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INFO : LONDON; PHNOM PENH; SAIGON; VIENTIANE; CINCPAC
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FROM : AmEmbassy BANGKOK

DATE: July 30, 1970

SUBJECT : Thanat Comments on Meeting with Ambassador Bruce

REF : Bangkok 9399

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Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman held a press conference (summarized in the refereneed telegram) following his meeting with Ambassador Bruce on July 27. Following is a taped account of the press conference:

REPORTER:

I have heard that the new American Chief Delegate to the Paris talks met you...

THANAT:

This morning Ambassador David Bruce, who will be chief of the delegation holding negotiations with the communists in Paris, came to meet me. He informed me that President Nixon had requested him to pass through Thailand, in order to hold meetings and exchange views on the negotiations in Paris. Ambassador Bruce has been appointed and he will go to take over his duties replacing Ambassador Habib.

At present, the attitude of both sides -- the communists and free countries -- are very far apart. The communists continue using the same old tactics of making allegations against free countries all the time and there is no sign that they will settle down to negotiations in earnest. On the contrary, the communists are making demands which it is utterly impossible for free countries to accept. For instance, they are demanding America to carry out one-sided withdrawal of troops from Vietnam unconditionally.

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It is easy to understand why it is impossible for America to accept such a demand. Another important demand made by the communists is for President Thieu's government to be liquidated and for a coalition government to be set up to replace it. The communists claim they are not able to recognize that the Thieu government has the duty to govern South Vietnam, therefore they are demanding for this government to be liquidated before they will hold any negotiations in earnest and obtain results. Furthermore, there is a big difference between the communists and free countries in regard to their understanding on what a coalition government is. The communists consider that a coalition government means a government of the Viet Cong, which in communist language is called "provisional government of South Vietnam." Furthermore, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong have set up a movement which they claim is a neutral movement, not concerned in any way with the communists. But it is in reality a tool of the communists. They want this movement which they claim is neutral to cooperate in forming the coalition government. They may allow some parties that are not the Viet Cong or organizations set up by the communists to take some part in the coalition government also. This would mean that the communists would have a two-thirds majority in the coalition government to be set up. These are the methods used by the communists in the setting up of what they call a coalition government. But the non-communist side, the free side, has a totally different understanding of the meaning of a coalition government. It must be a government as a result of free elections held under international supervision. They must be free and clean elections, a form of elections the communists have never known of. This is sufficient to show how great the differences are between the communists and the free side. But the free side, especially America, is having pressure on it by internal political circles to compel the negotiations to be continued, and to try to make concessions to the communists that the government in Saigon can accept. The communists are suffering some pressures also. But the pressure they suffer from is in the form of the weakening strength of North Vietnam, which has suffered heavy loss of men and of assets and money. Therefore, the communists suffer from pressure caused by the situation in their own country, from the heavy losses suffered in the waging of war, and the exhaustion resulting from waging war for years. Therefore, the present time is a time that has to be watched closely, in order to see whether the pressures put on both sides will lead to any concessions being made and in what way. There are other international circles that are endeavoring to give advice and make proposals, such as from the United Nations. The United Nations Secretary General has given advice concerning an international conference, but there is no sign that any agreement will be reached on the holding of such a conference. But should the pressure on both sides compel a situation to be reached in which some concessions have to be made, an international conference or

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an armistice might become a fact in the future. But there is no sign at present enabling any speculation to be made yet as to whether such a situation will be reached and when. This is why it is necessary to follow all developments closely.

Ambassador David Bruce has come to hold consultations and to exchange views with Thai leaders. I informed him of our views at the meeting held this morning, at which Ambassador Leonard Unger and the American Ambassador to South Vietnam, Mr. Bunker, were also present. This was contact made to hear views and to study ways to try and remedy the Vietnam war issue through international negotiations.

REPORTER:

A report has been spread that the United States may propose the setting up of a coalition government. Were you sounded on this subject?

THANAT:

Thailand considers that the setting up of a coalition government concerns the internal affairs of the country in which it may be set up. Our only view is that if a country sets up a coalition government that is recognized it will have to be a bonafide coalition government, not the communist form I mentioned just now. As students of international affairs we have seen examples in the past, such as in Laos. They showed the great differences of views on what a coalition government is between the communists and free countries. Should a coalition government be formed in Vietnam with the approval of the Vietnamese people, it will have to be seen whether it will be more successful than that in Laos or not. I mean whether it will be possible to set up a coalition government and prevent the communists from seizing and ruling over the whole country, using the coalition government as stepping stones in order to rule over South Vietnam. Furthermore, examples have been seen in other countries also -- in Czechoslovakia and in Poland. There has never been a single instance in which a coalition government with the communists has lasted long. They may last for a short time, six months to a year, or at most two years. But in the end the communists seize all power. Therefore, should a coalition government be formed in Vietnam, it will be necessary to watch and see whether it will be really practical or not, because it has never been lasting in any other country. Should it prove practical, then Vietnam will be a phenomenon, and all students of international affairs will have to pay special attention to it.

REPORTER:

So far as you have heard, is South Vietnam willing to agree on the setting up of a coalition government. Does it approve the plan...

THANAT:

It hasn't reached that stage yet when agreement has to be reached. Even the communists themselves have not reached agreement yet. Therefore, it

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is necessary to keep close watch over the attitude of the communists. At present, they do not want the Thieu government. They want it to be liquidated and for a coalition government in their form to be set up to replace it.

REPORTER:

Since the American Ambassador to South Vietnam was also taking part in the meeting, were any other subjects discussed?

THANAT:

He only accompanied Ambassador Bruce. He did not come here to hold talks on any subject at all. He took part in the conversation and views were exchanged normally, but no talks were held on any subject in special at all.

UNGER

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