security Council agenda.

On June 18, the draft resolution was put to a vote.<sup>36</sup> The Soviet representative opposed the draft, asserting that there was no threat to Thailand's security. By getting the matter raised in the Council, he said, the Americans were threatening the people of Indochina with a view to expanding the war there and dominating the country. He asserted that the Thai move was simply a camouflage for American manoeuvres to befuddle world opinion and scuttle the Geneva Conference at the moment when new possibilities for settling the Indochinese problem had appeared. He asked why the Thai Government wanted to ask for observers to be sent to Thailand when a peaceful settlement was already appearing on the horizon, and when Pierre Mendes-France, the new French Prime Minister had declared his

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36. New York-Foreign Office, 18 June 1954, FO 371/112277 [FS1071/99].

intention of concluding a peace settlement within a month. Tsaropkin declared that his government could not support the resolution relating to Thailand.

Dixon, in response to Soviet allegations, pointed out that there were a number of contradictions in Tsaropkin's speech. He agreed that it would be wrong to raise the Indochinese problem in the Council as it was already being discussed in Geneva but the Soviet representative had then proceeded to raise that very subject. Dixon rejected the Soviet allegation that Thailand's appeal was part of an American plot designed to scuttle the Geneva Conference. Thailand was a sovereign state with a mind of its own, and conscious of its obligations under the United Nations Charter. The debate had shown that a majority of members felt that the Thai apprehensions which had caused them to bring the matter to the Security Council were fully justified.

The Council then voted on the draft resolution with nine in favour, one against (USSR), and one abstention (Lebanon). Because of the Soviet veto the resolution failed.

Lodge commented sharply on Tsarapkin's speech. It was absurd, he said, to accuse the United States of preparing for armed intervention in the face of the military aid which had been sent to the Communists in

Indochina. It was the United States policy to respond to requests for aid from independent peoples striving to protect themselves against Communist imperialism. He blamed the Soviet Union for preventing the United Nations action in Indochina and Korea. If left unchallenged, the veto would prevent the United Nations from responding to Thai appeals. He proposed to take the matter to the General Assembly.

On the same day 18 June, Dixon reported to the British Foreign Office about the State Department idea of taking the Thai appeal to the General Assembly.<sup>37</sup> He did not believe that they would be able to limit the Assembly debate to the resolution about the despatch of observers to Thailand. If negotiations were still going on in Geneva, it would not be wise for Britain to run the risk of a debate in the Assembly. They ought to try to persuade the Americans that the Thai appeal would not be considered in isolation, and that a real pause was needed to work out future policy and to see how things developed at Geneva before they embarked on the Assembly procedure and committed themselves to a target date for an Assembly meeting. Furthermore, some delay in calling the Assembly would give them an opportunity of trying to get Asian, and in particular Indian, opinion to accept the Thai resolution.

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37. Ibid.

Eden agreed with Dixon about the importance of a delay in bringing the Thai appeal to the General Assembly. He recalled that Mendes-France had committed himself to getting an Indochina settlement by July 20.<sup>38</sup> It was important that no meeting of the Assembly should take place before that date.

At the tripartite meeting of the British, American and French representatives on June 23, Dixon explained to Lodge why the British Government were unwilling to embark on the Assembly procedure immediately.<sup>39</sup> Hoppenot also voiced a similar view on the matter. Hoppenot said that the French Government considered that the Government of Thailand should be discouraged from putting in their request for an Assembly until or after July 20. While the new French Government were negotiating seriously with the Communists, they could not possibly support a Thai request for an Assembly meeting.

Meanwhile, in his talks with Sir Roger M. Makins, the British Ambassador, on June 29, Dulles pointed out that even if an agreement were reached at Geneva, it was still important to hold open the possibility of United Nations observers entering Laos and Cambodia, even though they

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38. Geneva-Foreign Office, 19 June 1954, FO 371/112277 [FS1071/100].

39. New York-Foreign Office, 23 June 1954, FO 371/112277 [FS1071/105].

might not in the event need to do so.<sup>40</sup> He personally thought action in the United Nations would strengthen the hands of the French at Geneva. Dulles asserted that whatever happened in Indochina, it seemed wrong and unnecessary for the French to attempt to deny Thailand the protection of the United Nations.

On July 2, 1954, Dixon discussed the issue with Prince Wan, the Thai representative at the United Nations.<sup>41</sup> Prince Wan explained that he intended to address a letter to the Secretary-General or to the President of the General Assembly stating that he would shortly be asking for the General Assembly to reconvene under Rule 6 of its rules of procedure, to consider the Thai appeal for United Nations observers. At that stage, he said, he would make no specific request and mention no specific date. The request would be for a resumed, not a special, session. However, in the event of a settlement on Indochina, the Thai Government might quite possibly not wish to press their request for Assembly action.

Prince Wan explained that it was not his government's wish to interfere with the prospects of an Indochina settlement at Geneva by bringing up the Thai

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40. Washington-New York, 29 June 1954, FO 371/112277 [FS1071/114].

41. New York-Foreign Office, 2 July 1954, FO 371/112277 [FS1071/120].



appeal at the United Nations. From the Thai point of view, it was desirable to put on record their request for the Assembly to take action before it became clear at Geneva whether an Indochina settlement was going to materialise or not, since it might be difficult for them to ask for Assembly action if a settlement on Indochina was in sight.

The Foreign Office had no objection to Prince Wan proceeding on the line proposed, although it hoped that he would not allow himself to be pressed into action until July 20, 1954.<sup>42</sup>

On July 7, Prince Wan submitted his letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations requesting the inclusion in the agenda of the eighth session of the General Assembly an additional item entitled 'Request of Thailand for Observations under the Peace Observation Commission'.<sup>43</sup> In an explanatory note, Prince Wan referred to the 'hostile foreign forces' that had invaded Cambodia and Laos. 'These foreign interventions', he noted, 'which have received and are receiving material and political support from outside of Indochina are designed to overthrow the legal Governments of Laos and Cambodia and to establish the Vietminh supremacy in those countries. At the same

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42. Foreign Office-New York, 5 July 1954, FO 371/112278 [FS1071/1237].

43. New York-Foreign Office, 7 July 1954, FO 371/112278 [FS1071/1237].

time, the Vietminh regime and its foreign associates have stepped up their propaganda campaign against Thailand by making serious and false charges against it, while urging within Thailand itself those elements which are subservient to them to undertake and intensify subversive activities which are directly related to the war which is being fought on Thailand's eastern and north-eastern frontiers'.

On July 21, 1954, the Geneva Conference reached its conclusion. An agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam was signed and came into force on July 22.<sup>44</sup> The agreement provided for a ceasefire in Indochina, and the neutralism of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

In view of the Geneva settlement, the British Government did not think that Thailand needed to press for an extra session of the General Assembly to discuss the threat to Thailand's security from the Northeast.<sup>45</sup> To do so would demonstrate a lack of confidence in the Agreement. Furthermore, it was only one aspect of a much larger problem. The French were of a similar opinion. The Americans, however, remained consistent in their policy. The State Department still intended to include the Thai

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44. For detailed discussions on Geneva Conference see, Robert F. Randle, op. cit.

45. Foreign Office-New York, 17 August 1954, FO 371/112278 [FS1071/138].

item on the Assembly agenda. Their arguments were that it was by no means certain that the armistic would prevail and there would be advantages in having the United Nations observers in the territory adjoining those areas directly covered by the United Nations Supervisory Commission, but not within their orbit. Some mark of lack of automatic confidence in the armistic would be a salutary counterpoise to the current Soviet line that all was now 'sweetness and light in Indochina'. Furthermore, to drop the Thai appeal against the background of a Soviet veto in the Security Council was undesirable. The State Department preferred that the General Assembly should authorize the Peace Observation Commission to establish a sub-commission for Indo-China and despatch observers at once.

In view of the State Department's position, Dixon saw Prince Wan on August 16 to discuss his plan.<sup>46</sup> Prince Wan said he had not yet taken a final decision, but that, although the danger of invasion had been lessened by the Geneva Agreements, that of infiltration of the Vietminh into Laos was greater. The Free Thai movement was becoming a more serious danger to the Thai Government. He recognised that it would be unrealistic to ask for observers to be sent to Thailand, but his suggestion was that a Peace Observation Commission sub-committee should be

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46. New York-Foreign Office, 20 August 1954, FO 371/112277 [FS1071/143].

set up in New York. He was sure that he would get a majority for the inclusion of his request in the General Assembly agenda, though he was doubtful about the resolution itself being passed.

The British and the French continued to oppose the Thai proposal. The Thai Ambassador in London was duly informed of their attitudes, while in New York, Dixon warned Prince Wan that he could not guarantee that the British Government would vote for the inscription of any Thai item.<sup>47</sup>

In view of the Anglo-French opposition, the Thai Government decided not to press for a resumed session of the General Assembly, but reserved the right, if need be, to raise the matter during the forthcoming session. The United States agreed to this decision. However, it noted that if the Thai Government decided to submit a proposal in the General Assembly, the United States Government would support her. The Secretary-General of the United Nations was duly informed of the Thai decision on August 23, 1954.<sup>48</sup>

Thailand was clearly compelled by lack of British and French support to wait to see how the Geneva settlement

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47. Ibid.

48. New York-Foreign Office, 23 August 1954, FO 371/112278 [FS1071/145].

on Indochina was working out. At the same time, she was looking forward as an alternative safeguard to the UK-US proposal to form a security alliance in Southeast Asia which she desperately needed to bolster her defence against the Communist threat.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE ANGLO-AMERICAN SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THAILAND

The conclusion of the Geneva Conference in July 1954 permitted the British and the United States to proceed with their proposed plan for a Southeast Asia Defence Treaty which they hoped would not only safeguard Thailand and the rest of Southeast Asia from Communist aggression but would also uphold the Geneva Agreement. Although the Geneva Agreement of July 21, 1954 had brought to an end the eight- years colonial war in Indochina, both Britain and the United States felt that the Communists would not remain quiet but would attempt to extend their authority through subversion over the whole of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. From there, the Communists might put irresistible pressure on Thailand. Without strong support from the Anglo-American powers, it was felt that Thailand would not be able to face Communist pressure.

#### The Origins

The idea of a regional defence organisation for Southeast Asia had surfaced repeatedly since 1949 but, SEATO was conceived during the crisis created by French defeat in the Indochinese war against the Vietminh. Faced

with the French defeat, the United States Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, called for a 'united action' to meet the 'Red threat in Asia'.<sup>1</sup> He hoped that efforts to create an alliance would stiffen the French will to resist. After the fall of Dien Bien Phu, it was hoped that it would strengthen the French negotiating power at the Geneva Conference.

The British were genuinely interested in a regional security scheme that would provide effective protection for Thailand and Southeast Asia in general and which also involved the Americans, but they declined to rush into negotiations for a pact. London feared confrontation with China and thought it might also wreck the Geneva Conference. Furthermore, London felt that the support of Asian neutralists - India, Indonesia, Ceylon and Burma - was necessary to make the pact more viable. The differences between the United States and Britain concerning timing and membership delayed the formation of SEATO. In spite of the United States insistence, Britain showed no intention to negotiate for the regional security pact until the termination of the Geneva Conference.

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1. Charles O. Lerche, 'The United States, Great Britain, and SEATO: A Case Study in the Fait Accompli' The Journal of Politics, Vol. 13. 1956. p. 461; Donald E. Neuchterlein, Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1965. p. 114.

This did not mean, however, that Britain had been idle in her consideration of the defence planning in Southeast Asia. The chief British concern was for the defence of Malaya and to ensure an effective barrier as far to the north of that country as possible. As indicated in the British contingency plan, should Indochina fall to the Communists and enable the Vietminh to threaten the region, the Thai frontier, according to the British, was a better place to stop them. The British Chiefs of Staff envisaged a contingency plan to occupy the Songkhla position.<sup>2</sup> To the British, parts of Indochina could be conceded for the sake of general regional stability, but the Americans feared for the loss of all Indochina and anticipated the inevitable march of communism southwards. It was because of this perception that the Americans considered it important to take a 'united action' to help the French and prevent the Indochinese states from falling to the Vietminh.

Although the Anglo-American differences did not disappear, the Five-Power Staff Conference was held in Washington on June 3-11 to discuss the defence of Southeast Asia.<sup>3</sup> The Five-Power Staff Conference report suggested

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2. Cabinet Defence Committee D(53) 2nd. Meeting, 26 April 1953: Defence of Malaya, CAB 131/13.

3. Report of the Five-Power Military Conference of June 3-11, 1954, FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. XII. pp. 596-597. The Five-Power Military Conference was attended by Field Marshal Sir John Harding (United Kingdom), Admiral R.B. Carnet (USA). Major-General W.G. Gentry (NZ). General de Corps d'Armée J.E. Vallny (France) and Lt. General Sydney F. Rowell (Australia).



that the free world ensure the 'security of the flank resting on the Thai border', as envisaged by the British Chiefs of Staff, and that 'the final stop-line should be a defensive position on the Kra Isthmus'.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, the Five-Power Conference agreed to the British proposal to build Thailand into an anti-communist bastion of Southeast Asia. The conference also saw the need to press forward with the collective security arrangement to counter communist expansion.

Formal planning for a collective defence system began only after Churchill and Eden's visit to Washington late in June 1954. On June 18, the President and Churchill affirmed their intention of proceeding with a 'plan for collective defense in Southeast Asia' to meet the eventuality of either success or failure at Geneva.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter a joint United States-United Kingdom Study Group was formed to prepare a draft treaty. By the third week of July, after consultation with its ANZUS allies and Philippines and Thai officials, a negotiating draft was completed by Washington.<sup>6</sup> It began by proclaiming the prospective partners' desire to promote stability and well-

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4. FRUS, *ibid.* p. 437.

5. Agreed Minute of the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States, 27 June 1954, FRUS, *ibid.* pp. 580-581.

6. For the US draft on a collective security arrangement see, FRUS, *ibid.*, pp. 687-694.

being in Southeast Asia; their support for peoples desirous and capable of sustaining independence; their devotion to democratic principles; and, most importantly their 'sense of unity' in the face of 'any potential aggressors'.

Article Four was the heart of the proposed agreement. It identified two different threats and posited appropriately varied responses to them. In the event of overt armed attack upon the allies or on 'any states or territory in the area' which they unanimously designated, each would act to meet the common danger 'in accordance with its constitutional processes'. In the case of indirect aggression or subversion, the parties would immediately consult to determine action to be taken to maintain 'the common defence ... and peace and security in the area'. Other articles established a council to implement treaty terms; provided for the accession of other states upon invitation; and defined procedures for the ratification, coming into force, and denunciation of the treaty.

Late in August, the State Department made a modification in the draft treaty.<sup>7</sup> The Preamble and Article Four of the Treaty now specified that the parties were uniting against 'Communist aggression' rather than

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7. Revised US Working Draft of Security Treaty, FRUS, *ibid.* pp. 784-789.

subversion. This modification was made because Washington wanted to avoid involvement in any local disputes in the area. This phraseology also made it clearer that Communist China and its allies were the source of the threat to peace in Southeast Asia. The United States also made changes in the definition of the treaty area. The American position excluded 'the Pacific area north of 20 degrees north latitude' - ruling out any commitment to the defence of Hong Kong and Taiwan. The draft Treaty, on the other hand, extended protection against armed attack to Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam.

### The Manila Conference

The British perceived that the attitudes of the Asian neutralists would be crucial in the long-term. The support or at least the acquiescence of the neutralist states in a system of regional defence might induce the Chinese to uphold the settlement achieved at Geneva, while at the same time making it more viable. For these reasons the British Government strove to encourage the Asian neutralists to attend the conference in Manila. However, to her dismay, only three Asian countries - Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand - indicated their intention to attend the conference at Manila on September 6-8, 1954. India, Indonesia, Ceylon and Burma declined to participate. Participation in SEATO, Nehru believed, would run counter

to the declared policy of neutrality and non-alignment.<sup>8</sup>

On September 6, delegates met in Manila. Senators H. Alexander Smith and Michael J. Mansfield accompanied John F. Dulles. Richard G. Casey, Minister of External Affairs, led the Australian delegation. Guy La Chambre, Minister of Foreign Affairs, represented France. The Marquess of Reading, Minister of State, headed the British delegation. Minister of External Affairs T. Clifton Webb represented New Zealand. Representatives of Asian nations included Pakistan's Foreign Minister Chaudhri Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, the Philippines Vice President and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Carlos P. Garcia, and Thailand's Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Wan Waithayakon.

At the three-days conference in Manila, discussions among the delegations focussed on the nature, structure, and obligations of the proposed Treaty. Among the basic and controversial issues of the draft Treaty were the nature of the obligation to counter armed aggression, the definition of aggression, the propriety of protecting Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam, the desirability of coordinating military action, the geographical area covered by the pact, and finally whether or not the pact should concern itself with economic aid.

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8. Anthony Eden, The Memoirs of Anthony Eden, Full Circle, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, p. 136.

First, the obligation to counter armed aggression needed clarification. Like the representative from the Philippines, Prince Wan proposed a security commitment similar to NATO's whereby there was an automatic commitment to aid a member.<sup>9</sup> Although Dulles was sympathetic to Thailand's demand, he was not in a position to accept it. One of the reasons was that he wanted to avoid provoking a controversial constitutional debate in Washington as occurred when the drafters of the NATO pact inserted the provision that 'an attack on one is an attack on all'. For this reason too, Dulles explained to Prince Wan that the United States preferred to use the wording in line with that used in pacts involving the United States, the Philippines, Korea and the ANZUS countries. He believed that the form which was proposed by the United States in Article II gave adequate protection to their associates in the Treaty to the extent that it was possible to do so by and under the Constitution of the United States. The treatment of armed aggression was treated in Article II as follows:

In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack and to prevent and counter subversive activities directed from without against their territorial integrity and political stability.

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9. FRUS. op. cit., pp. 882-884.

A second issue arising among the member countries of the pact was how to define aggression. The United States insisted that the Treaty should be specifically used to prevent Communist aggression in the Treaty area as stated in the American draft in the Preamble and in Article IV. This was because the United States alone of the member countries had no territory in the Treaty area and thus any aggression not inspired by the Communist Powers would not be viewed as endangering the peace and security of the United States.

Thailand strongly supported the United States contention. As indicated earlier, Thailand needed a clear commitment in the Treaty against Communism. However, the United States intention of limiting aggression to Communist attacks alone met the vigorous opposition of other member countries, particularly from the British and New Zealand delegations. Britain felt grave doubts about the wisdom of using the term 'communism' in the Treaty and limiting the objective to deterring Communist aggression alone.<sup>10</sup> The other collective security treaties had not been so drafted as to be directed against one specific threat, but had been based solely on the right of self-defence against any attack. Furthermore, an outright anti-Communist and anti-Chinese alliance might instigate an increasing sympathy for Communist China among the Colombo Powers and thus might

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10. Ibid., p. 887.

jeopardise any hope of getting them to join the Manila Pact. It would also discourage the Asian Neutralists from joining the Pact at a later date.

As a compromise, the conference agreed to allow the United States to insert in the Pact a separate reservation declaring that the United States understood that American obligations under Article IV, Paragraph I, would only apply to "Communist aggressions".<sup>11</sup> Still, the American reservation clearly affirmed that the United States would consult under the provisions of Article IV, Paragraph II, if an act of aggression or an armed attack were initiated by other than Communist forces.

Apparently there were two reasons for adding the American "understanding" to the Pact. First, it sought to prevent any international friction on the Asian subcontinent that might weaken America's security policies in that area. Dulles wanted to dispel India's fear that the Manila Pact might be invoked by Pakistan in the dispute over Kashmir. Secondly, Dulles no doubt thought it wise to have a provision in the Pact directed specifically against Communist aggression since only this form of aggression could be construed as a threat to the United States security and could thus provide the rationale for Senate ratification of the Pact. Furthermore, it would also

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11. See Appendix II for the US 'understanding'.

provide an assurance to the Thai Government in facing any Communist threats.

The third major issue dealt with the question of subversion and infiltration. Prince Wan insisted that this issue should be included in the Treaty. He argued that:<sup>12</sup>

Thailand has been subjected to a threat of communist aggression from Indochina so much so that my government had to call the attention of the United Nations to the situation, which even now needs close and constant watching, while a threat of subversion to overthrow my government has been openly broadcast from a communist country.

Again the essence of the problem was how to achieve agreement on the interpretation and application of the provision providing countermeasures against subversion and infiltration. The provision on anti-subversion measures was set out in Article IV, paragraph 2:

If , in the opinion of any of the Parties, the inviolability or the integrity of the territory or the sovereignty or political independence of any Party in the Treaty Area or any of other State or territory to which the provision of paragraph 1 of this Article from time to time apply is threatened in any way other than by armed attack or is affected or threatened by any fact or

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12. For opening speech by Prince Wan see, Recorded Proceedings by the Secretary of State at the opening session of the Manila Conference. Document No. 1 6/9 FO371/111887 [DS1074/627].



situation which might endanger the peace of the area, the Parties shall consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defense.

The phrasing of this provision caused concern to some members who feared that the pact might be invoked to justify external interference in truly indigenous nationalistic revolutions in the treaty area. A treaty member might be tempted to invoke Article IV, Paragraph II, to dispose of a new government of a sovereign country in the treaty area if the newly established government did not meet the treaty member's approval. Apprehension over such possible abuse led the British delegation to suggest adding another paragraph to Article IV to be known as paragraph III.<sup>13</sup> Under this paragraph, SEATO action sanctioned in Article IV could only be justified by 'the invitation or with the consent of the government concerned'.

The question of whether or not Article IV could be interpreted to provide protection to Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam was also discussed. The United States and Thailand strongly favoured applying this article to the three small states while Britain and France did not. Thailand felt that the commitments should be specifically mentioned in the text in order to safeguard the neutrality of these Indochinese states. To Thailand, this was

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13. FRUS, op. cit. p. 889.

important because Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam formed her first-line of defence against Communist aggression. Britain and France felt that the membership of the Indochinese states in the Manila Pact was out of question because of the Geneva Agreement. As a result of these differences, instead of mentioning them directly in the text of the treaty, the pact members agreed to sign and attach to the Manila pact a special protocol in which they unanimously designated the three countries 'for the purpose of Article IV of the treaty'.<sup>14</sup>

The fifth major problem confronting the treaty members was how to coordinate collective military action in the event that such action should become necessary under the provisions of the Manila pact. Like Australia and the Philippines, Thailand was in favour of establishing joint military machinery along the NATO lines.<sup>15</sup> Thailand was even willing to offer its own soil as a site for stationing the joint SEATO military base because she was the only signatory situated on the Southeast Asian mainland, and immediately concerned about its own defense. The United States, supported by Britain and France, did not intend to create an integrated military force under a unified command as in NATO. As pointed out by Dulles later, a NATO formula

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14. See Appendix II for Protocol of the Associated States.

15. See Appendix II for Article VII on military coordination.

could not be adopted because there was no community of interest among the countries interested in the defence of Southeast Asia. The Manila Pact, being primarily designed as an alliance to deter the Communist powers, could be implemented in Southeast Asia by utilizing mobile American naval forces and air striking power that was already strategically stationed in the Pacific.

The Conference also discussed the question of 'area of commitment'. As fully agreed in Article VIII, the treaty was defined as the 'general area of Southeast Asia, including also the entire territories of the Asian parties', and 'the general area of the Southwest Pacific not including the Pacific area north of 21 degrees 30 minutes north latitude'.<sup>16</sup> The treaty, however, excluded Hong Kong and Formosa from the General area of Southeast Asia because the British Government considered that inclusion would conflict with its recognition of the Communist regime in China. Furthermore the inclusion of Formosa would have directly conflicted with the aspirations of British policy to get Asian neutrals to join the Manila Pact.

The conference also agreed that external and internal aggression could not be prevented solely by

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16. See Appendix II for Article VIII on Area of Commitment.

military means but also needed economic stability and prosperity. Hence, Article III stipulated that the members would 'cooperate with one another in the development of economic measures, including technical assistance, designed both to promote economic programs and social well-being and to further the individual and collective efforts of governments toward these ends'.<sup>17</sup> Though the Treaty provided economic and technical assistance in Article III, it did not intend to place greater attention on economic than on military matters. The treaty did not even indicate the organisation or machinery which would deal with economic matters.

In order to prevent SEATO from apparently encouraging colonialism, the Philippines urged that an article asserting the principles of equal rights, self-determination, right to self government and independence be included in the Preamble as well as in the Pacific Charter supplemented to the Manila Pact.<sup>18</sup>

The Manila conference ended on 8 September 1954 with a Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty, a US statement of 'understanding' to satisfy Congress, a Pacific Charter, and a Protocol to the Manila Treaty

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17. See Appendix II for Article on Economic Cooperation.

18. See Appendix II for Pacific Charter.

bringing Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam under the protection of SEATO.

Thus, with the signing of the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty or Manila Pact, the Anglo-American powers, had accomplished their objective to counter the Communist moves in Southeast Asia, particularly to protect Thailand from possible Vietminh attack, although the treaty left ambiguous the specifics of the response that might occur. Though Thailand did not get all she wanted, the existence of SEATO would be a shield to prevent the spreading of communism from Indochina to Thailand. Through SEATO Thailand was able to secure commitments from the Western powers, particularly the United States, to come to its aid in time of external aggression. Thus, Thailand would be able to 'avoid being left alone once more at the mercy of an overpowering enemy, defenceless and without allies'.<sup>19</sup> The Bangkok Government worried about Indochina falling under Communist control. If Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam fell to the Communists, the security of Thailand would be very much threatened. On 3 December 1954, the Thai Government ratified the Treaty.

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19. George Modelski, ed., SEATO: Six Studies, Halstead Press, Sydney, 1962. p. 90.

## A SUMMING UP

British relations with Thailand began in the 17th century when East India Company established their factories in Ayuthia and Pattani. However, formal relations were established only in 1855 when the Bowring Treaty was signed. This long-standing relationship was disrupted after the Thai Government under Pibul Songgram decided to collaborate with Japan. On 25 January, 1942, Thailand formally declared war on Britain and the United States. Unlike the United States Government, Britain recognised the Thai declaration of war and thus placed the two countries in a state of war.

Thailand's collaboration with Japan had given justification to the British Government to demand, not only the return of Burmese and Malayan territories annexed by Thailand during the war, but also to procure certain undertakings designed to secure Thai collaboration in political and economic rehabilitation of Southeast Asia in the post-war years. However, the divergent British and American viewpoints with regard to Thailand affected the Anglo-Thai peace settlement negotiations and this situation was fully exploited by the Thais to their advantage. The United States Government adopted a very benevolent attitude towards Thailand and from time to time expressed considerable suspicion towards Britain lest the latter should attempt to establish some kind of control over the

country in the post-war period. Thus, the British peace settlement policy towards Thailand became the subject of much criticism from American official sources. After considerable difficulty and delay, on the 1st January, 1946, the state of war between Britain and Thailand was formally terminated. The long delay in reaching an agreement with Britain to liquidate the state of war caused much economic hardship in Thailand, which the incompetence of post-war civilian government in Bangkok aggravated. The situation paved the way for the military under Pibul Songgram to reassert their dominance.

The victory of the Allied powers and the presence of the British occupation forces in Thailand caused the eclipse of the military clique which had dominated the Thai Government since 1932. Pibul was put on trial under the War Crimes Act for his share in bringing Thailand into the war on behalf of Japan, but he was freed by the High Court on the ground that an Act could not be applied retrospectively. Pibul avowed that he would lead the quiet life of a common citizen. However, in November 1947, Pibul Songgram, supported by the military clique, staged a coup against the Thamrong Government. The fall of the Thamrong Government and the return of Pibul Songgram into active political life was viewed with dismay by both the British and the Americans. The British did not forget Pibul's role during the war. It was feared that the return of Pibul Songgram would affect British interests in Thailand and

Southeast Asia as whole. In fact, when Pibul Songgram announced his intention to return to active political life in early February 1947, several steps were taken by the British and American Ambassadors to discourage his return but to no avail. The Thamrong Government had been discredited by the mystery of King Ananda's death and by its general inefficiency and corruption. Consequently, the British Government and other powers declined to give diplomatic recognition to the new government, imposed by force and dominated by Pibul and his military clique. Meanwhile, steps were taken by the British and the American Ambassadors to prevent the Free Thais from staging a counter-coup. Pridi Banamyong, the Senior Statesman, aided by the British and American Ambassadors, escaped to Singapore. On the British advice, Pridi issued a statement advising his followers to avoid causing trouble.

Realising the disapproval of the British and the United States Governments and other Western powers, the military clique remained at the outset discreetly in the background. Khuang Aphaiwong, leader of the Democrat Party, was appointed Premier of the interim government. Elections were held early in February 1948 and a new Parliament was called into being. Khuang Aphaiwong was again appointed as Prime Minister, and his government received a vote of confidence from the Parliament on March 5, 1948. There was considerable hesitation among the British and the United States Governments and other Powers



about extending recognition to the new regime headed by Khuang Aphaiwong. The Khuang Administration was, however, admitted to be in general composed of honest and capable ministers. Furthermore, it had the support of the electorate. The Khuang Government had also undertaken to respect Thailand's international obligations. Set against this background, maintenance of non-recognition was more inconvenient to the British and the other Powers than to the Thai Government. For the British, the urgent need for obtaining rice to relieve the food shortage in Southern Asia and to settle the war claims with Thailand were important factors in their policy. In March 1948, therefore, the new regime was recognised by Britain, the United States and other Powers.

The Khuang Government also proved to be short-lived. The Khuang Government had been brought into power on the ostensible grounds that it would deal with the ever-rising cost of living, would cope with the Chinese question, and would suppress the Communists. It succeeded in doing none of these, and its failure was made a pretext for a further coup. The true reason for the coup of April 1948 was, however, that Nai Khuang was far from subservient to the Army. For these reasons on 6 April 1948 Khuang was pressed to resign by the Coup Group in favour of Pibul. Khuang succumbed to the demand, and the Council of Regency then called on Pibul to form a new Government. Thus Pibul once more came to power. Since his administration had been

formed in a nominally constitutional manner at the request of the Council of Regency on the resignation of the preceding Prime Minister, and since he received, inevitably, a vote of confidence from the Legislature, the new regime was recognised by Britain and the Western powers. The British government by then accepted that Pibul, in spite of his previous war-time record, was the best person to maintain stability in Thailand. The British view was that a stable and friendly government in Thailand was important not only for the free flow of rice to British territories in Southeast Asia, but also was essential to the general security of Southeast Asia. Thus, despite his collaborationist record, Britain was prepared to foster the friendship of Pibul as the head of the Government in power in Thailand.

But Pibul's return to office in April 1948 was the signal for an outbreak of violence in the south. Involved were a Malay minority of 600,000 in the southern part of Thailand. Thai authority had not been completely established in those four provinces until 1902 and differences in race as well as religion separated the Malay Moslem minority from the Thai Buddhist majority. Immediately after the final incorporation of the four Malay provinces in South Thailand in 1902, rebellions had broken out and following that an appeal was made by the Malay leaders to resist Thai rule in order to protect their sacred religion and preserve their separate identity. The

attempt by the Vajiravudh Government to assimilate the Malays through the Thai Education Act of 1921 sparked off rebellion in Belukar Semak in Narathiwat province in early 1923. The Malays also united against the government's assimilationist policy known as the Rathaniyom policy (Cultural policy) under the Pibul regime. When the Second World War came, the Malay leaders joined the British against the occupying Japanese forces. The Malay leaders, particularly Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen, Tengku Abdul Jalal and others, hoped that if and when victory came to the British, their claim for separation from the Thai state would be honoured by the victors. When the war ended, Tengku Jalal petitioned the British Government for such recognition. However, to their disappointment, the British failed to entertain the aspirations of the Pattani Malays. Thus, the Pattani issue was left unresolved. The Pattani leaders then turned to the Pridi/Thamrong Government to concede the setting up of an autonomous government or to some extent to allow some form of cultural autonomy within a Thai state. Haji Sulong, the respected religious leader in Pattani, submitted to the Thai Government a seven-point plan for an autonomous state on April 3, 1947. However, before the government was able to consider the matter, Thamrong was overthrown in a military coup on November 8, 1947.

The return of Pibul Songgram caused fears among the Malays lest his reappearance would mean the same reign

of repression these provinces had experienced during his war-time regime. Thus, the Pattani leaders planned for an uprising. But the plan was shelved when Mahyideen failed to secure assistance and moral support from various quarters: the Indonesian leadership, the Malay Sultans and the British. Having failed, Mahyideen attempted to settle the Pattani problem through legal and constitutional means. Fearing that the Malay movement would spread, the Thai authorities took a strong line, and in January 1948 Haji Sulong and his colleagues were arrested. These arrests touched off the simmering discontent in the four Malay provinces and caught the sympathy of the Malays across the border, especially in Kelantan. A number of political and religious leaders sought political asylum in British Malaya and carried on their struggle from there. In February 1948, they formed the Gabungan Melayu Pattani Raya (the Association of Malays of Greater Pattani) or GEMPAR in Kelantan. It became a coordinating organization for the final liberation of the four Malay provinces. The Association drew support from various Malay groups and political parties, especially the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) and Singapore Malay Union. Petitions were sent to the Thai Government to release Haji Sulong and his colleagues without condition. The British Government was petitioned to withhold recognition of the new Khuang Government pending redress of the Malay grievances. The Malayan press agitated for the incorporation of the four Malay provinces into the Federation of Malaya, which came

into being in 1948. Some Malay leaders, like Ahmad Boestaman, former API leader, called for an uprising in the provinces from Thai rule.

The situation in the border provinces seemed to worry the British Malayan government which was intimately concerned with preserving good relations with Thailand. It may be said that they had neither encouraged nor given any support whatsoever to Pattani movement. In fact, immediately after the arrest of Haji Sulong in January 1948, Mahyideen was warned by Sir Edward Gent, the Malayan Union Governor, against becoming involved in Pattani politics. Mahyideen was also reminded by Lord Listowel of the British Colonial Office that the British Government could not countenance any incitement or aid to rebellious action in a friendly neighbouring country.

Fearing that the trouble in the four provinces would be exploited by sinister agitators, such as MNP or Communist elements, Sir Edward Gent suggested that a conference should be arranged between Mahyideen and the Thai Government to settle the Malay problem. The idea was strongly supported by the Colonial and Foreign Office. The Foreign Office was of the view that Mahyideen was the most reasonable of those involved in the agitation in South Thailand. However, the Thai Government refused to negotiate with Mahyideen whom they considered as 'the chief instigator of the Malay unrest' in South Thailand. In mid-

June Nai Direck Jayanama, Thai Ambassador to the United Kingdom, who was passing through Singapore, had conversations with MacDonald on the Pattani problem but nothing came of these.

The situation along the border became more acute after the outbreak of Communists revolt in Malaya in June 1948. Close cooperation between Malaya and Thailand had become a practical necessity in order to restrict the operation of those terrorist bands who were using the Malayan-Thai border as their sanctuary, and eventually to render them completely inoperative. Pibul readily agreed to cooperate with the British Malayan authorities in anti-terrorist action on the frontier. Despite Pibul's cooperative attitude, border cooperation was far from satisfactory. The Malayan press alleged that the Thai local authorities were more concerned with repressing the local Malay inhabitants than with assisting in putting an end to Chinese Communist activity. As a result an exodus of Pattani Malays fled to Malaya, bringing stories of the renewed Thai suppression of the Malays. The Acting British Consul in Songkhla expressed his fears that the continued suppression of the Malays by the Thai authorities would force the Malays to collaborate with the Communists. The British Embassy in Bangkok, on the other hand, blamed the Malayan authorities for their failures to take effective steps to curb Mahyideen or GEMPAR activities in Malaya which were inciting the Malays in the Southern provinces

to rise against the Thai authorities.

During the meeting in Kuala Lumpur in early November 1948 Sir Henry Gurney assured Thompson that the Pattani Movement had no support from the Malayan authorities. However, he insisted that the Thai Government must take effective steps to settle the Pattani Malay grievances. The Thai Government was duly advised to remedy the Malay grievances. Recognising the importance of preserving good relations with Malaya, in November 1948 Pibul announced new reforms to remedy the Malay grievances, so as to bring peace to the troubled area and thereby also help Malaya in dealing with the Communist insurgency.

Meanwhile, the British Embassy in Bangkok recommended that the British Government should assist Thailand by equipping the five Thai infantry battalions operating in the south against communist terrorists. The Malayan authorities agreed on condition that arms given to the Thais were definitely used for the suppression of Communism and not against the Malay infantry. In an effort to gain the complete and unqualified cooperation of the Thai Government, Malcolm MacDonald, the British Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia, flew to Bangkok in late November 1948, to dispel a number of misunderstandings about the nature and extent of problems which complicated reiterated assurances to Pibul Songgram that Britain harboured absolutely no designs on the four provinces of

South Thailand, a current Thai concern. Plans for more effective cooperative measures were then again discussed and agreed upon. Talks were continued in January 1949 at Songkhla. To encourage Thai cooperation, the British Government in June 1949 provided arms and equipment for use of infantry units operating in the Southern provinces. Training facilities for officers of the Thai armed forces were made available in Britain, and, in addition, the Thai police were given some equipment and were allowed training facilities in England. The British proposal for the establishment of a British Military Mission in Bangkok to advise the Thai security forces in the training and use of weapons and equipment and the coordination and timing of operations on each side of the border, however, was rejected by the Thai authorities.

On September 1, 1949, a Police Border Agreement was reached between the British and Thailand which provided for the reciprocal crossing of the Malayan-Thai frontier by police of each party. Cooperation showed a steady improvement thereafter, though it proved impossible to eliminate entirely the Communist gangs infesting the difficult border country.

Another important aspect of the Anglo-Thai relations in early 1950s was the war in Indochina. With the victory of the Chinese Communists over the Kuomintang in late 1949, the character of the Indochinese war had



changed tremendously. With the aid of the Chinese Communists, Ho Chi Minh was able to develop a regular army. In January 1950 the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China recognised Ho Chi Minh's Government.

The developments in Indochina were watched with concern by the British Government. From the British point of view, Indochina was the key to the defence of Southeast Asian countries from Communist aggression. The fall of Indochina to the Communists would, they feared, further increase Communist activity in Malaya and Southern Thailand. In an effort to strengthen the non-Communist regime in Indochina, early in 1950 Britain and the United States recognised the anti-Communist Bao Dai regime and also the newly established French-supported governments in Laos and Cambodia.

At the same time, the British and the United States also tried to influence the Thai government to do the same. This change of attitude was considered to be important because Thailand initially regarded the Vietminh Movement as a Nationalist rising and not part of any wider Communist plot. Hence, at first, despite efforts by the French to induce a firm attitude towards the Vietnamese living on the Thai side of the Mekong, who used their position to pass supplies to the Vietminh, the Thai authorities took the view that they were political

refugees, entitled to Thai hospitality so long as they conducted themselves properly. It was after the Jessup-Pibul talks in late February 1950 that the Thai Government adopted a new attitude towards the problem of Indochina. In the same month Pibul decided to recognise the Bao Dai regime and the Associated States - a step which precipitated the resignation of Pote Sarasin, Thai Foreign Minister. A number of administrative measures were taken from 1950 onwards to restrict the residence and movement of Vietnamese in Thailand and to check the arms smuggling across the Mekong. Recognition of the Associated States implied that the Thai Government had publicly committed themselves to the anti-Communist cause. Despite this cooperative attitude, Thailand would not cooperate with France in the way she did with the British in Malaya against the MCP who were using Thai territory as a haven in their guerilla warfare against the British.

Pibul's administration, in pursuit of the policy of identifying themselves with the anti-Communist cause, had caused indignant protests from Chinese Communist propagandists. Thailand was condemned as a tool of the Anglo-American imperialists. There was alarm in Thailand lest this resentment should be translated into action when, in January 1953, the Chinese formed a Thai Autonomous Regional Government at Cheli, in South-West Yunan. It was feared that the purpose of the Chinese in forming the Thai autonomous Government was to establish a Left-Wing

resistance Government in exile and a base for military action against Thailand in the name of a Pan-Thai movement.

The nervous state of mind engendered by this episode was strengthened almost immediately by the Viet-Minh invasion of Laos in April 1953. It was now feared that the ultimate aim was to mould northern Thailand, along with Laos and parts of Tonkin, into a new Thai State under Vietminh auspices. The Thai Government responded by evacuating the Vietnamese from the areas of Thai territory near the Mekong and strengthening military and police patrols there.

Alarmed at the Vietminh threat to its security, the Thai Government, with strong support from the United States and Britain, decided to ask the Security Council to send an observation commission to Indochina and its neighbouring states. The British supported the scheme as acceptance of it strengthen Thailand's resistance against the Communists and also avoid the 1941 situation whereby Thailand collaborated with the Japanese when the Allied Powers failed to provide any military assistance to her. The French Government however opposed the Thai scheme because it would internationalise the Indochina issue. As the Vietminh threat was receding in late 1953, the Thai Government decided to suspend its decision to appeal to the Security Council.

However, following the renewed Vietminh invasion of Laos at the end of 1953 and early 1954, the Thai Government, encouraged by the United States, decided to bring the matter to the attention of the Security Council. During this time, the French leaders sought a negotiated settlement of the Indochina conflict. Initially, the British and the French opposed the Thais' plan as they feared it would complicate negotiations on an Indochina settlement that were being held in Geneva. However, after being given the assurance that the Thai appeal would be limited to ask the Security Council to establish a sub-committee of the Peace Observation Commission to send observers to Thailand, the British and the French agreed to support the Thai appeal. When the Thai proposal was considered on June 18, 1954 the Soviet Union vetoed it. As a result the Thai draft resolution was not adopted. Thailand planned to bring the matter before the General Assembly. The British and the French opposed this move in view of the successful conclusion of the Geneva conference in July 21, 1954. The Thai Government, therefore, decided to postpone its appeal to the General Assembly.

After its failure to get support from the United Nations, the Thai Government's alternative was to join the security pact known as the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty Organisation (SEATO) when it was formed in September 1954. Under this Treaty Thailand was able to get Anglo-American involvement in the protection of Thailand

from a Communist threat. Conscious of the Communist threat, the Thai Government ratified the SEATO Treaty on 3 December 1954. To Britain the treaty was the high point in Anglo-American efforts to protect Thailand and British Malaya from Communist forces in the area. Prior to the SEATO Treaty, the British Government, had in fact, drawn up a contingency plan which envisaged the occupation of the Songkhla position in the event of Thailand being attacked by the Communists. This plan was approved by the Five-Power Staff Conference in June 1954 in Washington. With the signing of the SEATO Treaty, Britain hoped that, in the event of a Communist invasion of Thailand, the contingency plan could be implemented within the framework of SEATO.

## II

In the post-war era, as has been evident, Britain and Thailand had given particular attention to fostering of the goodwill of the other after the peace treaty of 1946. There were three major factors underlying Britain's interest and concern for Thailand's friendship, in addition to her financial investments in Thailand and the vicinity.

The first factor was Thailand's surplus of rice. Britain needed Thailand's rice to overcome the rice shortage in Malaya. As a result of war, Burma, one of the traditional suppliers of rice, could not supply rice to

Malaya. Thus, Thailand had become a vital element in the food supply of Malaya.

The security of Malaya was another factor in the British concern to retain Thai goodwill. Britain needed Thai cooperation to suppress the Malayan communists who were using the Malayan-Thai border as their sanctuary. Little could be done to maintain any semblance of law and order in Malaya if the Communists could cross the border at will and receive asylum in Thailand. Any feeling of hostility towards Thailand would make this task extremely difficult if not impossible. Before the end of 1948 Pibul had become the object of flattering approaches from the British Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia, Malcolm MacDonald, pleading for cooperation along the Malayan-Thai border against the Communists. Thus the British Government largely ignored the petitions for help from the Pattani leaders in South Thailand. As a result of this positive approach, Thailand agreed to begin discussions with the Malayan authorities on border cooperation which later resulted in the signing of the Police Border Agreement in September 1949.

The third factor was the importance of Thailand as a bulwark against Communism. The Communist successes in China against the Nationalist regime in late 1949 and the increasing success of the Vietminh forces against the French in Indochina in the early 1950s made Thailand a

vital country in the British strategic planning in Southeast Asia. The fall of Indochina to the Vietminh would increasingly open Thailand to Communist subversion and infiltration. It had become the British policy to see that Thailand remained on the Western side in the struggle against Communism. If Thailand fell to the Communists, the security of Malaya would be drastically affected. In her efforts to strengthen Thai resistance against Communism, Britain, in collaboration with the United States, not only assisted Thailand in equipping her armed forces and providing training to the Thai security forces in jungle warfare, but also supported Thailand in her appeal to the Security Council in June 1954. Britain also played an important role in contributing towards the successful conclusion of the Southeast Asia Defence Treaty in September 8, 1954.

The above factors remained the major considerations in the Anglo-Thai relations between 1945-1954. Despite the wartime collaborationist record of Pibul Songgram, the British Government was among the first countries to bestow recognition on his regime in early May 1948.

The Foreign Office considered Pibul Songgram to be the only leader in the circumstances who could maintain the stability which was important to assure the country's security against the Communist threat and to maintain the

supply of rice. The alternative regimes were that of Pridi Banamyong, which was weak and whose followers were corrupt and inefficient, or the rising ambitious generals.

Thus, it became the British policy after 1948 to support and strengthen Pibul regime. This policy was adopted by British Ambassadors in Thailand - Thompson, Whittington, Whitteridge and Gage.

Thailand, too, had considerable motivation to foster friendly relations with Britain. Despite the harsh Peace Agreement of January 1946, Thailand's relations with Britain remained cordial. The major factor was the traditional Thai policy of siding with a major power in international politics. Although the British power was diminishing after the war in favour of the United States, Thailand's strategic location in relation to British Malaya and the large British investment in the country made Thailand's relation with Britain a major concern. Before the involvement of the United States in Southeast Asia in the early 1950s, Thailand depended on Britain for protection against internal and external threats. Cooperation with Britain also helped to improve Thailand's international respectability.

Another salient feature in Anglo-Thai relations was the role played by the United States. The United States had played an important role during the Anglo-Thai



peace negotiations in September - December 1945. As a result of the United States intervention, the British Government had to modify some of its peace terms in favour of Thailand. Based on this experience, in her dealings with Thailand in the post-war era, Britain tried as far as possible to coordinate her policy with that of the United States. By this effort, Britain hoped that they could avoid diplomatic disarray due to their differences in the assessment of the attitudes or policy that should be adopted towards Thailand. Several examples could be given to illustrate this fact: the policy towards Pibul Songgram before and after the November 1947 coup and policy towards Thailand's appeal to the Security Council. The United States Government was also made aware of the Malayan-Thai border collaboration. In fact, the US Military Attaché was invited to attend the Songkhla conference as an observer. Prior to that, the US Military Attaché accompanied Colonel Heslop, the British Military Attaché, during his tour of the Southern border states.

The period 1945-1954 saw close liaison between the two allied powers in their dealings with Thailand. Although Thailand was considered to be within the British orbit, Britain needed United States cooperation to help Thailand to resist communism, particularly in the 1950s. Britain, because of commitments in Malaya and Europe and her economic weakness, could not play an effective role in Southeast Asia without the support and assistance of the

United States. The Communist successes in China in late 1949 and the deteriorating situation in Indochina by the early 1950s made the involvement of the United States in the region more urgent and important. In September 1954, Britain and the United States and their allies signed the Southeast Asia Treaty to create a regional security organisation.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix I

#### MALAYAN-THAI BORDER POLICE AGREEMENT

##### a. General

It has been agreed to by the Governments of the Federation and Thailand that there will be full cooperation on the border between their respective police forces against the terrorists, bandits and criminals. In order to give full and practical effect to this agreement, Federation Police may under conditions set out here-under enter Thailand territory and the Thai Police similarly may enter Federation territory.

##### b. Reasons for crossing the border

- i. To investigate urgently information received about terrorist movements or concentrations;
- ii. In pursuit of terrorists escaping from Federation of Malaya over the frontier into Thailand or vice versa;
- iii. To ensure close liaison and cooperation on all police matters in the border areas of the Federation and Thailand.
- iv. For the purposes of para b(i) and para b(ii) no Malayan patrol may cross the frontier into Thailand unless it is accompanied by a Thai policeman. In order to facilitate this, a force of Thai Police will be made available as described in para (i) below. For similar purposes, no Thai patrol may cross the frontier into Malaya unless it is accompanied by a Malayan policeman. For this purpose the Thai patrol will visit the nearest Malayan Police Station to the frontier and apply for a Malayan Police representative to accompany it.

In addition, Thai police operation on Malayan soil will be given Malayan Police powers and will be issued with Malayan Police Warrant Cards. Detailed arrangements regarding the number of Warrant Cards to be issued to Thai police will be arranged by the Chief Police Officers concerned.

c. Arrests

- i. Arrests should only be made by the Federation police patrols operating in Thailand territory and by Thailand police operating in the Federation territory when it is not practicable for the police of the territory in which the arrest is to be made to effect the arrest themselves. Whenever possible arrests in the Federation of Malaya should be effected by the Federation police and in Thailand by the Thai police.
- ii. Federation police having arrested a person or persons in Thailand will take prisoner to the nearest Thai Police station and hand him over to the Thai police. If it should be difficult to reach such a police station, the patrol is permitted to take the prisoner back into its own territory and then inform the police of the other territory as soon as possible. The prisoner must be handed over to the police of other territory as soon as possible.

d. Objects of arrests

- i. The main objects are to arrest terrorists and armed robbers connected with the terrorists forces in Malaya;
- ii. Robber gangs who are not connected with the terrorists of Malaya and who are nationals of the one country will not be attacked or pursued in that country by the police of the other country;
- iii. Minor or petty crime will continue to be dealt with solely by police in whose territory it occurs.

e. Conditions for crossing the border

Normally police patrols may cross into Thai territory and vice versa as follows:

- i. The total strength of any one patrol will not exceed a total of 35 police of all range;
- ii. Patrols will be in uniform of their respective forces;
- iii. Patrols may be armed;
- iv. Patrols should report to and liaise with the nearest Thai police at the first practical opportunity and vice versa;
- v. If it is not possible to contact the Thai Police during such a patrol the Thai Police should be informed as soon as possible after Patrol.

**Note:** In some areas of difficult country the distances between the police stations will preclude early contact by patrols in Thailand and conversely in Malaya.

- vi. When it is intended that two or more police patrols should work in conjunction or effect a sweep prior permission must be obtained from the Thai police and the plan must be made and operation carried out by the two chief police officers concerned.

f. Recognition signals

Patrols entering their neighbour's territory will be required to carry and use any recognition signals, which may from time to time be arranged by mutual agreement between the Chief Police officer Songkhla and the Chief Police officer of Kedah.

g. Armed forces

The above applies to the police and civil officials only, the military not having been included. The only soldiers who can cross the frontier are those few technicians, e.g wireless operators, who may from time to time be attached in small numbers to assist the

police of either force. Units, subunits of the armed forces may not cross the frontier under this agreement. Specialist soldiers attached to the police will wear police uniform. Civil officials should wear civil uniform, not plain clothes.

**h. Liaison Officer**

Federation police may send a liaison officer to Songkhla (to be attached to the British Consulate) to assist in detailed cooperation. The Thai police may send a liaison officer to Alor Star as and when required and for any periods.

**i. Attachment of Thai Police to Federation Police**

The Thai police have generously agreed to attach to the Federation police a group of approximately twelve Thai police under the command of an officer of senior N.C.O. to perform liaison duties and assist the Federation police. They will be quartered centrally where they can reside together and will be attached as may be convenient to Federation police patrols for assisting with the language problem and other technical difficulties.

**Note:** Details of accomodation and any necessary allowances will be settled later possibly in the light of experience during the first few days of attachment.

**Source:** Bangkok-Foreign Office, No. 645, 1 September 1949, FO 371/76291 (F13106/1061/40).

## Appendix II

### The South-East-Asia Collective Defence Treaty

The Parties\* to this Treaty,

Recognizing the sovereign equality of all the Parties,

Reiterating their faith in the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments,

Reaffirming that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, they uphold the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and declaring that they will earnestly strive by every peaceful means to promote self-government and to secure the independence of all countries whose peoples desire it and are able to undertake its responsibilities,

Desiring to strengthen the fabric of peace and freedom and to uphold the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law, and to promote the economic well-being and development of all peoples in the Treaty area. Intending to declare publicly and formally their sense of unity, so that any potential aggressor will appreciate that the Parties stand together in the area, and

Desiring further to co-ordinate their efforts for collective defence for the preservation of peace and security.

Therefore agree as follows:

#### Article I

The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international dispute in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

## Article II

In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of the Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack and to prevent and counter subversive activities directed from without against their territorial integrity and political stability.

## Article III

The Parties undertake to strengthen their free institutions and to cooperate with one another in the further development of economic measures, including technical assistance, designed both to promote economic progress and social well-being and to further the individual and collective efforts of governments toward these ends.

## Article IV

1. 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 to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Measures taken under this paragraph shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations.
2. If, in the opinion of any of the Parties, the inviolability or the integrity of the territory or the sovereignty or political independence of any Party in the Treaty Area or any of other State or territory to which the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article from time to time apply is threatened in any way other than by armed attack or is affected or threatened by any fact or situation which might endanger the peace of the area, the Parties shall consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defence.
3. It is understood that no action on the territory of any State designated by unanimous agreement under paragraph 1 of this Article or on any territory so designated shall be taken except at the invitation or with the consent of the government concerned.



## Article V

The Parties hereby establish a Council, on which each of them shall be represented, to consider matters concerning the implementation of this Treaty. The Council shall provide for consultation obtaining in the Treaty Area may from time to time require. The Council shall be so organized as to be able to meet at any time.

## Article VI

This Treaty does not affect and shall not be interpreted as affecting in any way the rights and obligations of any of the Parties under the Charter of the United Nations or the responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security. Each Party declares that none of the international engagements now in force between it and any other of the Parties or any third Party is in conflict with the provisions of this Treaty, and undertakes not to enter into any international engagement in conflict with this Treaty.

## Article VII

Any other State in a position to further the objectives of the Treaty and to contribute to the security of the area may, by unanimous agreement of the Parties, be invited to accede to this Treaty. Any State so invited may become a Party to the Treaty by depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines shall inform each of the Parties of the deposit of each such instrument of accession.

## Article VIII

As used in this Treaty the 'Treaty Area' is 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 Parties may, by unanimous agreement, amend this Article to include within the Treaty Area the territory of any State acceding to this in accordance with Article VII or otherwise to change the Treaty Area.

## Article IX

1. This Treaty shall be deposited in the archives of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. Duly the certified copies thereof shall be transmitted by that Government to the other signatories.
2. The Treaty shall be ratified and its provisions carried out by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional processes. The instruments or ratification shall be deposited as soon as possible with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, which shall notify all of the other signatories of such deposit.
3. The Treaty shall enter into force between the States which have ratified it as soon as the instruments of ratification of a majority of the signatories shall have been deposited, and shall come into effect with respect to each other State on the date of the deposit of its instruments of ratification.

## Article X

This Treaty shall remain in force indefinitely, but any Party may cease to be a Party one year after its notice of denunciation has been given to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, which shall inform the Governments of the other Parties deposit of each notice of denunciation.

## Article XI

The English text of this Treaty is binding on the Parties, but when the parties have agreed to the French text thereof and have so notified the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, the French text shall be equally authentic and binding on the Parties.

## Understanding of the United States of America.

The United States of America in executing the present Treaty does so with the understanding that its recognition of the effect of aggression and armed attack and its agreement with reference thereto in Article IV, paragraph 1, apply only to Communist aggression but affirms that in the event of other aggression or armed attack it will consult under the provision of Article IV, paragraph 2.

In witness whereof the undersigned plenipotentiaries have signed this Treaty.

Done at Manila, this eight day of September, 1954.

B. Protocol to the South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty

Designated of states and territory as to which provisions of Article IV and Article III are to be applicable:

The Parties to the South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty unanimously designate for the purposes of Article IV of the Treaty the States of Cambodia and Laos and the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam.

The Parties further agree that the above mentioned states and territory shall be eligible in respect of the economic measures contemplated by Article III.

The Protocol shall enter into force simultaneously with the coming into force of the Treaty.

In witness whereof, the undersigned Plenipotentiaries have signed this Protocol to the South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty.

Done at Manila, this eighth day of September, 1954.

C. The Pacific Charter

The delegates of Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Republic of the Philippines, the Kingdom of Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America;

Desiring to establish a firm basis for common action to maintain peace and security in South-East Asia and the South-West Pacific;

Convinced that common action to this end in order to be worthy and effective, must be inspired by the highest principles of justice and liberty;

Do hereby proclaim:

First, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nation Charter, they uphold the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and they will earnestly strive by every peaceful means to promote self-government and to secure the independence of all countries whose peoples desire it and are able to undertake its responsibilities;

Second, they are each prepared to continue taking effective practical measures to ensure conditions favourable to the orderly achievement of the foregoing purpose in accordance with their constitutional procedures;

Third, they will continue to co-operate in the economic progress and social well-being in this regions;

Fourth, as declared in the South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty, they are determined to prevent or counter by appropriate means any attempts in the Treaty Area to subvert their freedom or to destroy their sovereignty or territorial integrity.

Proclaimed at Manila, this eighth day of September, 1954.

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\* The Parties include Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, The Philippines, Thailand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

Source: Corrine Phuang Kasem, Thailand and SEATO, Thai Watana Panich Co. Ltd., Bangkok, 1973, pp 91-95.

## APPENDIX III

### SELECTED BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

#### (A) British Officials

**Bird, H.R.**

Appointed as Student Interpreter in the Siam Consular Service, July 1921; Appointed Vice-Consul at Bangkok July 1924-March 1951; 1926 Acting Vice-Consular at Nakown Lampong; Acting Vice-Consul, Bangkok 1929; Acting Vice-Consul at Batavia 1930-31; Acting Vice-Consul at Medan April 1931-January 1932; promoted to be Vice Consul-General at Bangkok July 1931; Acting Consul-General, Bangkok 1932; Acting Consul at Surabaya December 1933-36; promoted to be Consul at Batavia December 1934; transferred to Chiangmai October 1937; seconded for service with the Ministry of Information April 1942; appointed Consul at Cairo April 1944; Acting Consul-General, Cairo 1945; appointed as Chargé d'affaires, Bangkok, October 1945.

**Gage, Berkeley**

Appointed as Ambassador Extraordinary and plenipotentiary at Bangkok on February 1954. Served in the Foreign Office, October 1928. Private Secretary to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, January 1934. Served in Peking (August 1935-1944); Attached Dumbarton Oak Conference in September 1944 as United Kingdom delegation; served in Hague (1947-49) as Chargé d'affaires. As Consul-General at Chicago, 1950 before being conferred to Bangkok as British Ambassador in 1954.

**Gent, Sir G. Edward**

Assistant Principal, Colonial Office, 1920; Private Secretary to Principal to Parliamentary of State for Colonies 1924; Principal, Colonial Office, 1926; Assistant Secretary, Colonial Office, 1939; Assistant Permanent Secretary of State, Colonial Office, 1942-46; Governor, Malayan Union, 1946-48; High Commissioner, Federation of Malaya, 1948.

**Henry, Gurney**

Born on 27 June 1898. Appointed to the Colonial Service in June 1921 as an Assistant District Commissioner in Kenya; becoming a District Commissioner, 1923. Appointed as Assistant Colonial Secretary, Jamaica, 1935; Assistant Secretary, Kenya, 1936; Chief Secretary in the Conference of East African Governors, 1938-1944; Colonial Secretary of the Gold Coast, 1944-46; Chief Secretary to the Palestine Government, 1946. Appointed as High Commissioner, Malaya, October 6, 1949. Killed in an ambush, October 6, 1951.

**MacDonald, Malcolm**

Member of LCC, 1927-30; Labour MP 1929, Parliamentary Under Secretary, Dominions Office, 1931-35; Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs 1935-38 and 1938-39; Secretary of State for Colonies 1935 and 1938-40; Governor-General SE Asia, 1946-48; Commissioner-General in SE Asia 1948-55; High Commissioner in India 1955-60.

**Rees-Williams, D.R.**

Practised in Penang and was admitted to the SS Bar; left Malaya 1934; Labour MP 1945-50; member of Government Mission to Sarawak 1946; chairman of the Burma Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry 1947; Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office 1947-50; Commonwealth Office, 1950-51.

**Thompson, G.H.**

Served in the Foreign Office as Third Secretary, May 1920; transferred to Rio de Janeiro, April 1920, to Washington D.C., June 1922. As Second Secretary, January 1923. Transferred to Foreign Office, April 1927. Transferred to Santiago, August 1931, as Chargé d'affaires in 1932 and 1933. Transferred to Foreign Office in 1934; transferred to Valenco, Spain February 1937; Transferred to Foreign Office, July 1938. Attached to Imperial Defence College, January-October 1939. As Counsellor at Ankara in 1941. Appointed as Minister in Bangkok, March 1946 and Ambassador in March 19, 1947. Made KCMG in January 1949. Seconded to Minister of Defence and appointed as Senior Civilian Instructor at the Imperial Defence College, January 1951. Appointed as Ambassador to Rio de Janeiro in February 1952.

## Whitteridge, G.C.

Appointed Student Interpreter in Thailand Consular Service, January 27, 1932; appointed as Vice-Consul in Thailand in August 1933. Appointed as Vice-Consul at Batavia, October 1936. Acting Consul in 1937-39; Acting Consul at Medan, September 14, 1941. Employed at Foreign Office until July 1948 when he was transferred to Moscow as First Secretary; Appointed as Consul-General at Stuttgart, November 1949. Appointed as Counsellor and Consul-General at Bangkok, September 15, 1951. As Chargé d'affaires in 1951, 1953 and 1954.

## Whittington, Richard

Appointed as Student Interpreter in the Siam Consular Service in 1928; Acting Vice-Consul at Batavia (January - December, 1931). As one of HM Vice-Consul in Siam, January 1931. In charge of Consulate at Cheingmai from August 1934. Acting Consul-General at Bangkok in 1935. In charge of the Consulate at Senggora, August 1936. Appointed as Consul in 1938; Served in Bangkok as First Secretary, October 1938; Appointed as Consul at Algiers, December 1942 and as acting Consul-General in 1944. Consul-General at Atlanta, March 1945. Acting Consul-General at Bangkok, May 1946. As Counsellor and Consul-General from June 1947; as Chargé d'affaires in 1948; Transferred to Foreign Office, February 1952.

## (B) Thai Prominent Personalities

### Adul, Adulderajarat

One of the powerful figure in the late 1930s and the 1940s. As Deputy Interior Minister, December 1937-December 1938 under Phya Bahul Government; as Deputy Interior Minister, December 1938-August 1944 under Pibul. During the Second World War Adul was a very active member of the Free Thai Movement; served as chairman of the Investigation Committee of War Crime (1945-46); under Thawee Government as Deputy Interior Minister (August 1945-September 1945); as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health, September 1945-January 1946 under Seni Pramoj Government.

### **Banchoon Sricharoon alias Haji Abdul Wahab**

Bangkok Muslim. Educated at Al-Azhar University. Promoter of the 1932 Coup. Appointed as Senator in 1936 and 1948. Member of Parliament, 1946-47. Chairman of the Islamic Central Council, Bangkok.

### **Chaem Promyong alias Haji Samsuddin Mustaffa**

Born in Pattani in 1917. Educated at Al-Azhar University, Promoter of the 1932 revolution. Appointed as the first Chularajamontri in 1945. Headed the Commission of Enquiry to South Thailand, April 1947. Fled to Kelantan after November 1947 coup. Placed under Restricted Residence Enactment in Kelantan, 19 February 1949. Returned to Thailand in early 1950.

### **Direck Jayanama**

Joined the Ministry of Justice as an interpreter in 1924. Under Phya Bahol Government served as Deputy Secretary-General of the Prime Minister's Office, 1935; Secretary-General of the Prime Minister, 1936-1940; Acting Director-General of the Department of Publicity, 1938. Under Pibul Government was a Minister without portfolio, December 1938-July 1939. Deputy Foreign Minister, July 1939-August 1941. Foreign Minister, August 1941-December 1941. Deputy Foreign Minister, December 1941-January 1942. Thai Ambassador to Tokyo, January 1942-October 1943. Foreign Minister, October 1943-August 1944. Under Thawee Government was Minister of Justice, 31 August-September 1945. Minister of Finance, 31 August-September 1945. Under Seni Pramoj Government as Minister of Finance, September 1945-January 1946. Under Pridi Government as Minister of Foreign Affairs, March 1946-August 1946. Under Thamrong Government as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, August 1946-May 1947. Thai Ambassador to the Courts of St. James and Thai delegate to the United Nations, 1947-48.

### **Khuang Aphaiwong**

Studied engineering at Ecole Centrale De Lyon, France, 1918-27. Returned to Thailand, 1929 and was employed in the Telegraph Department as an engineer. Promoter of the



1932 coup d'état. Member of the first National Assembly, 1932. Director-General of Post and Telegraph, 1935. Under Phya Bahol Government served as Minister without portfolio August 1935-July 1937; Deputy Minister of Education, December 1937-September 1938. Under Pibul Government served as Deputy Minister of Education, December 1938-August 1941. Minister of Public Instruction, August 1941-September 1942. Minister of Commerce, September 1942-February 1943. As Prime Minister August 1944-31 August 1945; Minister of Finance, August 1944-January 1945. Minister of Communications, August 1944-August 1945. Minister of Commerce, January 1945-August 1945. Member of the Parliament (Bangkok), January 1945. Founder of the Democrat Party, 1946. Prime Minister, 1946-March 1946. Prime Minister, November 1947-February 1948. Member of Parliament (Bangkok), 1948. Prime Minister, 21 February 1948-8 April 1948. Member of Parliament, 1950, 1957 and December 1957.

### **Pibul Songgram**

An Artillery Officer. Educated in France, 1924-29. Promoter of the 1932 coup d'état. Under Phya Bahol Government served as Minister without portfolio, December 1932-September 1934; Minister of defence, September 1934-December 1938. As Prime Minister, 16 December 1938-6 March 1942; 7 March 1942-1 August 1944. Minister of Interior, December 1938-March 1942. Minister of Foreign Affairs, July 1939-August 1941; December 1941-August 1944. Minister of Defence, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, January 1938-August 1944. Supreme Commander of Armed Forces, November 1940-August 1944. Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force, August 1941-August 1944. The General Adviser, August 1944-September 1945. Imprisoned as a war criminal, 1945. Acquitted of charges March 1946. As Prime Minister from 8 April 1949-March 1957. Went into exile in March 1957.

### **Pridi Banamyong**

Born in 1900. Studied law in France, 1920-26. Promoter of 1932 coup d'état. Became Minister without portfolio under Pahol Government, December 1932-April 1933. In 1933 he presented the 'Economic Program' which was branded as 'extreme Socialist principles'. Went into exile in France, 12 April 1933. Returned to Thailand, March 1933. Appointed as Minister of Interior, March 1934-February 1935. Minister of Foreign Affairs, February, 1935-December, 1938. Under Pibul Government appointed as Minister of Finance, December 1938-December 1941. Became

The Regent, 16 December 1941-8 December 1945. Leader of the Free Thai Movement, 1941-45. Became Prime Minister, 14 March 1946-7 June 1946, 8 June 1946-9 June 1946. Resigned Premiership over the assassination of King Rama VIII, 9 June 1946. Became Prime Minister on 11 June 1946 till 23 August 1946. Went into exile in Singapore, November 1947. Staged an abortive coup in Bangkok, February 1949. Lived in exile in the People's Republic of China, 1947-70, in Paris 1970-83.

### Seni Pramoj

Educated at Trent College and Worcester College, Oxford. Graduated with B.A. 1929. Also studied for the Bar at Grey's Inn. Returned to Thailand and joined the Ministry of Justice, 1930. Became Judge of the Court of Appeal, 1938. Appointed as Ambassador to Washington, 1941-45. Became Prime Minister, 17 September 1945-31 January 1946. Foreign Minister, September 1945-March 1946. Under Khuang Government became Minister of Justice, November 1947-February 1948; Minister of Education, February 1948-April 1948.

### Sindhu Songgram, Luang

Received his early education in Denmark. Member of the Naval General Staff before the 1932 coup. Promoter of the 1932 coup d'état. Chief of the Naval General Staff, 1933-51. State Councillor, 1932. Minister without portfolio, December 1932-August 1937. Minister of Education, August 1937-February 1942. Minister of Economic Affairs, February 1942-March 1942. Minister of Agriculture, March 1942-August 1945-March 1942. Minister of Agriculture, March 1942-August 1945. Minister of Defence, August 1944-August 1945. C-I-C, Navy, 1946-1951.

### Thamrong-Nawasawat

Promoter of the 1932 coup d'état. Under Bahol Government, Secretary-General to the Prime Minister's Office, 1933-34. Minister without Portfolio, September 1934-February 1935. Minister of Interior, February 1935-December 1938. Appointed as Minister of Justice under Pibul Government, December 1938-August 1944. Under Pridi Government, served as Minister of Justice, June 1946. As Prime Minister, 23 August 1946-30 May 1947; 30 May 1947-8 November 1947. Senator in 1951.

**Wan Waithayakon, HRH**

Acting Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1923-24. Thai Minister to the Court of St. James, Hague, Brussels, and Paris, and Thai delegate to the League of Nations, 1926-30. Adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1943-45; Thai Ambassador to Washington and Thai delegate to the United Nations, 1947-52. Minister of Foreign Affairs, March 1952-February 1959.

**(C) Malayan Prominent Personalities**

**Abdul Jalal alias Nai Adul Saiburi, Tengku**

Son of the late Rajah of Saiburi, Tengku Abdul Mutallib. Appointed as Member of Parliament for Narathiwat, 1938-1945. Chairman of the South Siam representative. Vice-President of GEMPAR. Placed under restriction under the Restricted Residence Enactment in Perak, February-July 1949. Exiled in Singapore till 1960. First President of Pattani National Revolutionary till 1960. First President of Pattani National Revolutionary Front and Pattani National Liberation Front. Died in 1978.

**Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin bin Tengku Sulaiman, Tengku**

Son of Tengku Sulaiman, fourth Rajah of Pattani. Appointed as the rajah of Pattani in 1901. Arrested in February 1902 and detained in Pitsanuloke until 1904. Alleged leader of the 1923 Belukar Semak uprising. Fled to Kelantan, 1923. Died in 1933.

**Abdullah WangPuteh**

Born in Setul. Member of Parliament for Setul since 1933. Appointed as Deputy Minister for Education under Pibul Government, April 1948. Member of the Pacification Commission to South Thailand.

## Haji Sulong bin Haji Abdul Kadir

Born in Pattani. Educated in Pattani and Mecca under the tutorship of Sheikh Zainal Abidin AlPattani. Said to be strongly influenced by the religious thoughts of Jamaluddin Al-Afhgani and Muhammad Abduh. Returned to Pattani in 1930. Appointed as the President of Pattani Islamic Council. Religious teacher at Pattani Central Mosque. Chairman of He'et AlNapadlh alLah al Syariat (A Society in the defence of Islamic Religious Law). Arrested in January 16, 1948 on charged of treason against the state. Released in 1953. Believed to be killed by the Thai secret police in December 1954.

## Mahmood Mahyideen, Tengku

Fifth child of the last Raja of Pattani. Was educated for a short period in Bangkok before joining the Penang Free School. Upon passing his School Certificate, joined the Kelantan Civil Service as Inspector of Malay Schools. In 1939 appointed as the Superintendent of Education. During the Second World War he retreated with the British forces to India where he was attached to Force 136. Upon cessation of hostilities and his return to Malaya, he was appointed Deputy Senior Civil Affairs Officer, Kelantan and later Food Controller for the State. Served as a Federal Councillor until his death on 12 February 1954.

## Nik Ahmed Kamil bin Nik Mahmood

Entered Kelantan Civil Service as Assistant to Legal Adviser 1931; became Deputy Chief Minister 1938; Deputy Resident Commissioner, Kelantan, 1947-48; Menteri Besar, Kelantan 1948-53.

## Onn bin Jaafar, Dato

Menteri Besar of Johor, 1946-50; founder and President of UMNO; member of Communities Liaison Committee 1949; resigned from UMNO to form IMP 1951; founder and President of Parti Negara 1954-62; Member for Home Affairs in the nominated Federal Legislative Council and Chairman of RIDA.

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3. Unpublished Private Papers

1. Tengku Mahmood Mahyideen Papers

This consists mainly of correspondence between Mahyideen and Miss Barbara-Whittingham-Jones and British Malayan officials on Pattani issue. I am grateful to Tengku Abdul Jalal for letting me to see these papers.

2. Tengku Abdul Jalal Papers

The papers of Tengku Abdul Jalal are mainly on Pattani affairs. I am grateful to Tengku Abdul Jalal for letting me to see these papers.

3. Miss Barbara Whittingham-Jones Papers

This consists mainly of correspondence between Mahyideen and Miss Barbara Whittingham-Jones on

Pattani affairs. It is deposited at the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

4. Newspapers

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