FILE COPY

LEGATION OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Bangkok, November 25, 1940.

No. 65

Subject: Transmitting Newspaper Articles on the Alleged Misunderstanding of Thai Territorial Aspirations on the Part of the United States.

BY AIR MAIL

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The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to the Legation's despatch No. 46, November 9, 1940, with certain enclosures of newspaper articles and editorials in regard to the relationships between the United States and Thailand which have become somewhat strained within recent weeks as result of our policy of strict maintenance of the status quo which has run counter to Thai territorial aspirations and the revocation of the licenses of sixteen bomber airplanes which were manufactured in the United States for the Thai government.

1/2 I enclose for the Department's information two articles from Thai newspapers in regard to the alleged misunderstanding of the Thai policies in connection with Indochina on the part of the United States.

Respectfully yours,

Hugh G. Grant
American Minister

Enclosures:
1-2. Newspaper articles.

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Distribution: Original to Department by air mail. Two copies by ordinary mail.

A true copy of the signed original

Enclosure No. 2 to despatch No. 65 dated November 25, 1940, from the American Legation at Bangkok, Thailand, on the subject: "Transmitting Newspaper Articles on the Misunderstanding of Thai Territorial Aspirations on the Part of the United States".

Source: Thai Mai Daily News,
November 6, 1940

(TRANSLATION)

AMERICA'S UNDERSTANDING

It has always been the custom of Thailand and the Thai to admit that they consider America to be a country where justice is upheld and adored; and this adoration of justice on the part of America had been proved by various events of the past which had gone to make the Thai respect the justice and equality exercised by that great country. This fact should be well known to all Americans who have ever stayed in or passed through Thailand.

But recently there have been some regretable happenings, which, it is very sad to mention, are going to untie the knot of respect with which the majority of Thai people look on America. We believe the reason of all these infortunate happenings is because America does not try at all to understand Thailand's attitude; and because of this misunderstanding on her part, she imposed a ban on the selling of armaments to Thailand, for instance the recent detainment at Manila of the ten aeroplanes that had been ordered by Thailand, and had already been shipped and on the way here.

The cause of this misunderstanding sprang out of Thailand's request to France to effect a revision on the demarcation line on a basis of natural justice. This request of Thailand might have led America to misunderstand that Thailand assumes an attitude of wishing to invade French Indochina just when the Mother Country of the latter had been defeated in her war with Germany. Or, on the other hand, it might have led to a misunderstanding that Thailand has all along been backed up by Japan. Anyway it has come to light that America has sent a mild protest to Thailand regarding this matter, as if to show that she does not want any change in the Status Quo of French Indochina.

If America's understanding follows the above line, it can be said that she is much mistaken about Thailand's attitude. It is absolutely untrue that Thailand is going to invade French Indochina or that she has been backed up by Japan. America should be able to understand rightly Thailand's attitude, if only she would make a thorough investigation in all these affairs.

It is not France alone whom Thailand has approached in her request for a revision of the demarcation line as a result of the conclusion of the Treaty of Non-Aggression. Great Britain who has her colonial territory adjacent to Thailand, has also received the same request. But in this latter case, Great Britain has complied with Thailand's request for she has seen in it right and fairness as regards the revision of the demarcation line by taking as basis the deep-water channel as effected by nature, although by this consent

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of hers, Great Britain has lost some part of her territory. As for France, she is not at all interested in a just action, such as carried out by Great Britain.

The Treaty of Non-Aggression was concluded with a view to avoid frictions between the two contracting parties, which are apt to arise out of the people living close to both sides of the frontier. That is why it is most meet and just to revise the demarcation line by taking as basis the deep-water channel in the river Mekhong, the same as in the case with Great Britain where the river Ne Sai was involved and the deep-water channel thereof taken as a new demarcation line. The territory as involved in favor of Thailand in her request is only a small tract of land on the bank of the Mekhong that forms the Thai frontier. This tract of land is not a fertile one at all. On the contrary it is most barren. Moreover, if we were to revert to the unjust action of France in the past when she had taken Thai territory by force, we would see that the tract of land as involved in Thailand's favor, if this revision of the demarcation line by taking as basis the deep-water channel effected by nature be made, is not even one-tenth of the whole territory that had been forcefully taken away by France in former times.

We request America to understand this genuine attitude of Thailand, and we sincerely believe that if America would take in the above, the understanding that Thailand shows herself to be the aggressor should totally disappear.

And as America has shown interest in the maintenance of the Status Quo of all countries in the Far-East, we would request her once again to consider this. That as Thailand has all along declared herself to be strictly neutral, it is only necessary for her to make full preparations in her defence forces and armaments to make her neutrality practical and not only theoretical. The present world events have more than proved that weak nations, although neutral, are but mere toys in the hands of more powerful aggressors. Because of this, Thailand finds it necessary to be always in readiness to resist any aggression that may be attempted against her. At present the Thai Defence Forces are fully prepared, but armaments too must be counted on, and that is why the fact that America has hastened to misunderstand Thailand and banned the selling of armaments to her, looks as if America has a policy to weaken Thailand, and thus paves the way for an aggressor to infringe her neutrality. And if so, how can it be in line with another policy of America which aims at the maintenance of the Status Quo of all countries in the Far East.

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Enclosure No. 1 to despatch No. 65, dated November 2[illegible], 1940, from the American Legation at Bangkok, Thailand, on the subject: "Transmitting Newspaper Articles on the Alleged Misunderstanding of Thai Territorial Aspirations on the Part of the United States".

Source: Sri Krung Daily News,
November 8, 1940.

(TRANSLATION)

MISUNDERSTANDING

Misunderstanding between friends, no matter on what grounds, may result in such friendship becoming strained, but misunderstanding between countries, not only causes ill-feeling in diplomatic relation, but may cause reaction in every way, such as the endeavor of one country to press on another country's economics endangering its finances, and when the oppressed is unable to bear the pressure any longer, resorts to arms to decide the issue must inevitably happen. Therefore, a country which has had hundreds of years of commercial and diplomatic friendly relations should understand the policy of the country with which it has had such connection or to investigate the causes which have arisen instead of coming to its own decision, in order to enable the people of the two countries to live in peace and not to destroy one another with arms through the leadership of the head of the nation, due to his misunderstanding.

It is a known fact that the United States has great commercial interests in the East, amounting to several millions gold dollars per year, the majority of which is in China. For this reason the United States, with Mr. Roosevelt as leader, is helping China to fight Japan fearing that its interests will vanish if Japan wins. Japan, however, had declared that America's rights will not be destroyed but the latter did not believe the former's statement and therefore continued to help China all along by giving several millions dollars's loan to China to strengthen China to pursue the war. Speaking with Justice, Thailand has strictly stuck to its neutrality since the very beginning and has not helped Japan but China has always suspected Thailand in as much as it broadcasted its feeling and instigated the United States against Thailand on the grounds that Thailand is helping Japan to destroy American interests in the East, in particular that Thailand has allowed Japan to establish a military base in order to attack the Singapore base which the United States is to receive from Britain; also that Thailand has allowed Japan to move its troops across the country to attack Burmah. Such instigations from China made the United States doubt Thailand very much, especially that which said that Thailand is behind the Three-Power-Pact to wash Americans interest from the East. Moreover, Thailand's present territorial claim is, according to China's view, in order to have closer contact with Japan from Indochina. Such are the misunderstandings which I believe lead to Manila which is under the United States' protection to hold back the 10 bombers purchased by Thailand.

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That the United States' interests in the East must be preserved at their former status is a good policy but it should not lead to the misunderstanding that Thailand will throw off its neutrality and help Japan destroy Americans' interests because Japan by itself - without any interference by a great power due to misunderstanding and trick from China - may be able to complete the arrangement of the situation in the East long ago. Thailand, however, has no connection with this matter as Thailand's interest in China is practically nil, except what goods China is purchasing from Thailand, such as rice. Therefore, the United States' belief in China's propaganda urging intervention in connection with Thailand's territorial claim in as much as a declaration was made to preserve the former position of Indochina, is not an act of justice owing to the good relationship existing between these two countries. Moreover, the territory claimed from France is rightful and just because the latter invaded Thailand and took such land in a most unjust manner, which fact is already known to the United States. Being a great power loving justice, the United States should not feel anxious for its interest in the East more than necessary because Thailand has never had the least thought of destroying American interest in the East. Thailand's relation with Japan is a friendly one and it must necessarily sell to Japan what it wants to buy, but to side with one country or another in violation of its neutrality or justice, Thailand cannot do so because Thailand wishes to preserve the existing good friendly relation with every country. Even with France which had once invaded Thailand unjustly, His Excellency the Premier still thinks good of this country and asks to readjust the frontier in a peaceful manner. In conclusion, may the United States understand rightly Thailand's policy.

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