CHAPTER III
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THAILAND AND MAJOR POWERS

Thailand and the Soviet Union

When Pridi Phanomyong became Prime Minister of Thailand on 24 March 1946, he opened the question of reestablishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. He said:

Politics and diplomacy are two entirely different things. Whether we agree with another's beliefs has nothing to do with diplomatic relations. I wish to insist that Siam can never be a Communist country, because our customs, conventions, and history differ greatly from that of Russia.... I have studied enough economics to be in a position to say that Communism can never happen in this country and that we have nothing to fear about that. 1

Pridi was by no means allergic to communism. Indeed he openly sympathized with the Leftist Laotian leader, Prince Souphannouvong, and when the French tried to reassert their position in Indo-China through military means, he allowed thousands of Vietnamese refugees to come and stay in Thailand.

On 11 October 1946 Thailand repealed the Anti-Communist Law (1933). This paved the way for Thai-USSR diplomatic relations. On 26 December 1946 the Thai Minister to Sweden made a

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formal approach to the Soviet Government for exchange of diplomatic representatives. On 5 January 1947 the Soviet Government conveyed its willingness to establish diplomatic relations.2

The Soviet Union was interested initially in establishing trade relations with Thailand. Even before it named the Soviet Ambassador to Bangkok, it sent a trade delegation to explore the possibilities of trade. This delegation included one who was to be the Commercial Attaché in the Soviet Embassy. The Commercial Attaché offered to pay higher prices for rubber and some metals than the prices then ruling in the world market. In March 1949 the Soviets made an effort to expand trade by offering to supply Thailand with a variety of goods ranging from drugs to musical instruments.3

With Field Marshal Phibun Songgram's return to office as Prime Minister on 8 April 1948, Thailand aligned itself with the Western Powers. As the United States was then the richest and mightiest Power on earth, Phibun thought that with the cooperation and help of that country, he would be able to solve most of the problems of national development and reconstruction.4 He, therefore, gave the highest priority to the question of

3 Shirk, n. 1, p. 688. Also see Bangkok Post, 2 January and 28 March 1949.
4 Amara Raksasatorn, Professor of Public Administration at the National Institute of Development Administration, Bangkok, in an interview to the author on 24 March 1975.
promoting and maintaining the friendliest possible relations with the United States. This naturally affected Thai-USSR relations. By the end of 1949, the military regime no longer cared for Soviet interests in the region. Indeed, in November 1949 Pibun even thought of asking Moscow to close its mission in Bangkok. On 17 October 1950 he signed a Military Assistance Agreement with the United States and began to co-operate with that country in military matters too.

The Soviet Union, understandably, expressed its sorrow over this sudden accretion in American influence in Thailand. Pravda declared on 24 November 1950 that Thailand was allowing itself to be transformed into a military base for American aggression in Southeast Asia by signing such a treaty. The Soviet Press recalled with appreciation that Pridi Phanomyong had given shelter to Vietnamese refugees displaced by the French war in Vietnam. It alleged that Pibun was ill-treating those refugees. On 26 November 1950 Moscow broadcast a


7 Shirk, n. 1, p. 690.
manifesto drawn up by the Thai Communist Party (1) criticizing Phibun as a Fascist dictator and as an instrument of American "imperialism"; (2) calling for a national democratic common front to fight for independence, democracy, and permanent peace; and (3) denouncing Thailand's role in the Korean War.8

Having aligned itself with the United States in the context of the Cold War, Thailand began to keep a close watch on the movements of the staff of the Soviet Embassy in Bangkok. On 2 April 1952 Phibun took exception to a Soviet publication called Tass Bulletin published by the Soviet Mission in Bangkok.9 This publication contained information about the Soviet Union and its ideology. Phibun thought that it was prejudicial to the national security of Thailand. He, therefore, banned all types of Soviet publications.10

In 1953 the United States decided to create a defensive alliance in the Far East that could dominate the politics of Southeast Asia even as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was dominating the politics of Western Europe.11 This alliance, called the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization

9 Ibid., 3 April 1952.
10 Ibid.
(SEATO), was finally established in September 1954. However, Thailand and the Philippines were the only two countries from the region which allowed themselves ultimately to join it. The other member nations were Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, and the United States. Burma, Cambodia, India, and Indonesia chose to remain neutral instead of joining any military bloc. Thailand became the headquarters of the SEATO.

On 9 September 1954 the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, declared that the SEATO was directed against Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

In 1955, under Nikita Khrushchev, Soviet Union adopted three principles to guide it in its relations with the countries of Asia: (1) A positive and more sympathetic attitude towards the non-aligned countries of Asia; (2) economic assistance to selected non-aligned countries with a view to reducing their dependence on the West and making them more responsive to Soviet objectives; and (3) opposition to American influence wherever there was an opportunity to put up opposition. In other words it settled for a policy of containment in reverse.

12 For a detailed discussion on the SEATO, see Chapter 2 of the present study.
14 McLane, n. 11, p. 214.
The Soviet Union extended its support to the Communist Party of Thailand, which had been banned in Thailand. Leaders of the Thai Communist Party started making revolutionary statements from exile. Phayome Chulanont, a Thai Communist leader living in exile in Peking declared:

The Thai people, guided by the Thai Communist Party and oriented by Marxism-Leninism, have taken up arms and are defending themselves by heroically demolishing enemy encirclement. The armed forces of Thai people are newly formed and small in number. We shall fight with all our forces for our final aim - the achievement of the socialist revolution and the building of Communism in Thailand. 15

Peking, Hanoi, and Moscow made use of the Voice of the People of Thailand for radio propaganda in support of the Communist Party. They played up domestic and ethnic grievances in order to instigate people to take to terrorist activity. The broadcasts used the Meo language spoken in Northeastern Thailand as well as the Thai language. 16

On 16 September 1957 Field Marshal Phibun Songgram was replaced by another Field Marshal, Sarit Thanarat. However, the coup d'état did not bring about any change in the foreign policy of Thailand. Field Marshal Sarit took several measures to suppress not only the Communists but also those


who sympathized with them. He did not spare even the staff of the Soviet Embassy. In 1959 the Thai Government declared an attache, Shalkjarov by name, persona non grata. It also expelled a Tass newsmen, Yuri Trushin.

The first event perceptibly to affect this Thai attitude of unequivocal support for the United States occurred in May 1960. During that month the United States entered into an agreement with India to supply 17,000,000 tons of food-grains, especially wheat to India under Public Law 480. It also undertook to make available to India 1,000,000 tons of rice, in addition to the 500,000 tons of rice due for the year 1959. Thailand felt unhappy about this agreement. So much so that two ministers, including Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, threatened to resign in protest against the Indo-US treaty.

On 25 October 1960 Thanat Khoman said: "Thai Government should restudy its ties with the United States. The U.S. seems to accord more favourable treatment to the uncommitted nations than to those firmly on its side."
The Thais felt so hurt that after a talk with the Soviet Ambassador, Anatoly Nikolaev, Prime Minister Sarit Thanarat said in July 1961: "Ideology should not enter into Thai-Soviet relations. Thailand could have better relations and good understanding -- even trade relations with the Russians." 22

On 4 January 1962 he announced that he was dispatching a goodwill mission to Moscow under the leadership of Major-General Chalermchaip Charuvatra, then Director-General of the Tourist Organization, to sign a trade agreement. He indicated that Thailand would be interested in promoting trade with the Soviet Union even without a formal trade accord. He recalled that a few Polish ships had touched Bangkok Port without a formal trade accord. 23

Thereafter, whenever there were strains in Thai-US relations, Thai leaders made it their practice to issue favourable statements about the Soviet Union. For instance, in September 1962, when the United States decided to send twelve fighter planes with rockets, military helicopters, and amphibious tanks to Cambodia, there were frayed tempers in Thailand. This was because Thailand and Cambodia had territorial problems on the question of Phra Viharn. The situation on the Thai-Cambodian borders was far from being

23 The Nation (Rangoon), 5 January 1962.
peaceful, and one felt as though the two countries might go to war. Premier Sarit said on 20 September 1962 that the time was appropriate for Thailand to exchange formal Trade Notes with the Soviet Union. He announced that Soviet motion pictures would be shown in Thailand, that a Soviet Trade Centre would be opened in Bangkok, and that there would be cultural exchanges between Thailand and the Soviet Union. He added that a Trade Note containing definite proposals had already been drafted by the Foreign Ministry. He also disclosed that the Russians had bought about 62 per cent of Thailand's rubber produce in 1962 and that the consignment had been sent in vessels flying the Polish flag.

By 1964 the United States was ready to start bombing North Vietnam. As an ally under the SEATO, Thailand provided all possible help to the United States to carry on its missions over North Vietnam. The Soviet Union denounced the role of Thai military rulers and pledged to support North Vietnam. Soviet Premier Alexi Kosygin paid a visit to North Vietnam in January 1965. A joint communique issued at the end of the visit on 11 February 1965 stated that the Soviet Union would not remain indifferent to the threat to the security of a fraternal, Socialist country and would give the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) all necessary help. True to its

24 Straits Times (Singapore), 21 September 1962.
25 Cited by McLane, n. 11, p. 219.
promise, the Soviet Union started supplying jet fighters and ground-to-air missiles to North Vietnam. The Soviet concern during this period was how to neutralize Thailand and prevent it from providing total support to the United States.

In January 1966, the Soviet Union sent a 21-member troupe to give a series of performances in aid of the Thai Red Cross. These performances were presented in the auditorium of Thammasat University. The Rector of Thammasat University at this time was Premier Thanom Kittikachorn; and the patron of the Thai Red Cross was Queen Sirikit. Both of them expressed their warm appreciation of the various performances of the Soviet team. The Thais reciprocated this friendly gesture in September that year by sending a Thai cultural delegation to the Soviet Union. This delegation visited Dushanbe, capital of the Tadzik SSR. Again, in March 1967, Princess Dusdi Paribatra and Khunying Usna Pramoj, Chairman of the Women's Union of Thailand, visited Moscow to attend the festivities organized for the International Women's Day.


27 Siem Rath (Bangkok), 4 and 26 January 1966.


However, this process of promoting normalization of relations with Moscow was abruptly checked by the formation of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in August 1967. The ASEAN was a five-member regional association. The five members were: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. The objective of the ASEAN was to secure stability, economic growth, and social progress in the region. The Soviet Union suspected that this organization had links with the SEATO. In a Thai language broadcast on 7 August 1967 Radio Moscow described the Philippines and Thailand as the real initiators of the ASEAN. It said in another broadcast, on 13 August 1967, that behind the facade of economic and cultural cooperation there was the knocking together of a new military bloc. \(^{30}\) Pravda claimed that most observers had no doubt as to the patently anti-Communist nature of the new organization, its ties with the United States, and finally, its place in the "imperialist plans" in Asia. \(^{31}\) The Malaysian Premier, Tunku Abdul Rahman, refuted the Soviet charge, and claimed that, far from being a military pact, the ASEAN was a purely economic, social, and cultural organization. \(^{32}\)

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31 Ibid.

32 Ibid. Also see *Antara* (Djakarta), 27 April 1969.
By about 1969 the United States grew weary of the war in Vietnam and decided to reduce its military commitments in Southeast Asia. The US Congress, too, repeatedly expressed itself against the involvement of US troops in Vietnam. In this context the Thai Foreign Minister, Thanat Khoman, in a speech before the American Management Association in Bangkok on 19 March 1969, observed that the US decision to reduce its military commitments in Southeast Asia coincided with an enlargement of Soviet activity in the region. He added: "We should make our plans without assistance or co-operation from the United States." In an address to the Asian Society in New York, he further observed:

Brezhnev's proposal for Asian collective security, in our opinion, seems to envisage the departure from the scene of the Western powers and the eventual occurrence of a power vacuum which may be filled by a large nation presently inimical to Russian interests. That is why Soviet Union is taking whatever precautions may be necessary to prevent that eventuality from happening. If this viewpoint is generally upheld, it will certainly be in accord with the interests of Asian nations.

On 25 December 1970 Tass, the Soviet news agency, reported that the Soviet Union and Thailand had signed a trade agreement after three years of hard negotiations. This agreement, which was signed in Bangkok, provided for an

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34 Bangkok World, 8 March 1970.
expansion of direct trade and for a development of economic relations between the two countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. 35 This was the first trade agreement to be signed between the two countries after 1917.

In May 1971 Bunchana Attakhon, Thailand's Minister for Economic Affairs, went to Moscow for further negotiations. He talked with the Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade, Ivan Grishin. Commenting on his mission, he later disclosed that Thailand was importing machines, varied equipment, newsprint, and consumer goods in small quantities from the Soviet Union and that in return the Soviet Union was importing certain traditional Thai products. He also said that in 1970 the trade between the USSR and Thailand was worth 3.4 million roubles, and expressed the hope that it would increase further in 1971. 36

In view of the strategic importance of Thailand in the entire region of Southeast Asia and the compulsions of the Sino-Soviet schism, it is reasonable to expect that the Soviet Union would further strengthen its relations with Thailand. As for the Thais, they would follow their tradition of being on the friendliest possible terms with any Power that may be strong or dominant in the region at any given time, and of improving their relations with that country to

their maximum advantage. During the nineteenth century, when Great Britain was the most powerful nation in the region, they cultivated the British. During the Second World War, when Japan became very strong in the region, they courted the Japanese. In the period following Second World War, when the United States emerged supreme in the region, they became the comrades-in-arms of the Americans in their crusade against communism. Now, if the Soviet Union also increases its influence in the region of Southeast Asia, there is every possibility of Thai-Soviet relations blossoming forth in the same way.

**Thailand and People's China**

China and Thailand had had trade relations from time immemorial. Sino-Thai political relations, too, were good till China became Communist in 1949. Thailand did not recognize the new Communist regime in China for several reasons.

For one thing, Thai military rulers saw in communism a threat to themselves. They were determined to stifle all

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37 P. Mahaviro, Thai Language teacher at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in an interview to the author on 12 March 1975.

38 Ibid.

opposition within the country. They were, also, anxious to ensure that there were no guerrilla activities by the anti-regime elements within the country. Phibun Songgram, therefore, thought it expedient to strengthen ties with the United States. The USA on its part was willing to stop the growth of communism. It was even ready to go to war to save democracy from communism.

Secondly, Phibun had taken a number of anti-Chinese measures during the Second World War, and he was afraid lest the Chinese should retaliate.

Yet another important reason why Phibun was wary of People's China was that the people of Chinese origin in Thailand, though a minority, regarded Thailand as part of China. These people made this clear even at the end of the Second World War. While celebrating in Bangkok the Allied victory over Japan, they hoisted Nationalist Chinese flags over their houses unaccompanied by Thai flags. The Thais resented this. The Government imposed a ban on the flying of flags of other nations without the Thai flag also being flown by their side. The Chinese minority defied the ban. When Thai soldiers and the police attempted to pull down the

40 For motivations in Thai-US relations, see Chapter 2 of the present study.


42 Interviews to the author by Sunthorn Hongladerom, Secretary General of SEATO, 2 May 1974; and by Kramal Tongdhummeshart, Head of the Department of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, and a member of the National Assembly, 24 May 1974.
Chinese flags, they were fired upon. This resulted in fighting between the Thais and the Chinese in the streets of Bangkok. The fighting lasted for three days. The strength of the Chinese minority at that time was 3,000,000. Thailand, therefore, started wondering how it might safeguard its security in the event of China intervening on behalf of the Chinese minority.43 This was one of the motivating factors behind the signing of the Thai-US Economic Assistance Agreement, of 1950, and the Agreement for Military Assistance, also of 1950.

Phibun launched an anti-Communist campaign. His Government put up numerous posters all over the country, characterizing communism as a giant with a torch in his hands setting fire to Buddhist temples, and suggesting that under communism all Buddhist temples would be destroyed. It also sponsored an anti-Communist drama contest, and the plays were broadcast over Radio Thailand. The result of this anti-Communist campaign was that people started fearing communism without knowing what it was. Some got the impression that communism was a giant but one who had, for all his infernal strength, developed a mortal allergy to radio plays.45

43 Kramal Tongdhummachart, American Policy in Southeast Asia, 1945-60, with Special Reference to Thailand, Burma and Indochina (Thesis, Ph.D., Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia, Woodrow Wilson Department of Foreign Affairs, 1961), pp. 204-7.

44 For details, see Chapter 2 of the present study.

45 Kramal Tongdhummachart, n. 43, p. 205.
Thailand reduced the quota of Chinese immigration from 20,000 to 200 a year. In November 1952 it undertook a major round-up of people alleged or suspected to be engaged in a Communist subversive plot. On the external front, it imposed an embargo on all trade with Communist China. 46

People's China retaliated by announcing on 31 January 1953 the establishment of a Thai Autonomous People's Government with its headquarters in Yunnan (Southern China). The objective of this organization was to make Americans, whom it called imperialists, and the special agents of Chiang Kai-shek's "bandit gang". It also sought to strengthen the national defence of the fatherland (Thailand) and construct a new Hsii-Shuang Pan-na (Si Song Panna) area under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, Chairman Mao Tse-tung, and the Central Government of the People's Republic of China. 47

The Chinese province of Yunnan is less than a hundred miles from Northern Thailand. The Thai Government under Phibun was disturbed to learn of the founding of the Thai Autonomous People's Government and dubbed it a Communist-

46 Ibid., pp. 205-11; and Skinner, n. 39, pp. 8-10.

sponsored anti-Thal movement. The Thai Foreign Minister, Prince Wan Waithayakon, warned the Chinese against making use of the people of Chinese origin in Thailand for subversive purposes. He also advised the people of Chinese origin in Thailand to observe the laws of the land and help promote peace and prosperity in the country. Pote Sarasin, then provisional head of the Thai Government, told a news conference on 27 September 1957 that the role played by Communist China in the formation and functioning of the Thai Autonomous People's Government definitely constituted an unfriendly act. Thailand, he declared, would investigate and expose Communist subversive activities. The investigation, according to him, would centre mainly on Communist support for certain Left-wing parties and newspapers.

Radio Peking retaliated by charging Thai authorities on 4 November 1958 with arresting and harassing Chinese settlers under pressure from the United States. It said that this was an unfriendly act towards China. It warned Thailand to stop persecution of the overseas Chinese immediately, release those held in detention, and allow newspaper offices of the Chinese settlers to reopen. It also spoke of the dire consequences that would follow in the event of Thailand's non-compliance with its demands.

49 Liberty (Bangkok), 29 June 1956.
50 Bangkok Post, 28 September 1957.
At this time the Thai Autonomous People's Government was, according to Michael T. Malloy, engaged in (1) securing Chinese infiltration into the poverty-stricken northeastern province with a view to winning over their predominantly Laotian population to the idea of a neutral Laos; (2) carrying on propaganda by means of powerful radio transmitters from within Communist China; and (3) in stirring up minority tribesmen in Thailand's north-western provinces. 52

According to the Thai police, hordes of Communist-indoctrinated tribesmen moved down from China through trackers northern Laos and Burma to spread discontent among the minority communities of Thailand. 53 C.L. Sulzberger reported in the New York Times that the rebels, disguised as itinerant peddlers, went around in Northeastern Thailand distributing cloth and also amusing people with a kind of local calypso called Mor Ram full of sarcastic overtones against the Thai military Government and the United States. 54

Thai Autonomous People's Government had its own radio called the Voice of the People of Thailand. According to Thai sources, this was located at Sipsongpana (Yunan). It carried on relentless propaganda calculated to spread

52 Malloy, n. 47.
53 Ibid.
disaffection among the minority groups of Thailand -- namely, the Meos, the Musers, the Laos, the Vietnamese, the Shans, and the Muslims. The Interior Minister of Thailand, Prapas Charusathien, told newsmen in Bangkok on 19 May 1961 that the Chinese and the North Vietnamese were party to a plot for seizing control of Thailand's northeastern region on the border of Laos. 55 Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat criticized the activities of the Voice of the People of Thailand in November 1962, and said that Thailand had been unfairly accused of all manner of things by those who excelled "in insidious propaganda" aimed at provoking conflict and crisis and paving the way for Communist subversion against the Buddhist religion and the throne. 56

After the death of Sarit Thanarat in 1963, General Thanom Kittikachorn became Prime Minister of Thailand. At a news conference on 11 December 1963 Kittikachorn said that there would be no change in Thailand's domestic and international policies. He also declared that Thailand would continue to remain anti-Communist. 57 Under his orders hundreds of people suspected to be Communists were arrested in Thailand. During 1953-63 more than a thousand were arrested and jailed. 58

55 The Nation (Rangoon), 20 May 1961.
56 Straits Times, 10 November 1962.
57 The Guardian (Rangoon), 13 December 1963.
58 Malloy, n. 47.
By 1964 it became clear that the Thai Autonomous People's Government had been unable to do any specific damage to the military Government of Thailand. The Chinese, therefore, decided to reorganize it. On 22 January 1965 the New China News Agency announced that a new organization called the Thailand Patriotic Front had been set up on 1 January 1965. This Thailand Patriotic Front, which later merged with the Thai Autonomous People's Government under the leadership of Phayome Chalancoit, had a six-point programme:

(i) To "strive for national independence, abolish all unequal treaties signed by Thailand with the U.S. and drive out imperialist troops and aggressive forces out of Thailand;"

(ii) to "overthrow the fascist dictatorial government which is subservient to the U.S. imperialism and establish a government of the patriots and democrats";

(iii) to "pursue a policy of peace and neutrality, with from S.E.A.T.O., cease intervention in the affairs of neighbouring countries, and support their struggle for national independence";

(iv) to "develop national economy, promote agricultural production, help the poor peasants, assist and protect national industry and commerce, restrict foreign capital whose aim is to seize profits from Thailand, and establish an independent and self-reliant economy";

(v) to "improve the people's livelihood and suppress and mete out severe punishment to traitors and bureaucrats who oppress the people"; and

(vi) to "develop education and public health, oppose imperialism's corrupt culture, and
develop a fine national culture.** 59

In February 1965 China's Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, named Thailand his country's next target in its drive to clear Southeast Asia of pro-Western Governments and throw out the Americans. 60 This threat, which was widely discussed by the SEATO Council of Ministers in conference in London in May 1965, made it expedient for Thailand to start a counter-subversion plan on a wide scale. Police parachutist units were formed, and military helicopters assigned the task of patrolling and assisting border guards. The United States Information Service opened five branch agencies in Northeastern Thailand and supplied a portable radio-transmitter. This mobile transmitter was used to broadcast programmes in local languages. Australia, too, supplied radio transmitters which were set up at Khone Kaen and in Bangkok. 61

It was suspected that the 800-mile-long border between Thailand and Laos was the route by which the Chinese Communists infiltrated into Thailand. In every northeastern

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59 A New China News Agency report, 22 January 1965. Also see text in the Straits Times, 6 February 1965; and Karstan Prager, "War Against Thailand", ibid., 30 January 1965.

60 Straits Times, 6 February 1965. Also see excerpts from the NBC "Meet the Press" TV programme on 9 May 1965 in New York in which Thanat Khoman, Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs, was interviewed by an American correspondent. S.E.A.T.O. Record (Bangkok), vol. 4, no. 4, August 1965, p. 5.

61 Sulzberger, n. 54.
province bordering on Laos, therefore, the Thai Government introduced units known as mobile development units (MDU), a joint civilian and military effort. Teams attached to these units visited villagers even in the remotest areas, discussed their problems, and took steps to solve them. They constructed roads, bridges, and schools, and also provided badly needed medical care. They thus made an impact upon rural areas, both psychologically and in terms of material benefits.

On the military side, Thailand gave the highest priority to counter-insurgency measures. It planned a network of roads to link northern and northeastern Thailand so that all parts of the country might be accessible to the Thai security forces throughout the year. It also undertook a programme for the restraining and reequipping of its 6,300-strong border police.

Side by side with these programmes Thailand undertook a massive development campaign. This included a programme called the Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) programme, under which provincial officials were given greater authority and capability in the field of public works, as also in

62 Extracts from a speech by Marshal Green, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, before the Open Forum in Daytona Beach on 14 March 1965. SEATO Record, June 1965, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 41-42.

63 Ibid.
agriculture, health, education etc. The objective of the ARD was to respond to and fulfill village wants and village needs.

On 25 April 1966 Premier Thanom Kittikachorn announced that Thailand had banned all Chinese-language programmes over Radio Thailand in order to prevent the spread of subversive information. Nevertheless there was a steady increase in Communist activity in Thailand. For instance, during 1966, reports started coming in of assassinations of village leaders. There were about ten assassinations a month, excluding police and military casualties. Estimates of the number of hard-core Communists operating as terrorists in Northeastern Thailand ranged from 500 to 1,000. On 23 November 1966, the Minister of Interior, Prapas Charusathien, told the Press that there were three Communist-inspired terrorist bands (each of two hundred men or more in the northeast). These were led by Yot Phatisawat, Choy Latisangh, and

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65 Bangkok Post, 26 April 1966.

Kasem respectively. These leaders were all members of a group of fifty Communists who had been trained in guerrilla warfare in North Vietnam. 67

All these reasons led, on 10 August 1967, to the formation of a new anti-Communist organization called the Free People's League of Thailand (FPLT). It was founded by some prominent lawyers, intellectuals, and retired military officers. The FPLT aimed at (i) teaching the people to venerate the King, to safeguard the nation, to cherish the right of religious worship, and to support the democratic form of government; (ii) acquainting the public with the dangers of Communist doctrines; (iii) promoting close cooperation between peoples of the world in liberating areas subjugated by the Communists; and finally (iv) persuading all countries of the world to support the principles of the United Nations in the interest of establishing everlasting peace. 68

According to an estimate made in September 1968, there were at that time about 3,000 full-time terrorists and nearly 30,000 Communist sympathizers in Thailand. The guerrillas worked in small groups, each consisting of not more than twenty people. 69 On the other hand, the command

67 Ibid.
set up by the Thai Government to combat Communist guerrillas had about 20,000 troops and police and civil service officers in the northeastern region alone. 70

When we consider the total achievements of the Communists in Thailand from 1953 to 1968, we find that they were much less effective in Thailand than in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In the light of the political development in northern and northeastern Thailand, Alan Bennett rightly observes that "the joker in the pack remained the Thai Communist Party--whose history had always been shadowy and its support small, bearing out the government's contention that communism was an alien importation repugnant to the vast majority of the Thai people". 71

In 1969, with the United States seeking for a detente in its relations with China, Thailand was forced to reconsider its relations with its neighbours. On 25 July 1969 President Nixon announced a new doctrine in Guam. He said that the United States would reduce its military commitments in Asia and pledged to end the war in Vietnam and

70 Neilan, ibid. Also see Samora, n. 17.

bring peace to Southeast Asia. This doctrine had far-reaching consequences. In Thailand most of the military leaders were in favour of giving continued support to the United States in the pursuit of its objectives in Indo-China. Some few, however, thought otherwise. These latter included Thanat Khoman, then Foreign Minister, and Seni Premo$, then Leader of the Opposition in Thailand. They felt that Thailand should reconsider its foreign policy in the light of the Nixon Doctrine. Thanat Khoman said in Tokyo that he would like to open a dialogue with Peking and Hanoi. At a Press conference in Bangkok on 14 May 1971 he said that things had changed in the world and that suitable adjustments were called for to guard against the dangers around. He wanted Thailand to open a dialogue with China in order to check Communist insurgency in Thailand. He, however, ruled out full diplomatic relations with China; for the setting up of an Embassy in Bangkok by Communist China entailed the risk of subversive propaganda by that country. Thailand should deal with the Chinese Communists


73 Thanat Khoman, the former Foreign Minister in an interview to the author on 22 March 1974. Also see Chanchal Sarkar's report of an interview he had with Thanat Khoman, Hindustan Times, 25 April 1969.

74 Max Suich, "With China", The Age (Melbourne), 27 February 1969.
on the basis of mutual trust and equality, he said.75

Thanat Khoman was supported by Charoon Sibumruang, President of Thailand's Board of Trade. Charoon Sibumruang said on 5 May 1971 that Thailand should insist on China's buying Thai goods equal in quantity to the Chinese goods imported into Thailand. He was confident that Thailand would stand to gain by its trade with China as it would open up huge market.76

The Leader of the Opposition, Semi Pramoj, also supported the idea of a limited rapprochement with China. He said that Thailand should, in line with the diplomatic changes in the world, recognize Communist China after securing an undertaking from the latter that it would not support insurgency in Thailand.77

As against this, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, Prapas Charusathien, Colonel Narong Kittikachorn, and Pote Sarasin--the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Police Chief, and the Minister in charge of National Development respectively--advocated continuance of the status quo in Thailand's relations with the People's Republic of China. Premier Thanom Kittikachorn said on 23 May 1971 that Thailand would adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude in its approaches


76 Bangkok Post, 6 May 1971.

77 Ibid., 3 June 1971.
for trade with China to ensure that maximum safety prevailed in the attempts to seek better understanding with it.\textsuperscript{78}

Thailand abstained even when the United States supported a resolution in the General Assembly of the United Nations conferring full membership of the world body on the People's Republic of China. However, Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman said that the seating of the representatives from Peking in the United Nations would contribute to a lessening of tensions in the world. Pointing out that the Charter of the United Nations prescribed peaceful co-existence as well as respect for one another's independence and integrity, he said that China's acceptance of the Charter would solve the insurgency problem in Southeast Asia to a great extent.\textsuperscript{79}

There were thus serious differences within the Thai Government over the China issue, between Thanom Kittikachorn, Prapas Charusathien, and Narong Kittikachorn on the one hand and Thanat Khoman, Bunchana Attakhor, and Charoon Sibumruang on the other. This led eventually to a reshuffling of the Cabinet in the interest of the smooth functioning of the Government. The military strongmen thought that if they resorted to an outright dismissal of the Ministers that they

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. Also see Theh Chongkhadikij, "The Policy to Suit Thailand", \textit{Bangkok Post}, 7 August 1971; and Nayan Chanda, "Thailand: An Independent Line", \textit{Far Eastern Economic Review} (Hong Kong), vol. 73, no. 28, 10 July 1971, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{79} Thanat Khoman, n. 75.
did not like, there might be a chain of reactions. For instance, the Parliament and the Press might take the side of the dismissed Ministers and denounce Government policies. They, therefore, staged a coup d’etat on 17 November 1971: the Parliament was dissolved, the Cabinet dismissed, and the Constitution suspended for three years; and all persons, including Thanat Khoman and Bunchana Attakhor, who were opposed to Government policies, were dropped from the Cabinet. Thus, the efforts of Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman to promote a détente in Sino-Thai relations suffered a setback at the end of the year 1971.

Thailand and Japan

On 7 December 1941, when Premier Field Marshal Phibun Songgram was on a tour of the eastern provinces, Japanese troops suddenly entered Thailand and demanded that they be allowed passage through Thailand to other parts of Southeast Asia. The Japanese Ambassador met Deputy Premier Luang Adul and Foreign Minister Nai Direk and made several other demands, too, such as (1) freedom for Japanese troops to march through Thailand; (2) active Thai co-operation in the Japanese war efforts; and (3) alliance with the Axis Powers (namely, Japan, Germany, and Italy). He also threatened Thailand with dire consequences in the event of its failure.

to comply. 81

On his return to Bangkok Phibun Songgram promptly accepted all Japanese demands. In a radio broadcast on 9 December 1941, he justified this action on his part, and said that it was the necessary first step towards insulating the country from danger, the only way through which Thailand could project its independence. He added that Japan had undertaken to withdraw its forces from Thailand in course of time. 82

On 11 December 1941 Thailand and Japan signed an offensive-defensive pact. Under this pact Japan recognized Thailand's title to Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Trengganu, as well as to a part of Burma, Laos, and Cambodia. It also promised to construct the Kra Canal through Southern Thailand and thus carve a short route through the Gulf of Siam to the Indian Ocean. Well pleased with this treaty, the Thais declared war on Britain and the United States on 25 January 1942.

Throughout the period of the war, Japan was the solitary trade partner of Thailand. Thailand devalued the baht


82 Cited by Coast, ibid., p. 18.

83 For details, see the books by Coast, Nicol Smith et al., and Nuechterlein, n. 81. Also see John L. Christian and Nobutake Ike, "Thailand in Japan's Foreign Relations", Pacific Affairs (New York), vol. 15, no. 2, June 1942, pp. 196-204.
However, Japan lost the war and surrendered to the Allies in 1945. This put the Japanese and Thai economies in total disarray. The United States ultimately came to the help of both these countries. It signed an agreement, known as the Economic Assistance Agreement, with Thailand in September 1950. It concluded a similar agreement with Japan in December 1951. It arranged a trade agreement between Japan and Thailand in September 1952. This last agreement laid the foundations of Thai-Japanese trade relations in the period following the Second World War. Under it Thailand exported to Japan rice, castor beans, cotton or kapok seeds, salt, and certain agricultural products; and in return Japan supplied textiles, building materials, rails, and other manufactured goods. Within the framework of the agreement, Thailand also received two large settlements from Japan--$5.7 million in June 1953 and $4.8 million in September 1953. Japan imported rice from Thailand to the extent of 317,500 metric tons in 1950; 336,200 metric tons in 1951; 297,900 metric tons in 1952; 482,800 metric tons in 1953; and 200,000 metric tons in 1954.

85 Ibid.
On 9 July 1955 Thailand and Japan signed yet another agreement in Bangkok. Under this agreement Japan agreed to pay a total of £5,400,000 sterling in cash by way of compensation to Thailand for stationing its forces on Thai territory during the Second World War. It also announced that it would pay £9,600,000 sterling in the form of goods to Thailand.

The Japanese Premier, Nobusuke Kishi, visited Bangkok on 31 May 1957. He announced that Japan would be glad to contribute to Thailand's economic development. He also agreed to set up a joint committee to explore the possibilities of trade between the two countries.

Thereafter Japan practically became the sole destination for Thailand's castor beans, cotton seeds, kapok seeds, salt, hides and skins, iron-ore, and felspar. More than two thirds of Thailand's molasses and sesame went to Japan. Maize was another commodity to be exported to Japan in large quantities: it was found that any amount of it could be sold to animal-food producers there.

In November 1961 Hayato Ikeda, the Japanese Premier, came to Bangkok and held talks with Sarit Thanarat on various trade matters, including the yen problem that had arisen in

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87 Japan Times (Tokyo), 10 July 1955.
88 Times of India (Bombay), 1 June 1957.
89 Suparb Yossundara, "Japan's Role in the Thai Economy", in Yat-Hoong, n. 84, pp. 61-62.
connexion with the treaty of 1955 between the two countries. During the talks it was agreed that Japan should pay 1,000 million yen to Thailand annually for the first seven years and 2,600 million yen during the final year. 90 Premier Sarit openly expressed his happiness over the settlement of the yen problem. Following this agreement, Japan gave the highest priority to the manufacture of textiles and related industries, accounting for 1210 million out of 1309 millions of the registered capital of promoted firms in this category. It must be noted, however, that it was not the practice of Japanese firms to bring in a great amount of equity. Much of the capital was to come in the form of short- and medium-term credit for plant and equipment and raw materials. In the case of textile industries, total investments (Thai and Japanese) were 1,306 millions by 1969. A great portion of that was in the form of credit.92

Other industries which attracted Japanese capital were motor-car and tractor assembling; steel-rolling; iron-transfiguring; electrical appliances (including radio and television sets, electric bulbs, and cables); motor-car tyres and tubes; nylon fishing nets; gourmet powder; galvanized irons; and silos for drying corn. As for activities belonging to the non-promoted category, Japanese involvement embraced such diverse fields as shipping, banking and insurance, restaurants, night clubs, hotels, travel agencies, advertising

90 Japan Times, 30 November 1961.
91 Ibid.
92 Yossundara, n. 84, p. 64.
agencies, construction surveying, wholesale and retail trade, department stores, agriculture (granting credit and distributing seeds to farmers), and mining. The Japanese introduced coloured television stations also in Thailand. 93

Japan entered into several contracts with Thailand. Some of these contracts were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Account (yen)</th>
<th>Disbursed (yen)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 November 1962</td>
<td>Repairs to the generators—Yanhee Dam</td>
<td>8,936,820</td>
<td>8,845,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 November 1962</td>
<td>Purchase of steel piling for building and dam construction</td>
<td>14,335,905</td>
<td>13,396,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 February 1963</td>
<td>Technical services—Nam Phong Hydro-electric project</td>
<td>15,100,000</td>
<td>15,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 March 1963</td>
<td>Electric cables—Metropolitan Electric Authority</td>
<td>1,795,554</td>
<td>1,795,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 May 1963</td>
<td>Synthetic fabric spinning plant—Textile Corporation of Thailand</td>
<td>1,677,744,183</td>
<td>1,297,829,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 October 1963</td>
<td>Fish surveyorship—Fisheries Dept.</td>
<td>257,400,000</td>
<td>257,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 December 1963</td>
<td>Technical services—Nam Phong Hydroelectric project</td>
<td>43,165,000</td>
<td>43,165,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 April 1964</td>
<td>Generators—Nam Phong Hydroelectric project</td>
<td>180,000,000</td>
<td>180,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

93 For details, see ibid., pp. 87–93.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Purpose Description</th>
<th>Account (yen)</th>
<th>Disbursed (yen)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 October 1964</td>
<td>Cargo Ship—Ministry of Communication and Transportation</td>
<td>1,093,608,000</td>
<td>1,093,608,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 December 1964</td>
<td>Railroad track—Ministry of Communication and Transportation</td>
<td>1,948,486,118</td>
<td>1,948,378,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 March 1965</td>
<td>Railroad passenger cars—Ministry of Communication and Transportation</td>
<td>218,353,144</td>
<td>218,353,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 August 1965</td>
<td>Railroad petroleum tank cars—Ministry of Communication and Transportation</td>
<td>193,730,040</td>
<td>193,730,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 March 1967</td>
<td>Railroad passenger cars—Ministry of Communication and Transportation</td>
<td>210,221,208</td>
<td>189,199,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 September 1967</td>
<td>Technical services—Lam Dom Noi Hydroelectric project</td>
<td>29,636,000</td>
<td>29,636,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 June 1968</td>
<td>Automobiles and spare parts—Ministry of Communication and Transportation</td>
<td>21,664,972</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 September 1968</td>
<td>Technical services—Lam Dom Noi Hydroelectric project</td>
<td>68,459,000</td>
<td>19,500,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 5,982,640,945 5,509,941,824

Thailand imported from Japan 88 per cent of its requirements of synthetic yarn; 77 per cent of its requirements of cotton yarn; 53 per cent of its requirements of cotton textiles; 70 per cent of its requirements of passenger cars and motor cycles; 55 per cent of its requirements of lorries and trucks; 33 per cent of its requirements of tractors and spare parts; and 68 per cent of its requirements of electrical appliances. Japan topped the list in respect of Thailand's motor-car imports also. 94

No wonder, then, that Thailand soon developed a trade deficit. Though it was only $43.3 million in 1960, it rose to $268 million in 1967. During the visit of the Japanese Premier, Eisaku Sato, to Bangkok on 20 September 1967, Thanom Kittikachorn pleaded with him to rectify the trade imbalance. He also requested the Japanese Premier to buy more Thai goods. In the joint communiqué issued at the end of their talks the two Prime Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the state of Thai-Japanese relations. The Japanese Premier said that he appreciated the active role of Thailand in the promotion of such regional organizations as the Association for Pacific and Asian Council (ASPAC) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). 95

On 13 January 1968 Thailand and Japan signed an agreement in Tokyo providing for a Japanese credit of yen

94 Yossundara, n. 89, pp. 61-64.
95 For details, see Japan Times, 21 September 1967.
21,600 to Thailand, redeemable in fifteen to eighteen years, including a five-year period of deferment, at an annual rate of interest of 5.7 per cent.

Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn visited Japan in May-June 1968. The joint communique issued at the end of his visit noted with great satisfaction the strong tendency towards effective co-operation among the countries of the region and recognized the advantages of constructive collaboration on the basis of equal partnership and mutual benefit. However, the visit did not help correct the trade imbalance in Thai-Japanese trade. (Thailand's trade deficit was now $250 million.)

In 1963 the Bangkok Co-operative Farm Product Marketing Society (COPRODUCT) undertook the task of arranging for much-needed agricultural inputs. It decided to establish a company called the T.J. Chemicals Company, a Baht 5 million joint venture for the manufacture of agricultural chemicals near the Paknam warehouse in Bangkok. It also built a showroom in Bangkok to display the goods imported from Japan.

By 1970 Japan became the biggest trade partner of Thailand and the source of 35 per cent of Thailand's total imports. It became the main market for Thailand's exports.

96 Ibid., 14 January 1968.
97 Ibid., 23 May and 23 June 1968.
too, and accounted for 21 per cent of total Thai exports. On the Japanese side, Thailand accounted for less than 3 per cent of its exports and a little over one per cent of its imports. According to Japanese export licence statistics, suppliers credit to Thailand in the Fiscal Year April 1969—March 1970 amounted to US $95,781,000 (¥1,915,620,000), including (US) $4,766,000 (¥95,320,000) for vessels; (US) $29,629,000 (¥532,580,000) for textile machinery; (US) $3,685,000 (¥73,700,000) for electronic machinery; and (US) $452,000 (¥9,040,000) for communication machinery. The trade deficit now stood at (US) $260 million.

As time passed, the Thais discovered many problems in their relations with Japan. For instance, though 95 per cent of the Japanese firms located in Thailand by 1971 were joint Thai-Japanese ventures and thousands of Thais were employed in them, the top officials were invariably Japanese. These Japanese officials received salaries almost eight times higher than those paid in Tokyo for similar work. They were also provided with swimming-pools and large gardens and a number of luxuries which only the highest executives in


101 Bangkok Post, 29 April 1971.

102 Sambandan, n. 98.
Japan could afford in Tokyo; and they held elaborate dinner parties, always with an army of Thai servants in attendance. They had their own stores for their requirements of grocery, etc., like the Daimaru Department Store, which was well-stocked always with the latest gadgets from Tokyo. The Japanese children attended their own exclusive school built specially for them on the site of the old embassy. 103

Japanese tourists in Thailand, too, exclusively patronized Japan Airlines, stayed only in Japanese hotels, visited only Japanese restaurants and Japanese night clubs, and employed only Japanese guides. They deposited their money only in Japanese banks, affected superior airs, and never cared to mix with the Thais. 104

The Economic Affairs Minister, Bunchana Attakhor, alleged in 1970 that whenever a Japanese national came to Thailand, he was met at the airport by a Japanese tour guide, and that the tourist traffic from Japan brought no profit to Thailand at all. 105


104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.
Another reason for tension in Thai-Japan relations was that the manufactures turned out by Thai-Japanese ventures invariably carried the label *Made in Japan*. The injustice of it hurt the Thais. Japanese businessmen complained that the Thais were very lazy; and the Thais charged the Japanese executives with being too demanding and socially clannish. The Japanese executives employed the most modern commercial and industrial techniques. According to the *Topical Reports* they try never to appear to be hustling for business. Adaptable and resourceful, they find many routes around the complex tariff barriers erected by the Thai Government anxious to limit imports. For instance, when the Thais restricted the resident visas for foreigners to 200 a year for one country, the Japanese businessmen began flying from Bangkok to Laos every three months to renew their visas as tourists.\(^{107}\)

The Japanese partners in the joint ventures with Thailand were criticized not only for controlling the whole management but also for Japanizing the Thai economy completely and for making the latter a mere appendage of Japan's giant economy.\(^{108}\) The Thais felt that the Japanese never cared to export the products of the joint ventures to third countries.


\(^{107}\) Ibid. This was confirmed to the author by the former Economic Affairs Minister, Bunchana Attakhor, in an interview on 25 May 1974.

\(^{108}\) *Times of India* (New Delhi), 6 December 1972.
They sold them only in Thailand, their purpose being to keep Thailand wholly out of foreign markets.\(^{109}\)

Thai anger finally erupted in the winter of 1972. The National Students' Centre of Thailand, the only student organization at that time, held a ten-day demonstration in Bangkok and called for a boycott of Japanese goods in Thailand. This demonstration was aimed at relaxing the Japanese hold on the Thai economy.\(^ {110}\) Though Thailand was under military rule at that time, this demonstration was allowed to be held, and it made an immediate impact. Japan decided to untie its aid to developing countries and expressed its readiness to untie the $200 million credit it had granted to Thailand in June 1972. A White Paper on aid issued by the Government of Japan during the Thai student demonstration promised fundamental improvements in the quality of Japanese aid.\(^ {111}\) All the same, the Thais realize that they need to be more vigilant in their relations with Japanese business magnates and protect their national interests from erosion.

\(^{109}\) Ibid.

\(^{110}\) Norman Peagam, "Thailand Out of the Shell", Far Eastern Economic Review, vol. 80, no. 21, 28 May 1973, p. 13; and The Statesman (New Delhi), 6 December 1972. This factor was also explained to the author by Thirayudh Boonmee, the head of the National Students' Centre of Thailand at that time, in an interview on 18 April 1974.

\(^{111}\) Times of India (New Delhi), 6 December 1972.