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FILE DESIGNATION

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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TO : Amembassy BANGKOK

INFO : CHIANG MAI, SONGKHLA, Department of State

E.O. : 11652: NA

TAGS : PINT, TH

FROM : Amconsul UDORN

DATE: November 28, 1973

SUBJECT : Audience Bored by Student Leader's Dissertation on Democracy

REF :

Thai

1973 DEC 12 AM 9 34

SUMMARY: Seksan Prasertkun, a leader of the students who brought about the overthrow of the Thanom government, recently came to Udorn to speak in public about the meaning of democracy in Thailand. His audience, which consisted mainly of high school students, was disappointed that he talked mostly about how to improve the government in the future rather than about the details of the recent fighting in Bangkok.

When asked whether it was time to chase the U.S. military out of Thailand, Seksan, a former American Field Service student, declined to answer.

Following is the report of Consulate Political Assistant Pongkaset Suwannakoon who was in the audience which heard Seksan speak. END SUMMARY.

The newly established Udorn chapter of the National Vocational Students Center arranged for Seksan Prasertkun and two of the lesser known committee members of the National Student Center of Thailand to talk to the public in Udorn on the afternoon of November 23, 1973.

Action assigned to: EA/TB

Action Taken: noted

Date of Action: 12/14/73

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Pongkaset Suwannakoon	11/28/73	2888	Jere Brown-Kahn, Consul

Clearances:

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The meeting took place at the Thung Sri Muang Park in the middle of town. The admission was 1 ฿ for students and 2 ฿ for townspeople. Approximately 2000 people attended the gathering. About 90 per cent of the audience consisted of secondary and vocational students. Government officials seen at the Thung Sri Muang were Police Lt. Col. Virawat Mukdasanit of the Special Branch and 2-3 of his men, about 5 public prosecutors, about 10 lawyers, and about 10 traffic policemen. There was no sign of students from Udorn Teachers College.

The first two speakers told the audience about the problems which led to the fight resulting in the change of government. They cited the Thung Yai Expedition, the killing of the VDC in Roi-et, and the arrest of 13 citizens. The first speaker also gave the audience a brief account of what had happened on October 13-14 in Bangkok.

About five minutes after the second speaker began to talk, about 500 students left. When asked why they left so soon, one of them told me that he had thought that the speakers were going to talk about the details of the dramatic fighting between the students and soldiers and not about the problems of the country. He said he was very disappointed. I also overheard a discussion among some teachers who said that the speeches were not suitable for the student audience.

Seksan himself spoke very well for about two hours. He urged the people to help change the unjust system,particularly corruption in the government, and to help protect freedom and democracy.

At the end, Seksan answered about 20 questions put to him, one of which was "Is it time to chase the Americans out of Thailand?" Seksan responded that he wasn't in a position to answer. (An unidentified teacher was overheard telling a friend that Seksan was a former AFS Student).

The students probably did not comprehend fully what Seksan tried to say. They remained through the whole speech, however, because Seksan was a good speaker with a sense of humor. The townspeople, other than the government officials and lawyers, also probably went to the meeting thinking they would hear about the fighting on October 14-15 rather than speeches about democracy.

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All in all, the speeches were not very successful. Most of the students and townspeople went to the meeting just to see the national student hero.

After about four hours of speeches, the meeting broke up. That night a movie about the incidents of October 14-15 was shown at Thung Sri Muang.

BROH -KAHN

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