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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

Pol, Thai-US

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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Action assigned to EB

Action Taken dated

FROM : AmEmbassy BANGKOK Date of Action 17 DATE: February 10, 1970

SUBJECT : Foreign Minister Criticizes United States

REF : A. Bangkok A-47

B. Bangkok 1332

Name of Officer pol / Thai - US

1970 FEB 17 AM 7 DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman gave an interview February 2 to a selected group of newsmen representing Bangkok's English and Chinese-language press (excerpt from transcript enclosed). The interview began with an attempt by Thanat to refute statements made by Ambassador Unger in his January 21 speech to the American Chamber of Commerce (Ref A), and to establish that Americans in Thailand receive better treatment than do Thais in the United States. The following are specific statements Thanat made to prove his case:

a) Americans are allowed to visit Thailand for fifteen days without a visa, whereas Thais are allowed only ten days in the United States;

b) "Americans can own land in Thailand after applying for and receiving a permit", whereas Thais can own land in the United States "only in some but not all states";

c) American banks can establish branches in Thailand, whereas the reverse is not true for some states of the United States;

d) Americans may practice law in Thailand, "but go and see whether or not Thais are allowed to practice law in the United States."

There are elements of truth in these examples given by Thanat, but each is a complicated issue, and Thanat's simplistic presentation was obviously not intended to facilitate objective understanding of the situation.

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FORM 4-62 DS-323

Drafted by: POL:DCFerguson:rs

Contents and Classification Approved by: POL:WCHamilton

Clearances: ECON:DCramer

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In addition to presenting his own views, Thanat expressed his approval of MP Phaitoon Kruekaew's attack on the Ambassador's speech (Ref B). Thanat expressed regret that other Thais had not spoken up on the subject, and appealed to them to express their views (i.e., objections) of the Ambassador's speech.

To date there has been limited response to Thanat's call for support. His remarks were reported February 3 by the Bangkok World and three Chinese-language papers (the four papers which had been invited to send reporters), and on February 4 by several Thai-language papers (the latter apparently publishing the reports second-hand).

The Thai Daily February 5 published an undistinguished statement attributed to the Naew Prachathipatai Party, criticizing the Ambassador's speech, and the Naewna Daily News published a somewhat more thoughtful column February 4, in which it claimed that complete reciprocity with respect to purchase of land would in practice benefit Americans in Thailand much more than Thais in the United States.

Comment: The invitation to the English-language Bangkok World, and lack of invitations to Thai-language papers, would suggest that Thanat's statements were directed more at American readers than Thai. But that would seem to be inconsistent with his appeal to Thais to express their "opinions". We are unable to judge how seriously he meant the appeal, but he has at least created a record that is defensible to his own people.

UNGER

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FOREIGN MINISTER THANAT KHOMAN'S NEWS CONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 2, 1970

REPORTER: I feel that an address delivered by the American Ambassador recently has repercussions on the Thai people.

THANAT: It is up to Thais who feel the repercussions to express their views. That is the best way. The Ministry has already taken suitable moves but the Thai people do not dare to express their views. When something has repercussions on their feelings, it is much to be deplored that we Thais do not... It appears as if they are not performing their duties in full.

There are many matters stated that are not factual, especially regarding visas. This can be seen clearly because we allow Americans to come to Thailand and stay here with no need for a visa for as long as fifteen days, but Thais who go to America can stay there for only ten days. It can be seen clearly which side is in an advantageous position. The fact that Thais are able to stay in the United States as non-immigrants for a longer time than other people, because they do not belong to the category of immigrants, is a matter concerning the Immigration Division of the Ministry of Interior. During Vice President Agnew's visit here he brought this subject up for discussion. The Thai government, especially the Prime Minister, informed him that the matter is under consideration in order to remedy it and provide greater facilities. The matter is being studied by the Immigration Division and we are not overlooking it.

Regarding ownership of land, it is a fact that Americans can own land in Thailand after applying for and receiving a permit. The law governing aliens specifies that an application must be made for a permit. In regard to the Ambassador's statement that Thais can own land in America, this is true for only some but not all states; some states will not allow foreigners to own land.

There are many other examples that could be cited showing inequality. For instance, American banks can establish branches in Thailand, but some states in America do not allow aliens or Thais to establish branches, such as California for example.

Aliens can practice law in Thailand, and there are many aliens, especially Americans, who are practicing law here. But go and see whether or not Thais are allowed to practice law in the United States. There are many other

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examples that could be cited showing what is called mathematical equality, or in other words the equality that ought to exist. But there is not sufficient time to mention them so only some can be mentioned...

All Thais should express their views, but I don't know why nobody is. In the end the Minister of Foreign Affairs becomes the target of attack. I am not the 35 million Thai people. I am only one Thai among the 35 million Thais. There is one person, however, and he is Khun Phaithoon. The views he expressed are correct and I am of the same view. He is a Thai who makes statements that have logical reasons. But what about other Thais?

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