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17/19

Oct 38

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

December 12, 1938.

JWB

MMH

Bangkok's monthly report for October states that preparations for November elections to Peoples Assembly were creating little if any excitement; that 13 ships of war were commissioned in the Siamese navy Oct 5 (page 3); that a second construction program has been adopted, including two vessels allegedly to be built in Italy; that the man responsible for the building up of the navy has now been made Minister Commander-in-Chief of the navy; that there were rumors of an impending coup d'etat, which proved false, as result of the sudden and quiet banishment on a pension of the Minister of Lands and Agriculture who had been a prominent member of the original revolutionary committee (page 4); that there is reason to believe Japan's share in Siam's trade is decreasing, presumably as result of boycott activities; that efforts are being made to decrease influx of Chinese immigrants (page 11); that illicit opium trade is flourishing.

FE: Salisbury

THE

AMERICA

19, 1938.

ADVISER ON POLITICAL RELATIONS MR. HORNBECK DEC 16 1938 DEPARTMENT OF STATE

LEGAL ADVISER JAN 17 1939 DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Division of FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS DEC 10 1938 Department of State

JAN 13 1939

Yes No

OFFICE OF THE ADVISER ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS JAN 16 1939 DEPARTMENT OF STATE

892.00 P.R./115

Sir:

Edwin L. Neville

1/ I have the honor to transmit herewith the Political Report of the Legation for the month of October 1938.

American Legation,

Bangkok, Siam.

Respectfully yours,

Date of compl Edwin L. Neville, 1938.

Date of mailing Edwin L. Neville

(air ma American Minister, 1938.

FILED JAN 15 1939

Enclosure:

1. Political Report.

800-Siam

ELN/tse

F/A

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LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Bangkok, November 19, 1938.

90

No. 289

Subject: Political Report for October.

By Air Mail

ADVISER ON POLITICAL RELATIONS
MR. HORNBECK
DEC 16 1938
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

LEGAL ADVISER
JAN 17 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Division of
FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS
DEC 10 1938
Department of State

Excerpts for ONI pages 3-4, +5 as marked - Excerpt for MID, page 12, as marked - JB

JAN 13 1939

For Distribution Check
State
War
Navy
Yes
No

892.00 P.R./115

RECEIVED
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DIVISION OF
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AND RECORDS

DIVISION OF
TRADE AGREEMENTS
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JAN 17 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OFFICE OF THE ADVISER ON
INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
JAN 16 1939
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-M/C
DEC 17 1938

POLITICAL REPORT OCTOBER 1938

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

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Bangkok Monthly Political Report, October, 1938.

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China..... 2

III. INTERNAL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES:

The King..... 3
General Elections..... 3
Siamese Naval Vessels..... 3
Resignation of Minister of Lands and Agriculture..... 4
Commander-in-Chief of the Siamese Navy..... 5
Censorship..... 5

IV. COURSE OF LEGISLATION..... NIL

V. GOVERNMENT FINANCE:

Currency Reserve..... 7
Treasury Balance..... 7

VI. GENERAL ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CONDITIONS:

Trade of the Port of Bangkok..... 8

VII. ACTIVITIES OF AMERICAN COMMERCIAL INTERESTS.... NIL

VIII. ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN COMMERCIAL INTERESTS:

Japan..... 9

IX. EMIGRATION AND LABOR MATTERS:

Immigration Head Tax..... 11
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Air Raid Precautions..... 12
Youth Training by the Army..... 12
Opium..... 12
Floods..... 13
Short Wave broadcasting..... 13

POLITICAL REPORT
OCTOBER, 1938

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Edwin L. Neville
American Minister

American Legation,
Bangkok, Siam.

Date of completion: November 21, 1938

Date of mailing: November 23, 1938 (air mail)

* * *

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Bangkok Monthly Political Report, October, 1938.

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* * *

The arrival of Siamese Naval vessels built in Japan will be referred to in a later section of this report.

Mr. S. Takase, Japanese Consul General, arrived from Liverpool

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I. POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES.

Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Siam.

The Ratifications of the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Siam, concluded November 13, 1937, were exchanged October 1. The treaty became effective on that date, and telegrams of felicitation were exchanged between the Acting Secretary of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. (Please refer to despatch No. 269, October 4, 1938.)

II. POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES.

Japan

A Japanese trade promotion committee, headed by Mr. Chonosuke Yada, former Japanese Minister to Siam, arrived in Bangkok on October 18, in the course of a world tour of investigation and remained several days. On his departure Mr. Yada was interviewed by representatives of the press in British Malaya and was quoted as stating among other things, that Japanese trade with Siam was growing rapidly, that Japan supplies nearly 50% of the imports into Siam (the actual percentage is under 30), and that feeling still exists in Siam against French Indo-china for the loss of Cambodia on the frontier. The latter statement is a matter of opinion, but Japanese trade, as a matter of fact, has been decreasing during the past year. It would be interesting to learn how accurately Mr. Yada's remarks were quoted.

The arrival of Siamese Naval vessels built in Japan will be referred to in a later section of this report.

Mr. S. Takase, Japanese Consul General, arrived from Liverpool

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Liverpool to take the place of Mr. T. Itoh, who has left Bangkok for Tokyo.

The King of Siam, whose pending visit to his country was referred to in the Political Report of the Legation for September, sailed from Marseilles on October 15, and is expected to arrive in Bangkok on November 15. The King has been residing in Switzerland for study and reasons of health, and it is understood that he will return there after a visit in Siam of three months at most.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

A police raid on several Chinese houses was carried out in Bangkok on October 8, when about thirty Chinese were taken into custody, apparently on a charge of being concerned in the formation of secret societies and fomenting armed disorders. Presumably these persons were also suspected of being affiliated with the persons arrested in September in connection with the suppression of boycott activities. (Please refer to Political Report for September 1938, page 3.) It is reported that the Government will deport Chinese engaged in violent boycott activities.

It is reported from Bangkok that the Government will deport Chinese engaged in violent boycott activities on the part of hopeful candidates. There are 91 members of the Assembly to be elected, and according to press reports there were 424 candidates for office. At the election in November, 1937, there were reported to be 556 candidates in the running. The decrease is said to be due to the unwillingness or financial inability of men to run for office two years in succession. In any event the election activities have not caused much excitement.

Siamese Naval Vessels

Thirteen ships of war were commissioned in the Siamese Navy in a colorful ceremony on October 5 at Bangkok. The ships commissioned included seven destroyers, two mine layers, two convoy ships and a coast guard vessel, in addition to H.M.S. Dhonburi, a gunboat built in Japan, whose displacement is said to be 2,350 tons, length 77 meters, speed, 15.4 knots, engines, two M.A.N. Diesel, developing 2400 horse power. Armament is reported to consist of four guns of two hundred millimeters, four anti-aircraft guns of

seventy

893.24

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

II. INTERNAL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.

The King.

H. M. The King of Siam, whose pending visit to his country was referred to in the Political Report of the Legation for September, sailed from Marseilles on October 18, and is expected to arrive in Bangkok on November 15. The King has been residing in Switzerland for study and reasons of health, and it is understood that he will return there after a visit in Siam of three months at most.

General Elections

The General elections made necessary by the dissolution of the Peoples Assembly were fixed for November 12, and the month of October was devoted to electioneering activities on the part of hopeful candidates. There are 91 members of the Assembly to be elected, and according to press reports there were 424 candidates for office. At the election in November, 1937, there were reported to be 556 candidates in the running. The decrease is said to be due to the unwillingness or financial inability of men to run for office two years in succession. In any event the electioneering activities have not caused much excitement.

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please refer to Political Report from the Legation for January 1937) was one of the men involved in the Crown Lands scandal, as a result of which he was excluded from the cabinet. He was reappointed Minister of Lands and Agriculture, however, and the matter seemed to have blown over. Recently, it is stated, differences of opinion arose between him and other members of the cabinet which led to serious [illegible]

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seventy five millimeters and two pairs of quick firing guns of twenty millimeters. This vessel, with its sister-ship H.M.S. Sri Ayuthaya (please refer to Legation's Political Reports for July and September last) were built in Japan. It is reported in the press that the contract for two new war vessels for Siam was signed at the end of September of this year to be built in Italy. These new vessels are said to be the first step in the second construction program adopted. Work on these two ships is expected to begin in November, and will be completed in about three years. Armament, it is stated, will be purchased from a Swedish company. The Legation is not in a position to report on the effectiveness of the ships of the Siamese Navy nor on the efficiency of its personnel.

Resignation of Minister of Lands and Agriculture

The newspapers of October 1 reported that the Minister of Lands and Agriculture, Colonel Phya Riddhi Aganey, had resigned, and that the Minister of Defence, Luang Pibul Songgram, would take over the duties of that office for the time being, pending the appointment of a successor. Apparently this unpretentious announcement was the decided understatement of what happened. Phya Riddhi Aganey (please refer to Political Report from the Legation for January 1937) was one of the men involved in the Crown Lands scandal, as a result of which he was excluded from the cabinet. He was reappointed Minister of Lands and Agriculture, however, and the matter seemed to have blown over. Recently, it is stated, differences of opinion arose between him and other members of the Cabinet which became so serious that of the Government and National Assembly. The court rejected

Censorship

The Appeal Court has sustained a conviction of an editor, one Sub-lieutenant Buey Kunyarastanbhandhu, editor of Siam Rasdr daily news, who had been sentenced to one year's imprisonment by the lower court for publishing an article allegedly libellous and injurious to the prestige the

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the Prime Minister asked for his resignation. He was replaced on the retired list, with a pension, and was escorted to the Malaya border by a Police guard. This somewhat summary method of dealing with a Cabinet Minister who had been a prominent member of the original revolutionary committee gave rise to a number of alarmist rumors of a new plot for a coup d'etat which was to place King Prajadipok back on the throne which found their way into the foreign press in British Malaya and were, it is understood, repeated in the newspapers in Europe and America. There was very little publicity given to the incident in Siam, largely, it is understood, because of the impending elections. Phay Riddhi Aganey is reported to be living quietly at Penang and to have denied, in a press interview, the existence of a conspiracy.

IV. COURSE OF LEGISLATION.

The Assembly was not in session during the month and consequently no new legislation was adopted.

Commander-in-Chief of the Siamese Navy

The announcement was made of the appointment of Luang Sindhu Songgram-jaya to be commander-in-chief of the Navy, from October 24. This person is apparently a glutton for work, as he is also Minister of Public Instruction and Chief of the General Staff of the Navy, besides being a member of the Peoples' Assembly. He is said to be the person most responsible for the construction program of the Navy.

Censorship

The Appeal Court has sustained a conviction of an editor, one Sub-lieutenant Buey Bunyaratanbhandhu, editor of Siam Rasdr daily news, who had been sentenced to one year's imprisonment by the lower court for publishing an article allegedly libellous and injurious to the prestige of the Government and National Assembly. The court rejected

F/A

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jected the plea that the article was intended for public enlightenment, and apparently upheld the principle that prosecutions will lie against an editor who villifies the Government and the legislature.

IV. COURSE OF LEGISLATION.

The Assembly was not in session during the month and consequently no new legislation was adopted.

V. GOVERNMENT FINANCE.

Currency Reserve

The Siamese Currency Reserve at the end of October was published in the Official Gazette of November 14 as follows:

	Baht
1. Sterling securities:	
(a) of more than one year maturity	13,573,749
(b) others.	49,500,000
2. Cash at call	61,807,223
3. Silver Baht coins	43,372,064
Grand total	168,253,036
Currency notes in circulation	167,832,498

Treasury Balance

The Treasury Balance on September 30th, as given in the Government Gazette of October 30, stood as follows:

	Baht	Compared with the end of August 1938.
In Siam	18,663,028	Plus 1,288,056
Abroad	37,999,084	Plus 1,171,393
Total	56,662,112	Increase 2,459,449

The total balance on hand at the end of September 1938, is less by Baht 5,555,305 than the amount on hand on the same date in 1937.

VI.

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Bangkok Monthly Political Report, October 1938.

842.51

V. GOVERNMENT FINANCE.
VI. GENERAL ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CONDITIONS.

Currency Reserve

The Siamese Currency Reserve at the end of October was published in the Official Gazette of November 14, as follows:

(a)	of more than one year's maturity, inclusive	13,576,749
	" 69,601,639	56,129,368
(b)	others.	49,500,000
2. Cash at call	" 90,784,633	61,803,223,073
3. Silver baht coins		43,372,064
Grand total		168,256,036
Currency notes in circulation		147,832,498

Treasury Balance

The Treasury Balance on September 30th, as given in the Government Gazette of October 30, stood as follows:

	Oct., 1938	Oct., 1937	Apr.-Oct., 1938	Apr.-Oct. 1937
	Baht	Baht	Baht	Baht
Rice	7,623,708	3,983,330	54,838,387	34,642,802

Trade of the Port of Bangkok

The increased exports of rice in Baht compared with the end of August 1938.

Total value of imports into Siam for the month amounted to 18,663,028 Baht, an increase of 1,288,053 Baht over the same month last year. Exports of rice for the month totalled 37,999,084 Baht, an increase of 1,171,396 Baht over the same month last year.

Total 56,662,112 Increase 2,459,449

VII. ACTIVITIES OF AMERICAN COMMERCAIL INTERESTS.

The total balance on hand at the end of September 1938, is less by Baht 5,555,305 than the amount on hand on the same date in 1937.

VIII.

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Bangkok Monthly Political Report, October 1938.

VIII. ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN COMMERCIAL INTERESTS.
VI. GENERAL ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CONDITIONS.

CONFIDENTIAL

Trade of the Port of Bangkok

Japan

The Legation has been given October 1938 October 1937
compila Imports, by values Baht 10,539,110 Port of 8,006,345
(which Exports, to about 90% of the 3,661,957 trade of 6,324,292
country Imports, April- of a year and a half as follows:

PORT OF BANGKOK	October, inclusive B.E. 2480	59,601,639 cs. B.E. 2480	56,129,368 B.E. 2481
	Exports, April-October, inclusive	(Apr. 1937-Oct. 1937)	(Oct. 1937-Mar. 1937)	Apr. 1938-Sept. 1938)
Total duty rece from goods coll on specific rates.	Baht 11,329,689.36	Baht 90,784,523 11,223,133.84	53,775,073 10,587,045.72
Total As usual, the export of rice was the largest single item of trade, as indicated in the following table:			1,801,678.43

	Oct., 1938	Oct., 1937	Apr.-Oct. 1938.	Apr.-Oct. 1937
	Baht	Baht	Baht	Baht
Rice	7,623,708	3,983,350	54,838,387	34,642,802
Total value of imports from Japan	12,089,858	10,009,895	7,433,940
The increased exports of rice have enabled the people to increase their imports, and the totals of both countries	48,123,023	47,427,746	49,062,529
and exports show a decided increase over the figures of a year ago.			

PORT OF BANGKOK

VII. ACTIVITIES OF AMERICAN COMMERCAIL INTERESTS.

Nothing to report. B.E. 2481 (1938)

Months	From Japan	Total
	Baht	VIII. Baht
April	1,296,996	8,200,439
May	1,382,840	7,977,450
June	1,115,553	8,020,175
July	1,625,749	8,915,392
August	935,943	7,985,402
September	1,030,854	7,963,171

In transmitting this information, the compiler stated, "You will see that during the last 6 months Japanese imports

continue

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

VIII. ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN COMMERCIAL INTERESTS.

continue to decline. The total value of all imports has increased (probably [illegible] prices of non-Japanese goods), but the reduction in receipts from specific duties seems to indicate that the total quantity of goods imported has decreased somewhat.

The Legation has been given confidentially a special compilation of the Japanese imports at the Port of Bangkok (which constitutes about 90% of the total trade of the country) over a period of a year and a half as follows:

PORT OF BANKOK	1st 6 mos. B.E. 2480 (Apr.1937-Sept. 1937)	2d 6 mos. B.E. 2480 (Oct.1937-March 1937)	1st 6 mos. B.E. 2481 Apr. 1938-Sept. 1938)
Total duty receipts from goods collected on specific rates.	Baht 11,329,689.36	Baht 11,323,133.84	Baht 10,587,045.72
Total duty receipts from goods collected on ad valorem rates	1,792,196.76	1,778,038.49	1,801,678.43
Duty receipts	13,121,886.12	13,101,172.33	12,388,724.15
Total value of imports from Japan	12,089,658	10,009,895	7,433,940
Total value of imports of all countries	48,123,023	47,427,746	49,062,529

PORT OF BANGKOK

Value of Imports.

Months	B.E. 2481 (1938) From Japan	Total
	Baht	Baht
April	1,296,996	8,200,439
May	1,382,840	7,977,450
June	1,155,558	8,020,175
July	1,625,749	8,915,892
August	935,943	7,985,402
September	1,036,854	7,963,171

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CONFIDENTIAL

IX. EMIGRATION AND LABOR MATTERS.

continue to decline. The total value of all imports has increased (probably due to higher prices of non-Japanese goods), but the reduction in receipts from specific duties seems to indicate that the total quantity of goods imported has decreased somewhat."

Immigration Head Tax

The fee payable by immigrants, or persons whose stay in Siam will be more than two months, has been doubled as of October 17, and now stands at [illegible]. This action is presumably prompted by a desire to restrict the number (or profit by the arrival) of Chinese immigrants which is reaching alarming proportions, especially since the war with China has affected South China. One Siamese newspaper, (Prachan Wan, October 10) attributed it to a desire to restrict the immigration of Jews (!) from Germany and Italy.

The Japanese Legation and a few Japanese business men with whom the subject was discussed were of the opinion that while Japanese direct imports had been affected by the anti-Japanese boycott, the total Japanese imports have been very little reduced, as Japanese goods have been transhiped at Hongkong and Singapore and have not entered Siam as Japanese imports.

There are constant reports in the press of deportations of Chinese from Siam, or their exclusion on arrival, some of them because they were considered undesirable, but many because of inability to pay the immigration fee. The number of Chinese thus affected is said to amount to several thousand.

IX.

Labor Survey

Press reports state that a general survey of laborers in Siam is expected to be undertaken shortly by the Ministry of Economic Affairs. An act authorizing this survey was passed by the Assembly in 1937. (Please refer to Political Report of March 1937). It is reported that the first survey will be of laborers in Government employ.

X.

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IX. EMIGRATION AND LABOR MATTERS.

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X.

According to a report in the Bangkok Times for October 23, that if the sale of opium continues to decrease as at present, there will be a drop of about Baht 350,000 in the revenue. A press report also states that the proprietors of opium dens, or divans, are considering closing promptly at midnight, as

their

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X. MISCELLANEOUS.

Air Raid Precautions

During the month extensive preparations were made for a simulated air raid over Bangkok on November 1. Arrangements were made for a complete Black out of the city to take place upon the sounding of signals to familiarize the people with air raid precautions.

Youth Training by the Army

For some time the Siamese Army has given instruction to those students who desired military knowledge and who were attending some recognized institution of learning through a special branch known as the "Yuvajon" or Youth Department. It is now reported that another branch will be formed called the "Yuvakon" or Youth Labor Department. It is stated that even vagrant boys will be allowed to participate in this movement, and that the Army will undertake, in addition to military instruction, to give training in trades, such as carpentry, hair dressing, tailoring, shoe making and the like. No date is given for the inauguration of this project.

Opium

Apparently one result of the round-up of undesirables referred to in the Legation's Political Report for September 1938, has been a decrease in the sales of opium by the Excise Department. The Director General stated, according to a report in the Bangkok Times for October 22, that if the sale of opium continues to decrease as at present, there will be a drop of about Baht 200,000 in the revenue. The press report also states that the proprietors of opium dens, or divans, are considering closing promptly at midnight, as their

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their patrons, since the big raid, do not care to indulge in smoking to so late an hour as in the past.

The illicit trade, however, seems to be flourishing. There are constant reports of seizures by the Police, the latest report being the discovery of four hundred ounces of opium in the tires of an automobile. The illicit opium is supposed to be produced very largely in the Shan States along the northern border of Siam, whence it is smuggled into Burma as well as into Siam and Indochina.

ELN/tse

Floods

Heavy rains this year have caused much high water in the rivers of Siam, and reports from Ayuthia and other places further north, indicate that serious floods occurred in those regions. One report stated that the October level of the Menam River at Paknampho (a point north of Ayuthia) was within a few feet of the 1917 level, which was the highest on record. This high level of the river, coupled with the autumn high tides also produced flood conditions in Bangkok, and many of the residents in the less well drained parts of the city were compelled to move from their houses temporarily, or became marooned and had to obtain their food from boats.

Short wave broadcasting

On October 20 the Siamese wireless broadcasting station began a short wave broadcasting service in three languages, viz: Siamese, English and French. The Minister of Foreign Affairs inaugurated the service with an address in French, in which he congratulated the sponsors of the new service,

and

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Despatches forwarded by the American Legation at Bangkok to the Department of State during October 1938.

Number	Date	Subject
269	Oct. 3	Transmitting copies of revised immigration sheets.
270	" 4	Exchange of ratifications of treaty with Siam.
271	" 4	Diplomatic visas issued week of Sept.25-Oct. 1, 1938.
272	" 5	Siamese Consul General at Manila.
273	" 5	Leave of absence, Edwin L. Neville.
274	" 5	Personnel of commissions appointed under conciliation treaties.
272*	" 13	Leave of absence, Hawkshapman.
273*	" 17	Report of Political Situation.
274*	" 17	Tapes.
ELN/tse		Nonimmigrant 3(1) visas issued, week of Oct. 9-15, 1938.
275	" 21	Bible and Protestation.
276	" 21	Political Report for September 1938.
277	" 24	Immigration case of Eleanor Antoinette Von Harrenbock.
278	" 25	Siamese Consular Fees.
279	" 25	Personnel.
280	" 27	Forwarding copies of Customs Acts.
281	" 27	Siamese Consul General at Manila.

*Inadvertently duplicated.

* * * * * * *

Telegrams forwarded by the American Legation at Bangkok to the Department of State during October 1938.

27	Oct. 1	Exchange of ratification of Treaty.

* * * * * * *

Note: The present value of the baht (or tical), the Siamese unit of currency, is approximately $0.45

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Despatches forwarded by the American Legation at Bangkok to the Department of State during October 1938.

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273	" 5	Personnel of Commissions appointed under conciliation treaties.
274	" 5	Leave of Absence, J. Holbrook Chapman.
272*	" 13	Report on Railways in Siam.
273*	" 17	Maps.
274*	" 17	Nonimmigrant 3(1) visas issued, week of Oct. 9-15, 1938.
275	" 21	White ant infestation.
276	" 21	Political Report for September 1938.
277	" 24	Immigration case of Eleanor Antoinette Von Haverbeck.
278	" 25	Siamese Customs Notices.
279	" 26	Personnel.
280	" 27	Forwarding copies of Customs Acts.
281	" 27	Siamese Consul General at Manila.

*Inadvertantly duplicated.

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Telegrams forwarded by the American Legation at Bangkok to the Department of State during October 1938.

27	Oct. 1	Exchange of Ratifications of Treaty.

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