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ANALYSIS BRANCH

TO : Department of State

INFO: DJAKARTA, HONG KONG, KATHMANDU, MOSCOW, NEW DELHI, TAIPEI, VIENTIANE.

DATE: April 28, 1970

FROM : Amembassy BANGKOK

SUBJECT : Miscellaneous Remarks by Foreign Minister Thanat.

REF :

Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman spoke to a U.S. National War College group April 24. He covered a wide variety of subjects including the general situation in Southeast Asia, the proposed "Asian Front" (reported separately in Bangkok 4975), Thai-Soviet relations, Thai-Communist China relations, and SEATO. Thanat's remarks are enclosed.

Action assigned to IB

Action Taken Wkf

UNGER

Date of Action 5/9/70

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Enclosure:
1. Comments by Foreign Minister Thanat to the National War College group.

GROUP 4 - Downgraded at three-year intervals. Declassified 12 years after date of origin.

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COMMENTS BY FOREIGN MINISTER THANAT TO THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE GROUP, APRIL 24, 1970

General Situation in Southeast Asia

Some Americans have said that the war in Vietnam is a civil war, but the fighting in Cambodia and Laos has little to do with civil war. It is a classic war of colonial conquest.

The problem we are faced with there on the one hand is an attack from the Communists, and on the other hand actions and propaganda from various countries which are friendly, but which have within them elements which seek to undermine the freedom and independence of nations in Southeast Asia.

"Paramountcy" has been put forward by one of your politicians who suggested that North Vietnam should become the paramount power in Indochina. What does that mean? It means that such a person is working with the other side to bring about the subjugation of Laos and Cambodia. The only difference is that instead of guns they are using words to support the paramountcy of the North Vietnamese. This is a new factor which adds to the difficulty of Southeast Asian nations which face both the enemy and antagonistic elements within friendly ranks.

This is the new reality of life in this area. This is why the nations of Southeast Asia realize that the only force they can rely on is their own. This is why there is a new trend toward forging a new system, toward working together to prevent the area from being taken over by the Communists. This is the motivation for the formation of the "Asian Front" or "Asian Forum" to meet and discuss how the countries of the area can remain free.

In the case of Thailand we have proposed this line of action for a long time. We feel that the responsibility for defense of our country should lie primarily on the shoulders of the Thai people. We have never asked any country to send troops to defend Thailand. The American troops here are not fighting in Thailand. They have not and will not be engaged in the struggle against the Communists in Thailand. They are here only to fight the Vietnam war.

We see eye to eye with President Nixon. The Nixon doctrine coincides exactly with our ideas. The only thing we ask is that you try not to undermine our efforts, that you do not join with the enemy to hamper our efforts so that we do not have to face another front from within the friendly ranks.

QUESTIONS

The Proposed "Asian Front"

Question: Concerning membership in the Asian Front.
Thanat: I understand from Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik that South Vietnam will be invited to attend the meeting. We are now debating whether or not an

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invitation will be sent to North Vietnam, but I have no illusion that the North Vietnamese will participate even if invited. We have asked Japan to participate. Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik talked with the Indians and we understand according to reports that India will take part.

Question: Concerning the role of the Asian Front.
Thanat: The purpose is to see what can be done to deter the Communists from escalating the fighting in Cambodia and Laos and from taking over Cambodia and Laos. The situation in Vietnam is much more complicated and difficult. Therefore, we propose to take up first the less difficult matter of Cambodia, and then if we meet with success on Cambodia and Laos we would be emboldened to try to deal with Vietnam.

Question: How would the Asian Front be able to influence North Vietnam?
Thanat: We hope that by joining together we can exert certain moral pressure and make them realize that the nations of the area are against the conquest of Cambodia and Laos, and make them realize that they may incur the ostracism of nations in this part of the world.

We may appeal jointly to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference who in our opinion have been too complacent and delinquent with regard to their responsibilities, especially the Soviet Union which has refused to join with the United Kingdom in calling for consultations.

We may go jointly to the United Nations, and within the U.N. forum express the views of our countries. We will represent five, six, maybe ten countries - three or four hundred million people. If India is included the total would be close to one billion people, which is quite a sizable group. We may ask the President of the Security Council to call a special meeting to discuss the threat to peace in Cambodia and Laos.

Also we will perhaps discuss what other actions might be taken.

Question: Would it be useful to separate the Cambodian and Laotian questions?
Thanat: It is very difficult to separate the question of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. They are closely inter-related but because nations are more inclined to deal with the question of Cambodia we will do that first.

Thai-Soviet Relations

Question: What do you see as the future of Thai-Soviet relations and the future of Soviet influence in Southeast Asia?
Thanat: Thai-Soviet relations have been correct but not very warm. We have made it clear to them that we do not approve the expansion of their ideology in this part of the world, but that does not mean they are not trying. There have been increased contacts between Thailand and the Soviet Union recently. We have been negotiating for 10 years on a trade agreement and finally concluded one last month, but it is not yet ratified. We are also about to begin negotiations for an air agreement.

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Thai-Communist China Relations

Question: Concerning Thai contacts with Communist China.
Thanat: Last year I said that we would be willing to meet with the Chinese Communists for discussions leading toward peaceful coexistence. I did this to show that we are not the enemy of the Chinese people, but so far there has been no response. India, Indonesia and other nations too are willing to talk with the Chinese but they have had no response from Peking. The latest attempts were made during the wedding celebrations of the Crown Prince of Nepal when a number of nations sent high ranking representatives to Kathmandu in the hope that they would be able to talk with the Chinese Communists, but Chinese representatives said that they had not been instructed to talk with anybody.

Question: About the Chinese road in Laos.
Thanat: I do not expect the Chinese to use the road to bring in gifts. Probably they will transport AK-47s, hand grenades and propaganda material. The road is not necessary, however. They could use footpaths just as they have done in Laos and Vietnam. Even the Americans, especially the U.S. Air Force, have kept clear of the road, so we just have to let the Chinese go ahead and complete it.

SEATO

Question: Concerning the value of SEATO.
Thanat: For many years I have had no illusions about the value of SEATO, but since there is nothing better we had better keep it. It is difficult for SEATO to be effective because its membership is so heterogeneous. The same goes for the United Nations.

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