SOUTH-EAST ASIAN HISTORICAL MONOGRAPHS

The Key to the South

# The Key to the South

## Britain, the United States, and Thailand during the Approach of the Pacific War, 1929–1942

Richard J. Aldrich



KUALA LUMPUR
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
OXFORD SINGAPORE NEW YORK
1993

*Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP*

*Oxford New York Toronto*
*Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi*
*Kuala Lumpur Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo*
*Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town*
*Melbourne Auckland Madrid*

*and associated companies in*
*Berlin Ibadan*

*Oxford is a trade mark of Oxford University Press*

*Published in the United States*
*by Oxford University Press, New York*



*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*
*Data available*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

*Aldrich, Richard J. (Richard James), 1961–*
*The key to the South: Britain, the United States, and Thailand during the approach of the Pacific War, 1929–1942/Richard J. Aldrich.*
*p. cm.*
*Includes bibliographical references and index.*
*ISBN 0-19-588612-7:*
*1. World War, 1939–1945—Diplomatic history. 2. World War, 1939–1945—Thailand. 3. Thailand—Foreign relations—Great Britain. 4. Great Britain—Foreign relations—Thailand. 5. United States—Foreign relations—Thailand. 6. Thailand—Foreign relations—United States. I. Title.*
*D754.T4A43 1993*
*940.53'22—dc20*
*92-42994*
*CIP*

*Typeset by Typeset Gallery Sdn. Bhd., Malaysia*
*Printed by Kyodo Printing Co. (S) Pte. Ltd., Singapore*
*Published by Oxford University Press,*
*19–25, Jalan Kuchai Lama, 58200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

*For Libby*
*(who is a power for the hills)*

# Preface

In outlining the objectives of this study, it would perhaps be more useful to state what they are not, rather than what they are. This is not intended to constitute a study of Thai–Western relations, Thai foreign policy, or Thai politics. Instead the focus of this study is primarily upon British and American or 'Western' policies. There are several reasons for adopting this approach. Most importantly, much of the significant Thai documentation for the post-revolutionary period (after 1932) remains closed to public inspection in the National Archives in Bangkok. In consequence the analysis of Thai foreign policy during the period in question remains fraught with complex difficulties that are well beyond the scope of this study. While impressive accounts of Thai foreign policy after 1932 have been undertaken, the extent to which they depend on British and American documentation, or upon secondary sources, only serves to underline the attendant methodological problems. Equally, this study only touches upon French and Japanese policy in outline. This is partly because excellent studies of relations between these states and Thailand have recently been completed or are underway. It is also because the consideration of a wider canvass would, for reasons of space, have obviated the approach taken here which seeks to examine the nature of Anglo-American policy-making as well as its substance.

In this study considerable attention is given to the different schools of thought that evolved within British and American departments of state with regard to Thailand. These divergent official attitudes were less the product of reactions to specific events in Thailand than a reflection of the divergent concerns of the nearby British colonial territories—Malaya, Burma, and India—and the attempts of Britain and the United States to accommodate each other's policies. In this sense Western 'Thai policies' were often a summation of attitudes towards many larger questions and, accordingly, their central concerns were not dominated by the narrow requirements of Anglo-American–Thai

relations, but by a plethora of wider regional issues. The identification of bureaucratic competition within Western policy-making communities has played a part in shaping the objectives of this study. Instead of merely examining the direction of Western policies as recorded by the many diplomatic telegrams, minutes, and memoranda, some attention has been given to military and economic departments and the attendant range of internal bureaucratic pressures that helped to shape these policies.

At the centre of this study is Britain's attempt to maintain her dominant position in South-East Asia during a period of grave strategic overextension. As a consequence, during the 1930s, support from the United States was increasingly identified by officials as one of the few long-term answers to Britain's Asian predicament. Much attention has been paid to the United States not only as a significant political and commercial competitor for British imperial influence in Thailand but also, at the same time, as the crucial 'absentee-arbiter' of Britain's strategic position in Asia. Therefore, while the American State Department gave only limited attention to Thailand before 1938, nevertheless, the United States remained a crucial factor in the calculations of Britain, Japan, France, and Thailand in this region. Such American influence upon British policy is readily visible in the importance accorded by British officials to discussions with their American counterparts. Perhaps less obvious from the extant documentation, but equally significant, was the manner in which British officials would sometimes reject courses of action because of *expected* American disapproval, even before Anglo-American consultation had taken place. For this reason, any attempt to look at British or American policy in isolation would constitute an artificial exercise. For the same reasons of mutual influence, a degree of attention must also be devoted to Britain's French ally and subsequent Vichy enemy and its activities in the neighbouring colony of French Indo-China.

While the focus of this study remains primarily upon British and American policies, and to a lesser extent those of their allies, the impression must be avoided that such policies were formulated *in vacuo* without Thai influence. Thailand was surprisingly influential, exploiting the value of her strategic position at the crossroads of South-East Asia and her precarious neutrality, to shape the policies of the Powers. At certain critical moments the impact of Thailand upon Western policies was quite out of proportion to her weight.

No attempt has been made to employ the general theories and

predictive formulae developed by some social scientists over the last thirty years. Faced with the infinite variables generated by complex governmental communities of individual decision-makers, few general theories seem capable of explaining particular situations. Their limitations seem to be most evident when seeking to explain developing trends or slowly shifting policies and there is much to suggest that important changes in Western policy towards South-East Asia during the 1930s and 1940s consisted of just such an incremental process. Therefore the approach employed in this study remains that of international history, seeking to examine the roles and responsibilities of particular institutions in world events and the justifications advanced for those actions. It searches for the causal links between those events over a period of time. It is inescapably an empirical study.

*Department of Politics* RICHARD J. ALDRICH
*University of Nottingham*
*Nottingham*
*March 1992*

# Acknowledgements

IT is a pleasure for me to express my deep appreciation to those individuals and institutions who have offered kind assistance during the preparation of this study. I would like to thank those who have expended much time and energy talking and writing to me about life within policy-making communities, and consequently enhancing my 'feel' for the work-a-day life of the official. In particular I should like to thank Stanley Beddlington, Derek Bryan, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, Lord Gladwyn, John Gullick, Colin Mackenzie, Sir Frank Roberts, and Hugh Toye. A number of others assisted but have expressed a preference for anonymity.

I am also much indebted to the various academic institutions which have invited me to give papers, thereby providing me with trenchant criticism of some of my early findings. I would like to thank in this respect the Centre for Defence Studies at the University of Aberdeen, Georgetown University, the Centre for South Asian Studies at the University of Cambridge, the London School of Economics, and the US Army War College, Pennsylvania. I would like to thank Professor Ralph Smith of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and all the members of his seminar on the recent history of South-East Asia, a regular gathering that provides an invaluable source of encouragement for itinerant research students visiting London.

I have also benefited greatly from discussions and correspondence with a number of scholars working in overlapping and adjoining fields of study. I would particularly like to thank Christopher Andrew, Ian Brown, Anuson Chinvanno, Chuleeporn Pongsupath, Michael Coleman, Ingrid Floring, Anthony Gorst, Heng Pek Koon, Andrew Mackay Johnston, Saul Kelly, Sheila Kerr, Albert Lau, Scott Lucas, Kate Morris, Richard Popplewell, Tilman Remme, David Reynolds, Anthony Short, Anthony Stockwell, Judy Stowe, Tacha Tanaka, James Tang, Stein Tonnesson, Wesley K. Wark, and John Zametica.

Many librarians and archivists have been more than helpful. I

would like to thank the staff of the Archive Section of the Bank of England, the British Library, the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds, the Cabinet Office Historical Section, Cambridge University Library, the Churchill College Archives, the Imperial War Museum, the Library of Congress, the Foreign Office Library and Records Department, the India Office Library and Records, the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, the National Archives of Thailand, the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, the National Library of Thailand, the United States Naval Operations Archives, the Public Record Office, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Library, the Truman Memorial Library, and the Whitworth Library of the University of Salford. I am especially grateful to three archivists: Sally Marks and John E. Taylor in Washington, and Kanitiha Wongpanit in Bangkok. I would also like to thank the National Research Council of Thailand for much kind assistance.

I would like to thank my colleagues at the University of Leeds, the University of Salford, and the University of Nottingham for providing me with a stimulating atmosphere during the years over which this study was written. I am grateful to a number of scholars for reading and commenting on sections of the manuscript, including Peter Lowe, E. Bruce Reynolds, David Reynolds, Ralph Smith, and Zara Steiner. Responsibility for interpretation and errors, however, remains with the author.

Transcripts and maps from Crown-copyright records in the Public Record Office and India Office Library and Records appear by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Permission to quote from various collections of private papers was given by the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives and their trustees. Permission to quote from the papers of Lord Avon was given by Lady Avon and Birmingham University Library.

This research would not have been possible without the very generous support of the British Academy. Help also came from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, the Richard Newwitt Foundation, the Prince Consort Fund of Cambridge University, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, the Sir Richard Stapley Trust, and the Worts Travel Fund of Cambridge University.

There are a number of individuals to whom I owe a particularly heavy debt of gratitude. I should like to thank my supervisor, Professor D. A. Low, for his more than kind supervision of an erratic student and for many patient hours of stimulating discussion. I should also like to thank Dr Peter Lowe, whose special

subject on wars in the Pacific introduced me to this area of study; he has offered persistent encouragement and without him this study would not have been undertaken. I am also indebted to Dr Arthur Mawby for much encouragement and good advice. Above all it is friends and family who are perhaps most conscious of the time and effort involved in the preparation of such a study. Therefore, most importantly, I thank my wife Libby for both unfailing support and endless assistance, and to her this study is gratefully dedicated.

# Contents

*Preface* vii
*Acknowledgements* xi
*Appendices* xvii
*Maps* xviii
*Plates* xix
*Abbreviations* xx
*Orthology* xxiii

1 **Introduction: Dominant Themes** 1
British 'Dominance' and Thai 'Independence' 3
American Competition 15
Thailand, the British Empire, and American Anti-colonialism 24

PART I: INFORMAL DOMINANCE IN DECLINE, 1929–1938 37

2 **The West and the Last Years of the Absolute Monarchy, 1929–1932** 39
The West and Siam before 1910 40
British 'Dominance' and American Competition, 1910–1932 48
The World Economic Crisis, 1929–1932 61

3 **The West and the 'Young Turks', 1932–1935** 90
The Revolution, 1932 91
Coups and Counter-coups, 1933 97
Baxter, Financial Policy, and the Rise of Phibul, 1933–1935 105
New Economic Patterns 111
A New Strategic Landscape: Siam, Japan, and the West 123
Conclusion 132

**4 'To Swim with the Current': The Evolution of Western Policies towards Siamese Nationalism, 1935–1938** *152*
The West and Siamese Economic Nationalism *158*
Militarism, Irredentism, and Mass Nationalism *172*
'An Uneasy Equilibrium': Siam, Japan, and the West *180*
Conclusion *194*

PART II: THE APPROACH OF THE PACIFIC WAR, 1939–1942 *213*

**5 'The Voice Crying in the Wilderness': The Impact of the European War on Western Policies in Thailand, 1939–1940** *215*
Thailand, Singapore, and Anglo-French Strategy, 1938–1939 *218*
The Thai Non-Aggression Pacts, 1939–1940 *224*
'Thailand for the Thai': Economic and Political Nationalism *230*
Dollars, Oil, and Tin *237*
Conclusion *243*

**6 The West and the Franco-Thai Border Crisis, 1940–1941** *256*
Thailand, Vichy, and the West, May–August 1940 *260*
The Franco-Thai Border Conflict, October 1940–January 1941 *273*
Western Failures and Japanese 'Arbitration', January–March 1941 *284*
Conclusion *295*

**7 'The Key to the South': Thailand and the Outbreak of the Pacific War, 1941–1942** *311*
The Repercussions of the Franco-Thai Border Crisis *315*
The Western Response: 'A Modicum of Bribe' *319*
Political Assurances and Military Alternatives *328*
Churchill, Roosevelt, and the Outbreak of War *339*

**8 Conclusions** *361*
Thailand Declares War *361*
'Watchful Waiting' and 'Expediency' *367*
'A Challenge to the Colonial System in Asia' *368*

*Appendices* *376*
*Bibliography* *380*
*Index* *406*

# Appendices

1 British Financial Advisers to the Thai Government, 1898–1951 *376*
2 American General and Foreign Affairs Advisers to the Thai Government, 1902–1949 *377*
3 Foreign Officials in Thai Government Service, 1920 and 1939 *379*

# Maps

*All maps are reproduced by permission of the Controller, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, except Maps 7.1, 8.1, and 8.2, which are reprinted by permission of The New York Times Company.*


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2.1 | British Territorial Gains in Southern Siam before 1910 | *46* |
| 2.2 | The Burmese–Siamese Frontier Adjustment, 1931 | *76* |
| 3.1 | British Map of Possible Kra Canal Sites | *129* |
| 4.1 | Isthmus of Kra, Sketch Map by Consul Whittington, 1936 | *184* |
| 4.2 | Improved Communications in Malaya during the 1930s | *190* |
| 6.1 | The Border between Thailand and Indo-China, 1867–1941 | *291* |
| 6.2 | Cambodia: Territory Transferred to Thailand, 1941 | *292* |
| 6.3 | Laos: Territory Transferred to Thailand, 1941 | *293* |
| 7.1 | The Japanese Position in Asia, August 1941 | *329* |
| 7.2 | British Planning for Operation Etonian/ Matador, 1940–1941 | *338* |
| 8.1 | Thailand and the Malayan Campaign, 1941–1942 | *363* |
| 8.2 | Thailand and the Conquest of Burma, 1942 | *365* |
| 8.3 | Thai Gains in Malaya and Burma, 1942–1943 | *371* |

# Plates

*Between pages 168 and 169*

1 A government aircraft is launched against the rebels during the Bovaradet rebellion of 1933.
2 A Vickers 6-ton tank patrols the streets of Bangkok during the Bovaradet rebellion of 1933.
3 King Prajadhipok examines American technology during his tour of the United States in 1931.
4 King Prajadhipok tours Germany in 1934.
5 Pridi Banomyong.
6 Luang Phibul Songkram.
7 Prince Aditya Didd-abha.
8 Prince Wan Waityakorn Voravan.
9 Vanich Pananond.
10 Prayoon Pamornmontri.
11 Luang Vichit Vadhakarn.
12 Direk Chaiyanam.
13 An American military mission, ostentatiously displaying the Stars and Stripes, arrives at Singapore in 1941.
14 Lt.-Gen. Arthur Percival, GOC Malaya, greets the American mission at Singapore.
15 Sir Shenton Thomas, the failed arbitrator (*right*), talks with Duff Cooper in 1941.
16 Sir Josiah Crosby attends a conference at Singapore in 1941. To the left is Admiral Layton, C-in-C East Indies Fleet.
17 Air Vice-Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham and his staff during a planning session at Singapore in 1941.
18 British reinforcements exercise on the Thai–Malaya border in November 1941.
19 One of the last photographs to be taken of the HMS *Prince of Wales*, December 1941.
20 Vehicles are pushed into Singapore harbour prior to the surrender to Japan in 1942.

# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ABDA | American, British, Dutch and Australian Command |
| AOC | Air Officer Commanding |
| 'C' | Director of the Secret Intelligence Service (M16) |
| CAS | Chief of the Air Staff |
| C-in-C | Commander-in-Chief |
| CNS | Chief of the Naval Staff |
| CCS | Combined Chiefs of Staff (Anglo-American) |
| CID | Committee of Imperial Defence |
| C.I.D. | Criminal Intelligence Department (Singapore) |
| COI | Co-ordinator of Information (see also OSS) |
| COIS | Commanding Officer Intelligence Staff (Singapore) |
| COS | Chiefs of Staff |
| DIB | Director of the Intelligence Bureau (India) |
| DMI | Director of Military Intelligence |
| DMO | Director of Military Operations |
| DMOI | Director of Military Operations and Intelligence |
| DNI | Director of Naval Intelligence |
| DO | Dominions Office |
| FDR | Franklin D. Roosevelt |
| FEC | Far Eastern Committee (Official), London |
| FE(M)C | Far Eastern Ministerial Committee, London |
| FESS | Far Eastern Security Service, Singapore |
| FO | Foreign Office |
| FORD | Foreign Office Research Department |
| FSM | Free Siam Movement |
| G | Governor's Correspondence Files, Bank of England |
| GC&CS | Government Code and Cipher School |
| GHQ | General Headquarters |
| GOC | General Officer Commanding |
| *H. C. Deb.* | *Hansard, House of Commons Debates*, 5th series |
| HO | Home Office |
| IMTFE | International Military Tribunal for the Far East, Imperial War Museum London |

| | |
|---|---|
| IOLR | India Office Library and Records, Blackfriars, London |
| IPR | Institute of Pacific Relations |
| IRRC | International Rubber Regulating Committee |
| ITC | International Tin Committee |
| JCS | Joint Chiefs of Staff (American) |
| JIC | Joint Intelligence Committee, London |
| JPS | Joint Planning Staff (British) |
| KMT | Koumintang |
| LC | Library of Congress |
| LHCMA | Liddle Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London |
| MEW | Ministry of Economic Warfare |
| MI2c | Military Intelligence section dealing with the Far East |
| MI5 | Security Service |
| MI6 | Secret Intelligence Service (see also SIS) |
| MOI | Ministry of Information |
| MSC | Military Subcommittee |
| NSA | National Security Agency |
| OKW | German General Staff |
| OSS | Office of Strategic Services (American) |
| OV | Overseas Files, Bank of England |
| OWI | Office of War Information (American) |
| PD | Petroleum Department, Ministry of Fuel and Power |
| PHPS | Post Hostilities Planning Staff |
| PPF | President's Personal Files, Roosevelt Papers |
| PREM | Prime Minister's Files |
| PSF | President's Secretaries Files, Roosevelt Papers |
| PWE | Political Warfare Executive (British) |
| RA | Research and Analysis Branch, Office of Strategic Services |
| SAC | Supreme Allied Commander |
| SACSEA | Supreme Allied Commander South-East Asia |
| SB | Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police, London |
| SD | Department of State |
| SEAC | South East Asia Command (Allied) |
| SIS | Secret Intelligence Service (see MI6) |
| SOE | Special Operations Executive |
| T | Treasury |
| TNA | Thailand, National Archives |
| TWED | Trading with the Enemy Department |
| WO | War Office |
| WP | War Cabinet Memoranda (1939–1945) |

## *Additional Note on References*

Where duplicate copies of archival materials have been located in several different classes of records, the reference given is normally that of the 'home' series of the particular document. For example, where duplicate copies of a Bank of England letter appear in both Bank of England files and in Foreign Office files, the former location is given. Conversely, where documents are not indexed to their 'home' series, the implication is that the original records are presently closed to public inspection or no longer extant.

## *Additional Abbreviations Employed in References*

| | |
|---|---|
| ADM | Admiralty |
| AIR | Air Ministry |
| BE | Bank of England |
| BM | British Museum |
| BO | Burma Office |
| BT | Board of Trade |
| BUL | Birmingham University Library |
| CAB | Records of the Cabinet Committees |
| CO | Colonial Office |
| CP | War Cabinet Memoranda |
| CUL | Cambridge University Library |
| *DAFP* | *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937–9* |
| *DBFP* | *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939*, 2nd and 3rd series |
| DC (Ops) | War Cabinet Defence Committee (Operations) |
| *DGFP* | *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945*, Series D |
| *FRUS* | *Foreign Relations of the United States* |

# Orthology

## *The Use of 'Siam' and 'Thailand'*

THAI nationalists replaced the term 'Siam' with 'Thailand' in 1939. 'Siam' was employed again during the British occupation of 1945 but 'Thailand' was reintroduced shortly thereafter. The term 'Thailand' has been used in the title and introduction to this study, partly because ethnic 'Thai' nationalism beyond established Siamese borders constitutes one of the central preoccupations of Western policies during the period 1929–42. However, in the main body of the study contemporary conventions are followed and accordingly 'Siam' is employed in Chapters 2–4, which deal with events prior to 1939, while 'Thailand' is employed thereafter.

## *Personal Names*

There are numerous systems for the transliteration of Thai into English. However, none of them are presently accepted as a standard form. Contemporary documentation tends to be highly erratic, particularly with regard to the names of senior statesmen. The transliterations in this study follow common use rather than any particular system.

It should also be emphasized that it is customary for Thais to be referred to by their personal instead of family names. That is the practice followed in this study. Further complications are introduced by the system of official titles prior to 1932 which often resulted in a change of name. Kings are referred to by personal name, rather than in the Thai fashion which often employs reign number.

# 1
# Introduction: Dominant Themes

> Unique among the countries of South East Asia, Thailand ... preserved her independence.[1]

IN the study of Western policies towards South-East Asia there is one point upon which there is almost universal consensus, namely the 'uniqueness' of Thailand's experience in avoiding subsumption within the colonial empires of the Great Powers. This book breaks with that consensus by rejecting the concept of a distinct Thai experience and instead placing its emphasis upon a number of different forms of continuity. Continuity is deployed here both in a geographical sense, stressing the wider imperial framework of South-East Asia with its contiguous colonial territories, and also in terms of chronological development from the pre-war to the post-war period. This finds expression in three separate but related themes which inform the arguments advanced in the pages that follow.

First and foremost this study emphasizes the continuity between the policies of the Western powers in neighbouring colonial territories and in Thailand, suggesting that the degree of Western influence there, albeit informal, resulted in a situation that, while not strictly colonial, can certainly be characterized as 'dominance'. In the early twentieth century, Thailand constituted not only an economic satellite of the European empires, particularly Malaya, but also a political extension of Western 'imperium'. Moreover, the mechanisms of Western influence in Thailand prior to 1942 bear a remarkable resemblance to those deployed in other areas of informal empire or indirect rule. One renowned Thai scholar is reported to have remarked of Thailand: 'What good is this country? You can't compare it with anything.' The rejoinder offered here is that an appropriate starting place might be to draw comparisons with the nature of Western influence in the Unfederated Malay States, the Princely States of India, the sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf, and even aspects of British authority in Egypt.[2]

Secondly, continuity is also emphasized in terms of the American impact upon Thailand. Traditionally, American policy towards Thailand in the period 1925–42, that is, between the negotiating of the end of her unequal treaties with the West and assistance to the wartime Seri Thai (Free Thai) resistance movement, was negligible and can be dismissed as being of no consequence. As such the period 1925–42 is widely regarded as constituting a hiatus or an aberration in otherwise close Thai–American relations. But here it is suggested that, as in previous and subsequent decades, the United States continued to occupy a crucial place in the formation of Western policies towards Thailand. Throughout this period the dollar was regarded as the most dangerous threat to British dominance in Bangkok, no less alarming than the burgeoning scale of Japanese exports to South-East Asia. Equally, at the strategic level, the decline of both Britain and France as military powers in the wider Asia–Pacific region ensured that the United States was inescapably the absentee-arbiter of Western influence in the face of Japan's developing southward ambitions. The result was an ineffectual search for Anglo-American–French strategic co-operation against the background of fierce economic rivalry between these Western states.

Thirdly, while this study focuses upon the approach of the Pacific War and the cataclysmic events of December 1941, it rejects recent suggestions that the outbreak of war represented an important turning-point for Thailand or the West.[3] Instead connections are drawn between Western policies before and after 1941. Increasing American interest in Thailand after 1942 can be explained largely in terms of fear of a revival of the pattern of British informal dominance that characterized the 1920s, or even of the process of formal British absorption of Thai territory that ended in 1909. It is also suggested that remarkable British plans to extend post-war control over Thailand have their origins not in the experience of 1941, or of the Pacific War, but instead represent the revival of a harsh French-style 'colonial' school of British policy towards Thailand, discernible in the 1920s but in decline during the 1930s. Consequently, a proper understanding of the place of Thailand in Anglo-American–French relations during the 1940s can only be achieved in the context of a consideration of neglected continuities with the ideas of the 1920s and 1930s.

The pervading emphasis upon continuity in this study of Western policies does not imply uniformity. Although constant reference is made to 'Western' policies and attitudes, the primary

focus must be upon Britain, given her dominant position in Bangkok during the inter-war period. The disparity between the position of Western states in Thailand in the inter-war period is best underlined by the physical presence of their various diplomatic missions. American diplomats regularly complained of the undesirable impression created by the 'ramshackle' premises of the United States Legation. Indeed, in the 1930s, Bangkok was considered something of a punishment posting by American Ministers and their staff. Equally, the French community complained incessantly of their inadequate Legation and poor staffing arrangements. By contrast, the palatial British Legation, set in substantial walled grounds in central Bangkok, suggested not so much a Legation of the second rank but instead a High Commission.[4] Nevertheless, Britain, the United States, and France cannot be studied in isolation: American attitudes consistently formed the widest and most fundamental restraint upon Western policies, while Franco-Thai antagonism over disputed border territories resulted in unwelcome complications for all the Western powers that were of an importance entirely disproportionate to France's declining stature in Asia after 1900. Before embarking upon a chronological analysis, with all the necessary constraints of this narrative historical form, it would perhaps be useful to explore these various themes in some detail.

## *British 'Dominance' and Thai 'Independence'*

Within this study considerable attention will be devoted to ideas and strategies developed by Britain to sustain her position in Thailand during a period of continued British decline relative to the United States and other Great Powers.[5] In all of Asia and Africa during the early twentieth century, Britain encountered a growing variety of difficulties and threats that were awkward to calculate. Here the challenges came from within indigenous societies as well as from other states seeking to revise the international order, complicating the attempts of British officials to adjust the mechanisms of control in these regions. In Thailand in particular, Britain encountered three separate but related types of difficulty in defending her influence and interests: firstly her own comparative economic decline underlined by the sterling crisis of 1931 and the growing power of the dollar; secondly an upsurge in Thai nationalism; and thirdly external economic and strategic threats in South-East Asia presented by the United States and Japan. In

order to analyse various responses to the dilemmas posed by British decline during the 1920s and 1930s it is first essential to establish the full extent of Britain's dominant position in Thailand before the advent of the multiple blows constituted by Britain's sterling crisis of 1931, the not unrelated Thai Revolution of 1932, which removed Thailand's absolute monarchy, and Britain's international embarrassment at the hands of Japan in East Asia between 1931 and 1933.

Despite the completion of a number of detailed studies of Thailand's internal history and foreign policy during the 1920s and 1930s, the nature of the Western position in Thailand during the first four decades of the twentieth century remains an area which is far from being well understood.[6] In particular, historians of modern Thailand, either in the domestic or the international context, rarely open their accounts without eulogistic and unqualified reference to the unique nature of the Thai experience as 'the only country of Southeast Asia to escape colonial rule in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'. They seek to underline Thailand's 'unique status as an independent South East Asian state', and the 'exceptional' fact that 'Siam retained its independence while all around were losing theirs'. Others emphasize that Thailand is 'the only country never to have fallen under European domination' or that has 'been able to remain independent of foreign domination'. These panegyrics are at best misplaced and at worst highly misleading.[7]

The disparity between these unqualified assertions of independence and the reality of Thailand's existence in the early twentieth century has not gone entirely unnoticed. Geographers and economists, less preoccupied with the political superstructure than historians, have occasionally remarked upon the similarity of Thailand's development and place in the economic system with that of formal colonies. Thailand, notes one study, 'depicts many of the characteristics of the "typical" colonial territory', including heavy reliance on primary commodity production, a very weak indigenous industrial base and domination of the local economies by foreign capital. Two scholars in particular, considering the spatial aspects of economic and structural change in the nineteenth century, have remarked 'that Thailand was a colony in everything but name'. Such refreshing departures from the orthodoxy of Thai 'independence' are almost unknown in the corpus of historical writings on Thailand. An exception is the brief but penetrating remarks made by Benedict Anderson in 1978 when

reviewing the state of Thai studies. Reflecting upon possible new avenues for the study of the Thai monarchy, he rejected the commonly drawn comparison of Meiji Japan and pointed instead to the Sultans of Johore and Kelantan.[8]

The issue of whether the Thai monarchy constituted *de facto* colonial collaborators lies somewhat beyond the remit of this study, which focuses upon the policies of the Western powers rather than the domestic history of Thailand. However, the arguments advanced here do begin by challenging the extent of Thailand's 'independence' and 'neutrality', and seek to suggest that Thailand was, for a period, an integral if informal component of the British imperial system. Certainly during the 1920s and the early 1930s, at various levels of activity, Thailand seems to have constituted an area of informal British dominance, albeit one where British influence was already on the ebb tide. Striking parallels can be drawn with the patterns and mechanisms of British informal influence in Iraq, Iran, the northern Malay States, and even some Indian Princely States. This study accordingly concerns itself not with relations between two fully independent states, but with the strategies employed by Britain in an unsuccessful attempt to manage the transformation of an area of informal dominance into a more independent but nevertheless pliant state. At the centre of this complex and constantly shifting relationship was a formula whereby the degree of informal influence Britain required in Thailand, and understood to amount to British dominance in that country, was not generally incompatible with what the judicious Thai élite chose to interpret as real independence.

One might reasonably ask why such an important aspect of Anglo-Thai relations, and indeed aspects of Thai history, has hitherto been neglected. A number of historiographical explanations can be advanced. Firstly, the volume of research undertaken on Thailand's place in international history and indeed Thai history *per se* has been substantially smaller than that undertaken on other neighbouring Asian states. Secondly, much of the relevant documentation has only been opened to public inspection since 1972 and in some cases since 1985. Thirdly, those few studies undertaken since 1972 have neglected important collections of British and American documents relating to Thailand.[9] It is particularly surprising that one of the most revealing sources for Anglo-Thai relations, and indeed for some aspects of Thai history during the twentieth century, the Thailand Files of the Bank of England, have been entirely overlooked.[10]

Before pursuing the argument concerning Britain's informal dominance, much confusion will be avoided by a careful definition of terms. In this study the terms 'British Empire' and 'British imperial economy' are employed in the broadest sense to denote domination or imperium. In this respect the usage follows that adopted by Louis in his recent book, *The British Empire in the Middle East: Arab Nationalism, the United States and Post-War Imperialism.*[11] In the Middle East, unlike South and South-East Asia, informal colonies constituted a large proportion of the British-controlled area, with many countries falling within the British sphere by virtue of unequal treaty relationships, condominiums, or even economic agreements, such as that between Iran and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.[12] Unique and varied patterns of authority were not restricted to Britain's informal Empire in the Middle East. Even in *de jure* colonies such as India, Burma, and Malaya, extensive devolution of British power was a growing feature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often making use of an elaborate system of advisers and residents.

To what extent British dominance in Thailand and her place in the British imperial economy can be said, at any point, to have amounted to 'informal colonial status' is a difficult problem indeed. In a discussion of this troublesome phrase, Louis has drawn our attention to a far-sighted and somewhat iconoclastic memorandum discussing definitions of 'colonial peoples' drafted by Sydney Caine, a Colonial Office official in November 1944. Attacking the commonly employed League of Nations definition of colonial peoples as 'those not yet able to stand by themselves', he asked 'are there any peoples in the world who can stand by themselves, except perhaps the Russians and the United States? Even if one does not take the phrase quite so literally, there are many countries such as Liberia and Siam which are very close to Colonial status in this sense.'[13] Given that 'informal colonial status' constitutes a notoriously imprecise phrase, the form of words 'informal British dominance' is employed here. British informal dominance in the Thai context is explored below at three different levels: economic–financial, strategic, and political–legal.

In Thailand, the patterns of British influence were most apparent at the economic and financial level, arising partly out of Thailand's *de facto* subsumption within the British imperial economy, and partly out of the role of the British Financial Adviser to the Thai Government. Even in terms of overt interests

and activities alone, the place of Britain in the Thai economy during the 1920s and 1930s was unusually strong. The British Empire ports of Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang, Rangoon, and Calcutta nearly encircled Thailand and received over 70 per cent of her exports.[14] At the same time over 37 per cent of Thailand's imports came from the British Empire. British Malaya bought over 70 per cent of the Thai rice crop, Thailand's main export, which was shipped in jute gunny bags purchased from India. British Malaya bordered Thailand to the south and formed a terminus for Thailand's southern railway. Burma flanked Thailand on the west. British air routes from Hong Kong, Singapore, and Rangoon made connections at Don Muang airfield outside Bangkok. Thailand's currency reserve, about £5,000,000, was based upon sterling and like her foreign debt, was held almost exclusively in London. The three British banks in Bangkok overshadowed the others and the total British investment in Thailand in capital and loans was estimated to be £20,000,000 in 1932. British and Anglo-Australian companies operated mines and mills and directed logging operations, handled much of the import–export trade, and bought most of Thailand's tin and rubber. British social and business customs were accepted as standard by most Europeans and many Thai.[15]

Yet the predominance of British economic interests and activities, while indicating a substantial degree of power and leverage, does not automatically indicate British control. However, considerable control over the Thai economic and financial policies was exercised through a different medium, that of the British Financial Adviser to the Thai Government. Since the nineteenth century Thai kings had made extensive use of foreign advisers as part of a programme of rapid modernization. Most prominent amongst these were the General (later Foreign Affairs) Adviser, usually an American; the Financial Adviser, British since 1898; and Judicial Advisers, usually French and British nationals. Amongst these advisers the British Financial Adviser was unique in being largely a 'cat's paw' for the Governor of the Bank of England, who was in regular and most secret correspondence with his agent in Bangkok. Bank of England candidates for this appointment were invariably accepted by the Thais.[16] This stood in contrast to the more ambivalent role of the American Foreign Affairs Advisers, whose relationship with the State Department in Washington seems to have been proper and more distant. These American advisers, it appears, did not even begin to supply the United States Government with significant

confidential information until the eve of the Pacific War.[17]

The post of Financial Adviser lay in the gift of the Governor of the Bank of England because of London's pre-war dominance as a world financial centre, supplying the Thai Government's loans. Thai currency was also based upon sterling and London held Thailand's currency reserves. Before 1935 the post formed part of a prestigious array of appointments within the British imperial administrative system and hence the incumbents were invariably Empire civil servants with a financial background. Like James Baxter (1932–5) they often came from the Financial Department of the Governments of India or Egypt and, like his predecessor, Sir Edward Cook (1929–31), they usually moved on to yet more prestigious imperial appointments, in Cook's case, Governor of the Bank of Egypt. Significantly, in common with the Bank of England's appointees throughout the Empire, the Financial Advisers in Bangkok received the Bank's *Empire Newsletter* which kept them up to date with sterling-centred developments. It is not for nothing that one historian, in a recent study of a major financier in China, has remarked that the relationship between the British Treasury and the Bank of England constituted 'the inner network of British imperial power'.[18]

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the work of the British Financial Advisers was the intricate steps taken to mislead the Thai Government as to the extent of their direction from London. *En clair* international correspondence and telegrams from Bangkok were not secure from the Thai censorship inspection system. Consequently, the British Financial Adviser in Bangkok and the Governor of the Bank of England were obliged to conduct their voluminous correspondence in code, with some material travelling via the diplomatic bag of the British Legation.[19] As a result the Financial Adviser was particularly hard-pressed, working at his office in the Thai Finance Ministry by day, enciphering his private despatches to London, deciphering messages from London, typing and maintaining a personal archive in his own residence by night. He often complained to the Governor of the Bank of England of the burden imposed by these menial office chores which he dare not delegate to even his most trusted Thai subordinates.[20] Meanwhile, few things alarmed the Financial Adviser and the Bank of England more than an incident when two such letters, containing 'a very frank exposé' of Thai internal affairs went astray in March 1938.[21] This system reflected the general *modus operandi* of the Bank of England under its Governor, Sir Montagu Norman, a man of 'habitual secretiveness'.[22]

After 1929 the British Financial Adviser played a key role in Britain's attempts to slow down the erosion of British power in Thailand. As late as May 1940 the British Financial Adviser wrote to the Governor of the Bank of England stating clearly what he felt ought to be his 'definite aims', adding cautiously, 'here in Siam I keep them very strictly to myself'. He enumerated five objectives which clearly underline the extent to which the loyalties of the Financial Adviser were, at best, divided: firstly, to maintain the solvency and stability of the Thai economy; secondly, to assist the British war effort; thirdly, to 'develop a real community of relations and ideas with their British neighbours' by directing Thai nationalism into aspirations 'compatible with the fair and proper treatment of foreign and particularly the large British interests in the country'; fourthly, to resolve conflicts of interest and authority discreetly, persuading the Thais to settle these by mutual agreement and not by arbitrary legislation, and finally, to develop and expand the Thai agricultural co-operative movement.[23]

During the 1930s the role of the British Financial Adviser was increasingly a negative and frustrating one. His work came to be dominated by attempts to block radical economic schemes advanced by Thai Ministers that he judged to be either prejudicial to the stability of the economy, and consequently the extensive British investments, or a direct threat to the extent of British influence. Typically, the Governor of the Bank of England and the Financial Adviser sought to impede Thai attempts to raise loans in the United States between 1925 and 1931. Equally, Britain helped to frustrate repeated attempts to shift the burden of taxation from the downtrodden Thai peasant farmer to *ad valorem* duties upon the foreign companies that traded in the commodities they produced.[24] Therefore, although the formal role of the Financial Adviser was simply to assist with technical aspects of the Thai economy, in practice his function was also to oppose measures that threatened Thailand's place within the imperial economy. Financial Advisers sometimes complained to London that their role was merely that of a human obstacle and had little constructive value.[25] The significance of the advisers was clear to well-informed observers and during the turbulent year of 1932, the American Minister noted: 'The British and French have been very zealous in seeking to retain their advisory positions, through which considerable control over policies has been exerted; the decrease of advisers is one of the most definite measures indicating the decline of Western political influence.'[26] Accordingly, Britain defended the position of the Financial Adviser with vigour and

retained it throughout the 1930s and late 1940s.

If British authority loomed so large in Thailand during the 1920s why did British officials work hard to maintain the fiction of uncompromised Thai independence? The efforts of British officials in Thailand to exercise influence by 'the methods rather of the serpent than of the bull' were clearly tiresome and frequently fraught with complications.[27] Certainly by 1929 with the extent of British influence already arousing nationalist hostility within the Thai Government, British officials had no wish to raise its public profile. Equally, a higher public profile for British influence, perhaps along the lines employed in Egypt, would have undermined Thailand's strategic utility as a buffer state, and hence her valuable contribution to British imperial defence. As a neutral state, Thailand served initially as a buffer zone between British and French possessions, and subsequently to distance Japan and China. Particularly during the inter-war period, Thailand's strategic importance seemed to increase in proportion to the decline of British strategic credibility east of Suez. In this sense Thai neutrality served as the very rim of empire, a place where Britain, primarily from a position of real but as yet not perceived strategic debility, sought to maximize her power and interests, but meanwhile could not afford to extend her formal military responsibilities. By the 1920s Britain's desire to sustain benevolent Thai 'neutrality' was increasingly bound up with the Singapore naval base strategy. While imperial defence policy continued to emphasize the protection of lines of communication between British India, the Middle East, and the Dominions, Thailand and Singapore would remain closely associated with that task.

Britain's strategic predominance in South-East Asia in the early twentieth century, albeit underpinned by the Anglo-Japanese alliance, was illustrated in Thailand in two ways: firstly, by Britain's right to veto any attempt to build a canal across Thailand's southern peninsula, the Kra Isthmus, a project which would have severely undermined the strategic and commercial value of Singapore, which dominated the eastern entrance into the Indian Ocean; and secondly, by the manner by which Britain began to extend her influence into the northern Malay States which, until as late as 1909, owed formal suzerainty to Thailand rather than to Britain.

The northern Malay States shed considerable light upon the nature of the Anglo-Thai relationship in the early twentieth

century. During the late nineteenth century British mining and trading interests had expanded rapidly into the initially independent states of Kelantan, Kedah, Perlis, and Trengganu, which were governed by local sultans. These sultans and their states were under *de jure* Thai suzerainty, but in practice Thai authority was only of 'the most shadowy and feeble kind'. Meanwhile, Britain's constant fear was that the petty rulers of these states might be enticed into co-operation with her competitors, either directly by offering them military bases or indirectly by granting some commercial concessions that would facilitate powerful foreign interests on the peninsula.[28]

Significantly, Britain proved able to extend her authority over this area of Malaya, not directly, but through the medium of the Thai Government. As early as 1897, a secret convention was signed between Britain and Thailand whereby the latter undertook not to grant any special privileges to a third power on the Malay Peninsula, south of Maung Bang Tapan on the eleventh parallel, without reference to the British Government.[29] Initially the convention functioned well. But by the early twentieth century the Thai Government was increasingly embarrassed by the remonstrances of other powers for her policy of 'wholesale discrimination against foreigners in favour of British subjects and capital'. Increasing demands by foreign powers for concessions in the northern Malay States contributed to Britain's decision to annex them from Thailand in 1909.[30]

Even before the British annexation of this area from Thailand, Britain had employed Thailand not only as an instrument to exclude foreign interests from northern Malay States, but also as a conduit through which to introduce some internal British influence. In 1902 an Anglo-Thai treaty was concluded by which Thailand agreed that the four northern Malay States under Thai control should each receive a resident 'Thai' Adviser whose ruling had to be sought and accepted on matters of internal administration. Significantly, these 'Thai' Advisers were of British rather than Thai nationality. They were not only British nationals but sometimes officials of the Malayan Civil Service (MCS). Thus the British Empire began to extend her influence into the northern Malay areas, not only from the British Federated Malay States to the south but also from 'independent' Thailand to the north.[31] There are few clearer indications of Britain's pervasive regional authority during this period. Partly for reasons of economy of effort, an

'independent' and 'neutral' Thailand suited British interests better than a Thailand situated within the formal boundaries of the Empire.

While it is interpretations of Western perspectives that concern this study, at the same time, the ideas advanced above necessarily imply a revised understanding of Thai foreign policy. Traditionally, Thai foreign policy has been characterized as that of a wily Asian state surrendering areas, only some of which had predominantly 'Thai' populations, in order to regain full sovereignty over a core area, at the same time 'balancing' between the British and the French, in order to survive as a neutral buffer area between the two European colonial powers.[32]

This traditional interpretation of a neutral Thailand balancing external threats has much force, but applied too rigidly it fails to take account of the fluctuating strengths of the Great Powers in South-East Asia, and as a result gives too little credit to the flexibility and sophistication of both Thai and British officials. In practice, while maintaining formal independence and neutrality, Thailand had always leaned heavily in the direction of the leading regional power. For some of the nineteenth century this appeared to be France; in the early twentieth century Britain established dominance only to be superseded briefly by Japan, subsequently the United States, and more recently China. Although this pattern of distinctly *compromised* neutrality is clearly an enduring one, it has received little attention. Exceptionally, Apichart Chinvanno, in his outstanding study of the origins of Thailand's alliance with the United States in 1954, suggests that this formal Thai–American alliance in practice deviated little from the past patterns of Thai foreign policy, despite her prior pretentions to full 'neutrality'.[33] Conversely, Thailand's relationship with the United States in the late 1950s retained the somewhat equivocating qualities of her previous relations with Britain and Japan. Typically, in the wake of the Thai–American alliance of 1954, Thailand still refused the United States permission to build signals intelligence and telemetry stations in Thai areas close to China, for fear of giving offence to her powerful northern neighbour.[34] Thai foreign policy therefore continued to embrace elements of both allegiance and neutrality.

It has so far been suggested that Thailand constituted an important component within the framework of British imperial defence and the imperial economy. A third form of influence at the political–judicial level also requires examination. In this area a key British requirement was to achieve control over the internal

threats posed by communist and nationalist 'agitators' operating against the formal European colonies in Asia. Had Thailand taken a position of genuine independence and neutrality on questions of imperial policing and security intelligence this would have created two dilemmas for the British. Firstly, and most importantly, the large local Sikh population would have been able to use Thailand as a base for subversive activities in India and Burma. Secondly, Bangkok would have represented a refuge for members of the Far Eastern Comintern and also for independent communists attempting to evade arrest in India, Burma, and Malaya.

Recent research on British imperial policing and security intelligence in the early twentieth century has demonstrated that the authority of Britain's colonial police forces extended almost uninterrupted through Thailand as far as the border of French Indo-China, where British co-operation with the French colonial Sûreté ensured that there was no safe haven for the enemies of the British Empire in South-East Asia. This is clearly demonstrated by the failure of German attempts to ferment disorder in Burma via the Sikh population of Bangkok during 1915. The British enjoyed 'minute control over the police operations which the Siamese undertook' against this conspiracy. Nor was this control a temporary or uncharacteristic phenomenon prefiguring Thailand's eventual decision to join the victorious powers in 1917. E. W. Trotter and R. C. Whiting of the Burma Police had been appointed, respectively, Acting Commissioner and Deputy Acting Commissioner of the Thai Police Force in Bangkok. Burma policemen, led by Eric St J. Lawson, had dominated since the turn of the century and were responsible for the development of the Bangkok Special Branch, which numbered 122 men before 1914. By September 1915 the Sikh conspirators arrested in Bangkok had either been executed or were in chains *en route* to British jails in Singapore.[35]

Ironically, Thai enthusiasm for British imperial policing derived partly from Thai formal political independence, and also from an appreciation by the Thai élite that the economy was bound into a wider imperial framework and shared its interest in stability. In 1921, Sir Josiah Crosby, then serving as Consul-General in Bangkok, reflected upon the congruence of interests existing between the Empire and the Thai élite:

Siamese statesmen see clearly enough that their interests are bound up with the maintenance of the *status quo* in this corner of Asia. They have no wish to see ourselves expelled from India or Burma, or the French

thrust out from Indochina. . . . The revolutionary movements in British India and French Indochina therefore excite little or no sympathy.

Meanwhile, as the British Financial Advisers often pointed out, the long-suffering Thai peasantry bore no lighter burden than in neighbouring colonial states. In this sense, the perceived interests of the Thai élite bore a resemblance to those of the petty monarchs of the French and British protectorates on the borders of Burma, Malaya, and Indo-China, who retained their privileges at the cost of some collaboration. The Thai élite also expressed contempt for fellow Asiatic nationalist movements struggling to overthrow the machinery of formal colonial rule of which they had no experience. Crosby's 1921 despatch suggested that the Thais 'consider as their inferiors the denizens of India and of Indo-China, whose continuance in a state of political subjugation, so far from seeming incongruous to them, is deemed to be necessary for the preservation of their own autonomy'.[36] After all, Britain had brought down the Burmese, their most troublesome enemies. Crosby considered this degree of collaboration to indicate a 'curious state of mind' that could only be partly explained by Thailand's proud tradition of formal political autonomy which permitted her the boast that she had at no time been ruled by a Western Power.[37]

The end of the absolute monarchy in 1932 did not make a substantial difference to internal security co-operation. As late as 1939, D. G. Cleary, Deputy Director of the Intelligence Bureau of the Indian Government, toured Thailand to investigate the perennial Sikh problem. Cleary noted that while the danger presented by the Sikhs was 'very real indeed', Britain could rest assured that 'any misconduct' by the Sikhs 'is sternly dealt with by the Thai authorities, who treat them as an inferior race held in bondage by the British'. The double dividend enjoyed by the overextended British Empire as a result of Thai formal independence was clearly operating at the political–judicial as well as other levels.[38] Influence over security in Thailand was also reinforced by the presence of foreign Judicial Advisers who were usually British and French nationals.[39]

Therefore the limited work as yet undertaken on Western policy towards Thailand during the early twentieth century has been largely misdirected. It has ignored the informal patterns of British authority, focusing instead upon a system of unequal treaties, an area where British authority was more formal but, at the same time, less significant.[40] The elimination of this formalized inequality was certainly a high priority for Thai governments, and as a result

the unequal treaties were negotiated away in 1909, 1925, and 1937. Britain offered limited resistance, not wishing to jeopardize her good relationship with the Thais by appearing to lag behind the other Powers in abandoning the treaty system. Partly as a result of contemporaneous unrest in Egypt, India, and Iraq, Britain was aware of the need to accommodate nationalist pressure. The Foreign Office noted in 1925 that in Thailand, 'if we remain the one power clinging to the vestiges of a system which is increasingly felt as a humiliation, we shall only increase the odium to which we are exposed in the Far East'.[41] Meanwhile Britain chose to emphasize the defence of the more significant but less formal aspects of her authority.

The precise extent of British dominance in Thailand before 1932 is difficult to measure. While the significance of Thailand's formal political independence must not be marginalized, it is also clear that this independence was sometimes closest to reality where it suited Britain best. Were this a comparative study, revealing parallels could be pursued with the patterns of British authority in the northern Malay States which had passed to Britain in 1909, in Iraq after 1932 and in other areas of British dominance.[42] In other ways the British position in Thailand did not resemble the British position elsewhere. This is hardly surprising for it was in the nature of indirect influence, and its concern with economy of effort, that the unique patterns of indigenous authority should be incorporated, and indeed reinforced, by the collaborative relationship. Much work remains to be done in identifying the precise pattern of British informal dominance in Thailand before 1929. Such explorations, however tantalizing, lie beyond the scope of this study, the focus of which is the decline of the British position during the 1930s in the face of both American and Japanese competition, and the origins of subsequent wartime schemes for its revival. Consequently, for the purposes of this study it is sufficient to establish that unqualified and eulogistic reference to 'independent Thailand' is, at best, a misleading formulation.

## *American Competition*

American policy towards Thailand during the late 1920s and 1930s, in common with the position of Britain, is far from being well understood. Hitherto historians have tended to minimize the importance of Thai–American relations during this period. It has been widely assumed that, subsequent to the successful efforts of

Francis B. Sayre, an American Adviser to the Thai Government, to revise Thailand's unequal treaties with the West in 1925, Washington had no important part to play until her involvement in the Seri Thai [Free Thai] movement in 1942. The major account of Thai–American relations in the twentieth century asserts firmly that 'the influence of the United States in Siam was minor from the time of the overthrow of the absolute monarchy until World War II'. More recent accounts have followed this orthodoxy, characterizing the American role during the 1930s as that of 'an unimportant observer'.[43] Contrary to these dismissive assertions, it will be suggested here that the nature and significance of the American role has been neglected and stands in need of reassessment. While this cannot be compared with the scale and scope of British activities, flowing from pervasive, if declining, informal influence and contiguous colonial territories, nevertheless, in two respects the impact of the United States was critical. Firstly, prior to 1937, the United States rather than Japan constituted the most confident challenger to Britain's economic position in Bangkok. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, at the strategic level, from the late 1930s, all Western policy in South-East Asia and indeed much Thai thinking was conditioned by the ineffective search for Anglo-American–French–Dutch military co-operation in the region. Thereafter, during 1940 and 1941, Roosevelt's policy and his gradual extension of support constituted the key determinant for both European states and for Japan in South-East Asia.

In some respects, assertions as to the insignificance of American influence in Thailand after 1925 are not surprising, for the most visible but not the most important aspect of the American presence in Bangkok, a succession of senior advisers, was in decline. Their heyday stretched from 1902 to 1915 when, although small in number, they dominated the senior post of General Adviser. At this time the presence of foreign advisers was ubiquitous throughout Asia, including China, Japan, and the Malay States which were being gradually incorporated into the British Empire. American dominance of Thailand's senior advisory position can be explained in terms of a number of factors. Firstly, a generally favourable impression had been created by American missionary influence and the part they had played in educating the princely élite during the late nineteenth century. Secondly, at a time when Thailand was balanced precariously between the acquisitive imperial territories of Britain and France, the obvious

limitation of American interests in South-East Asia to the Philippines commended them to Bangkok. Indeed in 1902 the Thai Minister in Washington remarked to the American Secretary of State that their choice of General Adviser was prompted by the 'friendly and progressive policy in Asia' pursued by the United States. But more fundamentally this decision also marked Thai recognition of the United States as a future force in Asia, for the Thai Foreign Minister remarked simultaneously that 'the United States is a great nation and one which must be reckoned with in the world of politics'. The British-owned *Bangkok Times* was quick to appreciate the importance of this, reflecting that with Britain and France encroaching upon her borders, Thailand was 'calling in the new world to hold the balance between two parts of the old'.[44]

Prior to the First World War, the remit of the American General Adviser included foreign affairs, legislation, and the general co-ordination of all government ministries. Edward H. Strobel and Jens I. Westengard, the two Harvard Law professors who were the incumbents of this post during that period, enjoyed considerable influence; some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that they all but directed Thailand's foreign policy. But ironically the appearance of the first adviser, Strobel, coincided with the concerted Thai efforts, albeit ineffectual, to limit the power of foreign officials in their service. Arriving in 1902, Strobel expected to serve under the same generous terms as his Belgian predecessor, but instead he discovered that the Thais intended to demote him to a role equivalent to Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Strobel was required to exert considerable pressure to recover the traditional overarching authority associated with his post. Nevertheless, Thai objectives remained constant and therefore in 1915, with the departure of Westengard, Strobel's successor, the position was replaced with the lesser office of Foreign Affairs Adviser. This constituted part of a general drive to reduce the numbers of all foreign nationals in Thai service. Britain, with its powerful regional economy developing apace in the south, was best placed to resist the removal of her advisers. Reflecting on this general drive to reduce the corps of advisers, the American Minister complained to Washington:

> Whenever this affected a British subject, their diplomatic representative in Bangkok has invariably filed a strong protest, and by a queer combination of veiled threats and flattery, usually succeed in retaining

the official on the payroll. A similar policy has been adopted by the German and French Legations but these countries have so far been less successful.

The substance of this complaint was that Washington's policy toward Thailand was not sufficiently vigorous or competitive. However, the American Secretary of State, Edward Lansing, forbade the Minister from making even a formal protest on behalf of American Advisers. American diplomats, even in 1915, found themselves in a frustrating position whereby the limited nature of their country's interests did not warrant Washington making serious efforts in their defence.[45]

Subsequent American personnel, now styled Foreign Affairs Advisers, remained influential into the early 1920s and played a central part in the renegotiation of Thailand's irksome unequal treaties with the West. Francis B. Sayre, the most eminent of these advisers during the 1920s and an ardent royalist, continued to advise members of the princely élite, and indeed King Prajadhipok, long after he had returned to his post at the Harvard Law School. At the same time, with the advent of end of the absolute monarchy in 1932, some Americans, including Sayre, found themselves out of sympathy with the new regime in Bangkok. In the mid-1930s the American Advisers of that period, Raymond B. Stevens and subsequently Frederic R. Dolbeare, were gradually eclipsed by a powerful and talented Thai Foreign Affairs Adviser, Prince Wan Waityakorn Voravan, appointed for this express purpose.[46]

Against this background of the erosion of the most prominent American advisory position, and of burgeoning British economic power on Thailand's southern border, it might well be asked, why did Britain regard the United States as the most significant commercial threat to her position in Bangkok prior to 1937? One explanation lies in the fact that Britain's apparent strength in South-East Asia, with her powerful entrepôt port of Singapore, was running against the global trend. Between 1914 and 1930 Britain's share of world manufacture fell from 14 per cent to 9 per cent; meanwhile the First World War had transformed the United States into the largest creditor nation and Britain into a significant debtor. Hitherto, the power of sterling and London's position as a financial centre had served to cushion Britain from these developments, but the Bank of England's efforts to secure Anglo-American co-operation in Asia in the 1920s underlined the extent to which sterling was now under pressure as the premier

international currency. Devaluation in September 1931 appeared to confirm this. The growing power of the dollar was not lost upon the Government in Bangkok, who temporarily converted a substantial proportion of their reserves into dollars in both 1931 and 1939. The potential of American interests once they had become entrenched in Thailand was underlined by the oil refining and distribution activities of Standard Vacuum Oil, who competed vigorously with the Anglo-Dutch combine, Royal Dutch-Shell. Conversely, in the late 1930s, when these oil companies began to co-operate against the threat of Thai nationalization, British officials quickly found that they could do little without the approval of the American companies. In the 1920s the United States failed to transform global ascendancy into a strong commercial position in Bangkok partly because of the close links between the economies of Thailand and Malaya, but also because of the lack of concerted American effort. In the early 1930s that effort began to materialize with Thai imports from the United States doubling in a period of three years, while British imports fell dramatically. However, both were quickly outstripped by the extraordinary growth in the import of competitively priced Japanese piece goods.

Perhaps the most promising opportunity noted by American diplomats within Thailand was the possibility that this country offered for circumventing commodity cartelization by European producers. As early as 1916, confronted with the first indications that Thailand might wish to revise her commercial treaty with the United States, American diplomats began to search for some suitable *quid pro quo*. Having explored a number of possibilities they reported that only one area showed immediate promise, 'namely tin'. They continued:

> It appears that normally the United States consumes annually, ¾ of the world's product.... Siamese tin at present counts as Straits tin [British Malayan tin], as it is smelted in British territory and the smelters and shippers of the Federated Malay States... are credited with a handsome percentage of the price paid by the consumer. So that it might possibly pay to ship tin ore direct to the United States.

The New York Orient Mines Company actively investigated this possibility in the 1920s. In the 1930s, British-led producer cartels would fight prolonged battles with Thai nationalists to maintain Bangkok's adherence to cartelization designed to increase the price of commodities destined largely for the United States. Equally, American companies would attempt to establish a

position within Thailand with the object of undermining cartelization. It was these efforts that ensured that British officials and entrepreneurs operated in a climate of perpetual, if distant, threat, and were therefore constantly on the watch for what they referred to as the 'American python'.[47]

If, until the late 1930s, the United States was important in Thailand because of Anglo-American economic competition, then thereafter American policy was primarily significant because of a long and troubled search for Western military co-operation, both in terms of a specific guarantee to Thailand and throughout South-East Asia. The First World War had witnessed the ascendancy of the United States as a naval as well as an economic power. This was marked by the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922, wherein Britain chose to abandon an effective alliance with Japan in order to avoid an expensive naval arms race with the United States which she could not afford. Thereafter Britain embarked on a fruitless search for American naval co-operation east of the Suez. Both Britain and the United States recognized that the Singapore naval base was weak but the United States Navy, already fearing a two-ocean war in the Atlantic and the Pacific, consistently resisted attempts to extend its responsibilities to Singapore and the South China Sea. Confrontation with Japan during the Manchurian Crisis of 1931–3 failed to inspire Anglo-American co-operation among either diplomats or military planners and thereafter the problems of the depression ensured that the Roosevelt administration remained focused upon domestic affairs before 1937.

As early as 1935 Britain, France, Thailand, and Japan all showed themselves to be increasingly conscious of the weakness of Singapore and, correspondingly, to be aware that in the long term the *status quo* in South-East Asia could only be preserved with American military support. In 1939 the perceptive Prince Wan pointed out that although American isolationism was a negative factor, nevertheless it determined the nature of the entire regional strategic matrix.

During the 1930s there were both general and specific problems that prevented any prospect of the extension of a guarantee to either Singapore or Thailand. Most obviously Roosevelt faced the insurmountable obstacle of domestic isolationism; moreover the State Department identified grave constitutional problems with any personal presidential undertakings to intervene overseas on behalf of another power. In any case, during 1940 Roosevelt

entertained his own reservations about assistance to the British Empire, considering that the balance of probability was that the Government in London would be forced to capitulate to the Axis. General William J. Donovan, before he became co-ordinator of Roosevelt's intelligence, conducted two missions to Europe to ascertain the possibility of Britain's survival.[48]

More specifically, American–Thai relations during this crucial period were beset by irritants. Since 1935 American oil companies had been pursuing a protracted struggle against Thai nationalization of their refining and distribution business, a programme that emulated similar nationalization by Japan. This episode culminated in an Anglo-American oil blockade imposed on Thailand in the Summer of 1939, a full two years before the same measure was taken against Japan, albeit for different reasons. It also ensured that in so far as Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, gave extended consideration to Thai affairs before 1940 it was in the context of what appeared to be an unwelcome Japanese-inspired episode. If Hull already viewed Bangkok with circumspection by 1939, then the subsequent Thai incursion into French Indo-China, co-ordinated with Tokyo, could not have been better calculated to offend Hull's sensibilities. Since 1937 he had publicly committed himself to the moralistic principle of no territorial change by coercion or military force. The Indo-China episode was sufficient to convince both Hull and the American Minister in Bangkok that the Thais were all but Japanese puppets and were therefore 'past praying for'. Accordingly, British attempts to orchestrate Western support for Thailand as a neutral buffer state positioned between Japan and Singapore received short shrift from both the United States and France. Nevertheless, a frustrating search for an American guarantee for either Thailand or Singapore formed a centre-piece of British regional policy from 1940.[49]

While different parts of the administration in Washington entertained a variety of good reasons for avoiding entanglement in South-East Asia during 1940, nevertheless the result was a twofold contradiction that was increasingly apparent to Roosevelt. Firstly, British weakness in Europe following the fall of France in the Spring of 1940 dictated a policy of appeasement towards Japan. Overstretched in the Middle East and awaiting an expected invasion of South-east England, Britain could not afford to open a front with Japan in the Far East and so would go to almost any lengths to avoid a confrontation with Tokyo while she lacked

American support in that region. This was not to Roosevelt's liking as he now sought to harden his own line towards Japan. Secondly, Washington had not yet appreciated the extent to which Britain's war in Europe and the Middle East was dependent upon the resources of the Empire. This was true not only of materials but also of manpower since the Middle East campaign was conducted almost exclusively with Indian and Australian troops. Any attempt to underpin Britain's efforts in Europe through programmes such as Lend-Lease, but which left her exposed in Asia, misunderstood the nature of the British war effort.

These contradictions were most clearly revealed by bitter Anglo-American arguments over the Burma Road during the Summer and Autumn of 1940. The Burma Road constituted the crucial supply line for Chiang Kai-shek's forces, channelling support to a government whose coastal access had been closed by Japanese occupation. This route also permitted China to export materials and in 1940 the United States still derived two-thirds of its tungsten, a key strategic mineral, from this uncertain source.

In June 1940, noting Britain's weakness, Japan issued an ultimatum requiring her to close the Burma Road or risk military confrontation. Churchill faced Roosevelt squarely with his dilemma. Unwilling to risk war with Japan single-handed, he offered to keep the Burma Road open only in return for a pledge of American support in the event of a Japanese attack.[50] When Roosevelt refused, Churchill reduced his terms, requesting instead a brusque warning from Washington to Tokyo that an attempt to change the *status quo* in the Far East would not be tolerated. This also proved elusive and in July, Churchill capitulated to Japan, closing the Burma Road for three months. Washington reacted with anger and incomprehension: even Stanley Hornbeck, one of the State Department's more Anglophile officials, suggested that some sort of retaliation should be taken against London.[51]

Throughout the Summer and Autumn of 1940 Britain continued to press Washington not only for public or private guarantees of her own position on Singapore, but also for secret pledges of support in the event of a Japanese attack either upon the Netherlands East Indies or Thailand. This, they argued, was the only alternative to a policy of appeasement by Britain, France, and Thailand.[52]

The extent to which the United States constituted the key strategic arbiter in all of South-East Asia is underlined by the

parallel experience of Paris and later Vichy in Indo-China during 1940. The successive Governors-General of the colony, General Catroux and then Admiral Decoux, issued frequent appeals for American support against Japan's incursion during 1940. Even Paul Baudouin, the Vichy Foreign Minister and at best a dubious character, appears to have been willing to join with Britain in resisting Japan had American assistance been forthcoming. Baudouin was particularly dismayed by the absence of expected ethnic solidarity. He explained:

> There can be no doubt that our presence in the Far East forms part of the existing Anglo-Saxon plan for that part of the world. This plan is upset, but in the event of an invasion of Indo-China, the United States will confine itself to moral condemnation; such being the case we must come to terms with Japan, and maintain our position in Indo-China in agreement with her.

As with Britain and the Burma Road, France opted for a degree of appeasement.[53] For both countries, at odds as they were over Thailand's border confrontation with Indo-China during 1940 and 1941, nevertheless Washington's attitude remained the critical determining factor for their policies in South-East Asia.

During the five years prior to the outbreak of the Pacific War, it is therefore possible to detect a litany of complaint from British, French, and Thai officials that Washington had not recognized the importance of either South-East Asia or Thailand in Japan's strategic thinking. As late as August 1941, Henry Ashley Clarke, a senior British diplomat, lamented, 'Americans minimise the issue, and talk of big issues, but Thailand is the key to the South.'[54] Such reproaches were unjust. Elements within the Washington administration had been reflecting upon the importance of the region since 1939 and in 1940 three events served to focus Roosevelt's mind on the problem. In quick succession the Burma Road Crisis, the Tripartite Pact, and Japan's move into northern Indo-China seemed to indicate Tokyo's future intentions.

A turning-point in Roosevelt's thinking was revealed on 31 December 1940 in a letter to Francis B. Sayre, the American High Commissioner of the Philippines, who enjoyed long associations with Thailand. Roosevelt now chose to underline the connections between South-East Asia and American support for Britain in Europe. He asked, 'If Japan, moving further southward, should gain possession of the region of . . . the Malay Peninsula, would not . . . the chances of England's winning be decreased

thereby?' It was not enough, he asserted, to focus 'exclusively on the problem of the immediate defense of the British Isles'; instead the British Empire now required support on a global scale. Consequently, from early 1941, the United States turned slowly to underpin her position at Singapore and to support her policy of prolonging Thai neutrality through a sympathetic policy towards Bangkok. No concrete guarantee of military intervention was made before November, but increasingly bellicose statements and military missions dispatched to Singapore indicated Washington's new position. As a result, Japanese policy-makers, while wishing to absorb Thailand during 1941, held back, believing this might well entail war with Britain *and* the United States.[55]

Accordingly, from the mid-1930s, the strategic matrix in South-East Asia, with Thailand at its centre, was conditioned by the initial absence and later the slow materialization of American initiatives. From early 1941 London's policy towards Thailand was driven primarily by daily consultation with Washington and in the months before Pearl Harbor, it was Roosevelt, rather than Churchill, who determined in some detail Western policy towards Thailand. More importantly, throughout the decade preceding the Pacific War, Western policy towards Thailand was consistently formulated in an Anglo-American context of simultaneous rivalry and co-operation.

## *Thailand, the British Empire, and American Anti-colonialism*

This study has its origins not in a particular interest in Western policies towards Thailand during the inter-war years but in a general preoccupation with the animosity generated amongst the wartime allies by the question of the post-war status of the European empires in Asia. Perhaps the most attractive area that suggested itself for study was the wartime issue of the future status of French Indo-China, not only because of the bitter legacy that resulted from Allied decisions, but also because of the opportunities available here for the exploration of Anglo-French, as well as Anglo-American, issues and for drawing illuminating comparisons with parallel Middle Eastern episodes in Syria and the Lebanon.[56] The question of French Indo-China was also replete with fascinating historical irony.[57]

Yet, while the question of wartime Indo-China remains a most

intriguing subject, the dynamics of this particular controversy have largely been explored.[58] More importantly, the wider frameworks of Anglo-American rivalry and co-operation have now been mapped out by a number of scholars working on both Asia and the Middle East, particularly Christopher Thorne and William Roger Louis.[59] Consequently, it is now generally understood that almost from the moment of Britain's defeat in Malaya by Japan, and in the French case somewhat earlier, many European officials had decided that the raising of the Union Jack and the Tricolor once more over Singapore and Saigon was far more important than any victory parade through Tokyo.[60] Equally it has been demonstrated that corresponding American anti-colonial sentiment, which European officials viewed with such alarm and distaste, was a complex phenomenon. Roosevelt's anti-colonial stance drew moral force from a commitment to self-determination and also from a firm conviction that rivalry over empires had contributed to the outbreak of the Second World War. But at the same time American anti-colonialism also drew strength from the knowledge that the restoration of the European Empires implied the resurrection of imperial tariffs and a strengthening of the sterling area with direct consequences for American commerce.[61]

In stark contrast, however, to the wartime controversies over the future of European colonies such as Indo-China, India, and Malaya, the place of Thailand in allied relations during the 1940s continues to present a number of perplexing problems that have yet to be resolved. Historians and political scientists writing on twentieth-century Thailand at both the international and domestic levels never tire of re-emphasizing Thailand's unbroken record of formal independence, seeking to underline that Thailand, unlike her neighbours, has never suffered the ignominy of colonial status.[62] Yet, most curiously, a close inspection of British and American documentation for the 1940s reveals that the wartime debate over the future of Thailand, an independent state, quickly came to occupy a central place within the fierce controversy over the future of colonies in South-East Asia. Indeed paradoxically, the issue of Thailand generated more acrimony between Britain and the United States than did the questions of neighbouring British colonial states such as Burma and Malaya.[63] Not only was Thailand viewed as a colonial issue by American officials despite its formal independence, but this matter also stimulated those same officials to unsurpassed levels of anti-colonial fervour. The United States suspected that whereas in the rest of South-East

Asia, Britain and other European states were engaged in the recovery of Empire, in Thailand Britain was about to embark upon a unique exercise in imperial aggrandizement. In this assumption, despite pious British denials, American officials were correct.

As in the corresponding case of Indo-China and India, the Anglo-American conflict over the future of Thailand was not always played out at the highest level. By 1944 President Roosevelt had become increasingly reluctant to press British officials on the future of European territories in Asia. He did not wish to jeopardize a firm friendship and shared European priorities by arguing over Asian issues on which Churchill was unlikely to give ground. Roosevelt later complained to Eden that he had discussed Indo-China twenty-five times with Churchill, adding, 'Perhaps discussed is the wrong word. I have spoken about it twenty-five times. But the Prime Minister has never said anything.'[64] A similar silence was preserved on Thailand due to Churchill's secret territorial designs on large areas of its southern peninsula.

Consequently, the wartime management of awkward questions was passed to reluctant subordinates in the Foreign Office, the State Department, and elsewhere. In the absence of firm political direction at the highest level British and American regional commanders, their political advisers and propaganda bureaux gained an exaggerated impression of the extent to which their wartime military influence and control would have a bearing on the post-war settlement. American officials were particularly perplexed by the inseparability of political and military issues for there was no escaping the fact that to assist Britain in defeating Japan in Asia was, at one and the same time, to assist in restoring colonial rule.

Thailand was especially important in this context, for as John Paton Davies, Political Adviser to the American General Stilwell in China, pointed out, anti-colonialism was not only essential to American credibility within colonial areas, it was doubly significant in independent states, particularly China. As Davies asserted, the danger was that 'the Chinese and later the Thais, will feel—as many Chinese already do—that we have aligned ourselves with the British in a "whiteocracy" to re-impose Western imperialism in Asia'.[65] The relationship with America's China policy had also been identified publicly by commentators such as Pearl Buck, President of the East and West Association in the United States.

'If we ally with the British Empire in any way,' she warned in November 1943 'then in the eyes of other peoples we become part of the British empire. . . . Our relations with postwar China, then, depend entirely on our relations with empire.'[66] In this sense American anti-colonialism in South and South-East Asia formed an essential counterpart to her China policy.

Consequently, British ambitions in Thailand, far more than attempts at mere restoration of European rule in Indo-China and Malaya, struck at the very root of American credibility in China and elsewhere. Therefore, American officials were prepared to go to some lengths in order to impede British acretion in Thailand. Typically, in 1945, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the American wartime Secret Service, co-operated with American Foreign Service officials in sabotaging the official visit of the Thai Prime Minister designate to Admiral Mountbatten's South East Asia Command (SEAC) in Ceylon. This, it seems, was not an isolated incident, for horrified British officials in London subsequently noted that 'the OSS have on at least one earlier occasion "kidnapped" important Siamese who were supposed to be looked after by British organisations. This episode smells.'[67] For American officials in Asia, such drastic action seemed wholly justified, for they understood the continued independence of Thailand to be central to American interests throughout Asia. In a review of current developments in Thailand on 11 December 1944, one American official insisted that 'to America a strong democratic Thailand would be a support for . . . self government in Asia. To Great Britain a strong independent Thailand might be a challenge to the colonial system in Asia.'[68] Hence paradoxically, 'independent' Thailand became one of the most fraught colonial issues in Asia. The irony of this was not lost upon contemporary observers, as one American official noted: 'I think of all places in the world, curiously enough, Thailand is one of the few places where the United States has a firm foreign policy.'[69]

United States officials were especially disconcerted by reports that Britain intended either to annex southern Thailand or alternatively restore the recently deposed absolute monarchy in order to ensure that the ruling élite was dependent upon British support to maintain its position.[70] Certainly the Colonial Office had long held ambitions towards the rubber and tin-rich areas of southern Thailand around the Kra Isthmus.[71] These were subsequently reinforced by Churchill's advocacy of post-war annexation on strategic grounds, expressed in the wake of

Britain's defeat in Malaya in 1942. Leo Amery, Secretary of State for India and Burma, developed similar ideas independently of Churchill.[72] Meanwhile officials in Britain's wartime sabotage organization, the Special Operations Executive, explored ideas for royalist *coups d'etat* in Thailand both before and after December 1941.[73] By December 1944 the American Ambassador in China, General Hurley, considered that he had gathered sufficient evidence to permit him to lay charges before his British counterpart, Sir Horace Seymour. He insisted that in London 'plans were being made for annexing Siam'. Seymour denied the suggestions fervently but when he reported this exchange to the Foreign Office an official minuted that his denial was 'hardly correct', for, he explained, 'we have designs on the Kra Isthmus [southern Siam]'.[74]

This wartime rivalry links this episode with earlier themes in Western policy towards Thailand. British preparations for a future forward policy in Thailand were instrumental in arousing wartime American interest in a country which some officials had hitherto largely neglected or even dismissed as being within the wider British orbit in Asia. To the American State Department, British wartime ambitions against Thailand appeared to be a wholly unwelcome novelty. In fact, in two quite different senses, British ambitions derived their wartime dynamism from old ideas and associated communities of officials that had been an integral part of British policies in the region throughout the pre-war period. Therefore Anglo-American rivalry over the future status of Thailand was rooted firmly in the nature of Britain's position in Thailand during the period before 1942. Consequently, Anglo-American rivalry in Thailand cannot be properly understood without a thorough exploration of two separate but related pre-war themes that lent British wartime ambitions in Thailand their vitality.

Firstly, British hopes for expansion at the expense of Thailand itself, or for informal hegemony there, far from being new, represented a desire to revive a historic pattern. Not only had Burma and Malaya expanded at Thailand's cost during the past two centuries but, more importantly, prior to 1932, Britain's political and economic influence had been such that Thailand effectively constituted an informal component of the British Empire. Consequently, British plans for post-war Thailand, as for neighbouring Malaya and Burma, were about recovering a lost pre-eminence, albeit in the case of Thailand, an informal position that had ebbed gradually in the 1920s and 1930s rather than ending abruptly in 1942.

This attempt to reshape British policy in the image of the 1920s was reinforced by a second factor of perhaps greater importance, the fragmented nature of the British policy-making community. During the period 1932–41 British diplomats in Bangkok had not been in an acquisitive or domineering frame of mind. Instead they had sought to exchange a visibly declining informal supremacy for friendship and co-operation in the defence of Singapore. However, after Thailand's capitulation to Japan in 1941–2, many British policy-makers, especially those outside the Foreign Office, judged the diplomatic approach to Thai policy to have failed. Speaking of 'betrayal' by Thailand, they turned backward, focusing instead upon an earlier and somewhat idealized model of strong British influence as a pattern for post-war Anglo-Thai relations.

In December 1941, British diplomats and their benign policies experienced a *bouleversement* at the hands of Japan and also suffered physical removal from the regional and local levels of policy-making. For the next five years South-East Asia came under a military command which staffed its civil affairs sections with ex-colonial officials who spoke of Thailand with distaste. Contemporaneously in London, a crestfallen Foreign Office found itself competing with new wartime organizations, such as the Ministry of Economic Warfare, which had recruited heavily from Empire traders and businessmen in the hope of exploiting their regional expertise. It was from this 'colonially minded' policy-making élite, newly resurgent after years of relative subservience to the Foreign Office, that much of Britain's wartime Thai policy flowed. More importantly, it was from these often garrulous groups of non-diplomatic officials in Asia that their American counterparts gained a harsh impression of future British intentions. Consequently, this study seeks to argue that Thailand's peculiar position at the centre of imperial controversies during the 1940s can only be properly understood in the wider context of, firstly, Britain's dominant but rapidly declining position in Thailand between 1929 and 1942, and secondly, the divergent approaches to Thailand advocated by different components of the British policy-making community. The essence of this argument then is one of continuity between schools and generations of policy-makers. Furthermore, it is argued that shifts in policy can often be explained more in terms of the rise and fall of competing 'colonial' and 'diplomatic' approaches to Thailand within a bureaucracy than as a product of dramatic changes in the international system.

Such continuities are also identifiable within not only British and American but also Thai foreign policy. While phrases such as

'declining informal dominance' are appropriate in the context of the Anglo-Thai relationship in the 1930s, Thailand's formal political independence was nevertheless of importance on the eve of the Second World War and ensured that her wartime experience was uniquely untraumatic. While in neighbouring colonial states Japan had swept away European rule, in Thailand the Japanese arrived to conclude an alliance with an independent state from which British influence had slowly ebbed during the 1930s. Therefore, in contrast to neighbouring states, where both 1941 and 1945 represented a *tabula rasa*, Thailand enjoyed a pattern of remarkable continuity. This is underlined clearly by the omnipresent and enigmatic figure of Field Marshal Luang Phibul Songkram. Phibul arrived as the military *enfant terrible* of the Revolution of 1932, remained as Premier both before and after 1941, and returned in 1948, after only the briefest incarceration as a 'war criminal', to reassume the Premiership until 1957.

This continuity, emphasizing again the links between the periods before and after 1941, was of great importance for rival British and American policies which both purported to draw moral force from their understanding of Thailand's relations with Japan before and during Japan's advance on Singapore. Diametrically opposed interpretations of the period 1937–42 were employed both by Britain to legitimize her wartime plans to re-establish a degree of control over post-war Thailand, and also by the United States to justify her attempts to thwart perceived British aggrandizement in South-East Asia. The place of Thailand in Western policies during the approach of the Pacific War therefore requires careful study, not only because many aspects of the inter-war period are far from being well understood but also because the subsequent acrimonious wartime debate over the future of Thailand was inseparable from ideas and arguments concerning the nature of Thai politics and Western foreign policies during the 1930s.

1. R. H. Fifield, *The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, 1945–1958*, New York: Harper, 1958, p. 230.

2. B. Anderson, 'Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies', in E. B. Ayal (ed.), *The Study of Thailand*, Athens: Ohio University, Center for International Studies, 1978, p. 193.

3. N. Brailey, *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore: A Frustrated Asian Revolution*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1986, pp. 3–9.

4. Roosevelt to Sumner Welles, 7 January 1938, Box 95, PSF, Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York; Dormer to FO No. 158, 2 October 1933, F7021/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO.

5. C. Barnett, *The Audit of War: The Illusion and Reality of Britain as a Great Power*, London: Macmillan, 1986; I. M. Drummond, *Imperial Economic Policy, 1917–1939*, London: Macmillan, 1974; J. Darwin, 'Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy between the Wars', *Historical Journal*, XXIII, 3 (1980): 657–79; B. R. Tomlinson, 'The Contraction of England: National Decline and the Loss of Empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, XI, 1 (1982): 58–72.

6. Recent studies include B. Batson, *The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam*, Singapore: Oxford University Press/Asian Studies Association of Australia, 1984; Brailey, *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore*; Charivat Santaputra, *Thai Foreign Policy, 1932–1946*, Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1987; Thamsook Numnonda, *Thailand and the Japanese Presence, 1941–1945*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 1977. A useful account is also offered in D. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984, pp. 252–66.

7. Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. xiii; Brailey, *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore*, p. 18; A. Moffat, *Mongkut: King of Siam*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961, p. viii; F. J. Moore with C. D. Neher, *Thailand: Its People, Society and Culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974, p. 310. Vanderbosch and Butwell note that 'Thailand is the only South East Asian country that never lost its independence to a Western colonial power', A. Vanderbosch and R. Butwell, *The Changing Face of South-East Asia*, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966, p. 279.

8. C. Dixon and M. J. G. Parnwell, 'Thailand: The Legacy of Non-Colonial Development in South East Asia', in C. Dixon and M. J. Heffernan (eds.), *Colonialism and Development in the Contemporary World*, London: Mansell, 1991, p. 205; Anderson, 'Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies', pp. 193, 199, 209.

9. Limited work has been conducted on British and American policies towards Thailand in the period 1929–42 dealing with the specific question of unequal treaties. Some insight into British policy can be gained from Charivat's study of Thai foreign policy in the 1930s. Vikrom Koompirochana, 'Siam in British Foreign Policy, 1855–1938: The Acquisition and the Relinquishment of British Extraterritorial Rights', Ph.D. thesis, Michigan State University, 1972; P. Oblas, 'Siam's Efforts to Revise the Unequal Treaty System in the Sixth Reign, 1910–25', Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1974; Charivat, *Thai Foreign Policy, 1932–1946*.

10. The majority of the Bank of England files relating to Thailand can be located in the following classes of material: ADM 25, C 43, C 44, G 1, G 30, OV 9, OV 25, OV 43, OV 65, OV 66, OV 95. Bank of England Archives, Threadneedle Street, London (hereafter BE).

11. W. R. Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East: Arab Nationalism, the United States and Post-War Imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. vii.

12. On devolved authority, see, in particular, R. Jeffrey, 'The Politics of "Indirect Rule": Types of Relationship Among Rulers, Ministers and Residents in a "Native State"', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 13, 3 (1973): 261–81.

13. Memorandum by Caine, 9 November 1944, CO 968/162/14814/11A, PRO, cited in W. R. Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonisation of the British Empire, 1941–1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 402.

14. For a discussion of the problems posed by entrepôt trade via Singapore in assessing the real destination of much of Thailand's exports, see Cook to Niemeyer, 17 September 1929, fol. 23, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE.

15. Office of Strategic Services Report, 'Thailand: Current Developments', 11 December 1944, File 483, Box 49, Entry 106, RG 226, NARA; Dormer to FO No. 7, enclosing Annual Report on Siam: 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO; Crosby to Halifax No. 166, 28 April 1938, enclosing Annual Economic Report (A) for 1937, F5937/373/40, FO 371/22212, PRO; Crosby to Halifax No. 457E, 25 October 1938, enclosing Annual Report, Economic (B) for 1938, F12608/373/40, FO 371/22212, PRO.

16. Siepmann (BE) to Skinner (BE), 15 September 1932, fol. 204, OV 25/2 (669/1), BE.

17. Dolbeare to Donovan (COI/OSS), 16 November 1941, 892.51/231½ PS/AML, RG 59, NARA.

18. For brief biographical sketch, see Appendix 1. On the Empire Letter, see Hall-Patch to Siepmann, 31 December 1930, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.23/45, TNA; R. Dayer, *Finance and Empire: Sir Charles Addis*, London: Macmillan, 1988, pp. 109–10.

19. Siepmann (BE) to Skinner (BE), 15 September 1932, fol. 204, OV 25/2 (669/1), BE. The British Financial Advisers employed Bentley's Complete Phrase Code, one of the more sophisticated commercial systems available at that time. The use of these codes was banned by most governments on the outbreak of war in 1939.

20. Baxter (Bangkok) to Siepmann (BE), 8 May 1934, fol. 119A, OV 25/3 (669/2), BE. Encipherment was not obviated by the use of the British diplomatic bag because of disagreements with the Foreign Office.

21. Doll (Bangkok) to Niemeyer (BE), 28 March 1938, fol. 25, OV 25/5 (669/4), BE. See also Hall-Patch to Siepmann, 31 December 1930, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.23/45, TNA.

22. Dayer, *Sir Charles Addis*, p. 111.

23. Doll (Bangkok) to Niemeyer (BE), 17 May 1940, fol. 38, OV 25/7, (670/2), BE; Worthington (British Adviser, Kelantan) to H. C. Patani, 27 April 1925, fol. 2, K Kh 0301.1.8/16, TNA.

24. Hall-Patch memorandum, 'Investigation into the Present Fiscal System of Siam', 26 November 1931, fol. 2, K Kh 0301.1.1/12, TNA. On this matter see also pp. 59, 67, and 235.

25. Siepmann (BE) to Baxter (Bangkok), 24 March 1934, fol. 130, ADM 25/9 (4100/2), BE.

26. Baker to SoS No. 59, 1 May 1934, 892.00/123 F/G, RG 59, NARA.

27. Doll (Bangkok) to Niemeyer (BE), 17 May 1940, fol. 38, OV 25/7 (670/2), BE.

28. Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', p. 168. On traditional Thai–Malay relations see, Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai–Malay Relations: Traditional Intra-regional Relations from the Seventeenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988.

29. Thamsook Numnonda, 'The Anglo-Siamese Secret Convention of 1897', *Journal of the Siam Society*, LIII, 1 (1965): 51–2.

30. Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', pp. 169–70. See also I. Klein, 'Britain, Siam and the Malay Peninsula, 1906–1909', *Historical Journal*, 12, 1 (1969): 119–36; Chandran Jeshurun, 'Britain and the Siamese Malay States, 1892–1904: A Comment', *Historical Journal*, 15, 3 (1972): 471–92; Thamsook Numnonda, 'Negotiations Regarding the Cession of the Siamese Malay States, 1907–1909', *Journal of the Siam Society*, LV, 2 (1967): 227–35.

31. Shaharil Talib, *After Its Own Image: The Trengganu Experience, 1881–1941*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 177. Trengganu successfully resisted the imposition of a 'Siamese Adviser'.

32. Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', *passim*.

33. Apichart Chinvanno, 'Thailand's Search for Protection: The Making of the Alliance with the United States, 1947–54', Ph.D. thesis, St. Anthony's College, Oxford, 1985. On this matter, see also E. B. Reynolds, 'The Opening Wedge: The OSS in Thailand', in G. Chalou (ed.), *The Secrets War*, Washington, DC: National Archives, 1992.

34. Interview with official from the NSA, Washington, DC, 12 August 1986.

35. Lawson to Prince Nares Vovaridhu, Minister of Local Government, 19 May 1905, enclosing 'Report on the Police Administration of Bangkok Town', K Kh 0301.1.22/4, TNA; Lawson to Williamson, 11 August 1920, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.22/5, TNA. In 1915 the British presence was strengthened by the arrival of David Petrie, a Secret Service officer of the Indian Government, later to become Director of the British Security Service (MI5), R. Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence*, London: Frank Cass (forthcoming).

36. Crosby was quoting a dispatch that he had written in 1921 within a telegram drafted in 1938, Crosby to Halifax No. 328, 10 August 1938, F10000/1321/40, FO 371/22214, PRO.

37. Arguments advanced in this study concerning informal dominance do not necessarily imply a system of British 'indirect rule' in Bangkok. In any case British officials in South-East Asia seemed less confident than their African counterparts as to the meaning of this phrase. Typically, J. L. Leyden, a Burma Office official, recalled in 1942: 'Some two or three years ago I attended a conference wherein a Deputy Commissioner asked the very pertinent question "What is Indirect Rule?" Much hesitant explanation was forthcoming; none of it very satisfactory.' Leyden appeared to derive his own imprecise ideas from his service in Nigeria rather than in Burma. Leyden memorandum 'Reconstruction', 20 September 1942, fols. 31–4, M 4/2803, India Office Library and Records (hereafter IOLR), Blackfriars, London.

38. Cleary memorandum, 'Tour of Thailand', September 1939, F1933/123/40, FO 371/24753, PRO.

39. French Surête officers liaised with the Thai police, but in practice Franco-Thai co-operation was not as close. Typically, Vietnamese radicals, among them Ho Chi Minh, often resided in and operated from the remote north-eastern area of

Thailand into French Indo-China with impunity. Dormer to FO No. 7, enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO.

40. Two studies of Anglo-Thai relations in the early twentieth century concentrate on the revision of unequal treaties while neglecting the question of informal influence, Oblas, 'Siam's Efforts to Revise the Unequal Treaty System'; Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights'.

41. Memorandum 'Outstanding Questions in Siam', 21 January 1925, F270/72/40, FO 422/82, PRO, quoted in Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', p. 270.

42. For strikingly, in the newly acquired northern Malay States, administrative departments were divided into those directed by Malays and those (particularly financial) headed by British officials who went under the title not of 'District Officer' but of 'Adviser'. See Shaharil Talib, *The Trengganu Experience*, pp. 177–81, 207. For a comparative discussion of Britain's informal influence, see D. Denoon, *Settler Capitalism: The Dynamics of Dependent Development in the Southern Hemisphere*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

43. F. C. Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1965, pp. 32–5; R. R. Sogn, 'Successful Journey: A History of US–Thai Relations, 1932–45', Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1990, p. 845.

44. K. T. Young, 'The Special Role of American Advisers in Thailand, 1902–49', *Asia*, 14, 1 (1969): 7; *Bangkok Times*, 23 July 1903.

45. Young, 'American Advisers', pp. 5, 24; Hornbrook to SoS, 3 March 1916, M726, reel 6, 892. 01a/23, RG 59, NARA; Hornbrook to SoS No. 30, 14 December 1915, M729, reel 6, 892.01a/19, RG 59, NARA; Lansing to Hornbrook, 5 February 1916, M729, reel 6, 892.01a/19, RG 59, NARA..

46. Sayre to Traidos, 28 August 1929, Siam File (1926–9), Box 1, Sayre Papers, LC; Traidos to Sayre, 12 September 1925, File (1924–9), Box 14, Sayre Papers, LC; Young, 'American Advisers', p. 23.

47. C. Keyes, *Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom as a Modern Nation State*, Boulder: Westview, 1987, pp. 44–7; D. Aldcroft, *The Inter-War Economy: Britain 1919–1939*, London: Batsford, 1970, pp. 243–56; R. Dayer, *Finance and Empire: Sir Charles Addis, 1861–1945*, London: Macmillan, 1988, p. 146.

48. White memorandum, 'Revision of 1856 Treaty', February 1918, M730, reel 1, 711.922/37, RG 59, NARA; J. Hillman, 'The Freerider and the Cartel: Siam and the International Tin Restriction Agreements, 1931–41', *Modern Asian Studies*, 24, 2 (1990): 297–323.

49. Cf. pp. 319–28.

50. N. R. Clifford, 'Britain, America and the Far East, 1937–41: A Failure in Co-operation', *Journal of British Studies*, III (1963): 148–50; F. W. Marks, 'The Origins of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Promise to Support Britain Militarily in the Far East—A New Look', *Pacific Historical Review*, 53, 4 (1984): 447–9.

51. Hornbeck memorandum, 19 June 1940, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1940, p. 359; Hornbeck memorandum, 13 July 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, p. 584; R. Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 239–42; Marks, 'The Origins of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Promise to Support Britain Militarily in the Far East', p. 449.

52. Cabinet minutes, 31 July 1940, CAB 65/23, PRO.

53. P. Baudouin, *The Private Diaries of Paul Baudouin*, London: Eyre Spottiswoode, 1948, p. 134.

54. Ashley Clarke minute, 12 August 1941, F7581/210/40, FO 371/28124, PRO.

55. Roosevelt to Sayre, 31 December 1940, File 1929–40, Box 7, Sayre Papers, LC.

56. On the Lebanon and Syria in wartime Allied relations, see A. B. Gaunson, *The Anglo-French Crisis in Lebanon and Syria, 1940–1945*, London: Macmillan, 1985; H. Blumenthal, *Illusions and Reality in Franco-American Diplomacy, 1914–1945*, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1986; W. A. Hoisington, *The Casablanca Connection: French Colonial Policy, 1936–1943*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

57. Few developments can be more curious than the active assistance offered to the Vietminh and to Ho Chi Minh personally by United States Government agencies in 1945, given the subsequent involvement of the United States in the protracted conflicts of this region, R. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years of the United States Army in Vietnam*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983, pp. 37–51; A. L. Patti, *Why Vietnam: Prelude to America's Albatross*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, pp. 124–30.

58. P. M. Dunn, *The First Indochina War*, London: Hurst, 1985; W. LaFeber, 'Roosevelt, Churchill and Indochina', *American Historical Review*, LXXX, 4 (1975): 1277–95; C. Thorne, 'Indochina and Anglo-American Relations, 1942–1945', *Pacific Historical Review*, XCV (1976): 73–96; J. Sbrega, '"First Catch Your Hare": Anglo-American Perspectives on Indochina during the Second World War', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XVI, 2 (1985): 63–78; D. C. Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place, 1900–1975*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 194–253.

59. W. R. Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonisation of the British Empire 1941–1945*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977 and *The British Empire in the Middle East: Arab Nationalism, the United States and Post-War Imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984; C. Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Great Britain and the War Against Japan, 1941–1945*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978 and *The Issue of War: States, Societies, and the Far Eastern Conflict of 1941–1945*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985.

60. Memorandum by Davies, 'Anglo-American Cooperation in East Asia', 15 November 1943, File 317, Box 49, Entry 99, RG 226, NARA. Earlier versions of this perceptive memorandum had been circulated to the State Department and elsewhere; see, for example, the summary in Merrell (New Delhi) to Hull, 26 October 1943, *FRUS*, China, 1943, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1957, pp. 878–80.

61. Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, pp. 3, 121–33, 226; Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, pp. 353–6.

62. See, for example, Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. xiii; Brailey, *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore*, p. 18.

63. In contrast to British and American policy towards Thailand in the period 1929–42, some attention has been given to wartime developments. N. Tarling, 'Atonement before Absolution: British Policy towards Thailand during World War Two', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 66, 1 (1978): 22–65; N. Tarling, 'Rice and Reconciliation: The Anglo-Thai Peace Negotiations of 1945', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 66, 2 (1978): 50–112; Songsri Foran, *Thai–British–American Relations during World War Two and the Immediate Postwar Period, 1940–1946*, Thai Khadi Research Institute Paper No. 10, Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, 1981; Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, *passim*.

64. Halifax to Eden No. 258, 18 January 1944, F360/66/61, FO 371/41723, PRO.

65. Memorandum by Davies, 'Anglo-American Cooperation in East Asia', 15 November 1943, File 317, Box 49, Entry 99, RG 226, NARA.

66. Pearl Buck, 'Postwar China and the United States', in *Asia and the Americas* (November 1943), cited in Thorne, *The Issue of War*, p. 183.

67. Minute by Adams, 3 October 1945, on Dening to Sterndale Bennett, 138/3/45, 24 September 1945, enclosing Report from Security Section SACSEA, 21 September 1945, F7788/296/40, FO 371/46552, PRO. For a detailed discussion of this episode, see R. J. Aldrich, 'Imperial Rivalry: British and American Intelligence in Asia, 1942–6', *Intelligence and National Security*, 3, 1 (1988): 41–3.

68. Situation Report, 'Thailand—Current Developments', 11 December 1944, File 483, Box 49, Entry 106, RG 226, NARA.

69. Memorandum of a conversation between Heppner (Director OSS SEAC) and Warner, fols. 23–5, File 515, Box 52, Entry 110, RG 226, NARA.

70. Memorandum of a conversation between Moffat (Director Office of South-East Asian Affairs), Landon and Mani Sanasen, 27 July 1944, 892.01/7–2744, RG 59, NARA.

71. Colonial Office Secret Monograph, *Relations Between Thailand and the Southern States of the Malay Peninsula*, by Dr W. Lineham, MCS, Singapore, 1941, CO 537/7335, PRO. Only thirty-five copies of this secret reference work were printed. Col. F. C. Scott to Gent (Colonial Office), 1 September 1941, fol. 3a, WO 106/2505, PRO.

72. Martin (Private Secretary to Churchill) to Harvey, 21 May 1942, F4097/2878/40, FO 371/31856, PRO.

73. Jebb (SOE) to Cadogan, SC/26/43/69, 7 August 1941, and minute by Gage, 12 August 1941, F7487/286/40, FO 371/28134, PRO. See also FE (41) 16, 'Infiltration—Thailand', 13 May 1941, CAB 96/2, PRO.

74. Seymour to Sterndale Bennett No. 354, 12 December 1944, and minute by Scott, 13 January 1945, F214/127/61, FO 371/46325, PRO.

# PART I
# Informal Dominance in Decline, 1929–1938

Here ... Great Britain holds first place, with two-thirds of the foreign trade. Powerful British companies have been settled in the country for over fifty years. The Anglo-Siam Corporation, Bangkok Docks, United Engineers have made such an exclusive place for themselves in the market that even non-British industrials have confided the sale of their products to them. To mention 'Borneo' or 'Bombay-Burmah' is to evoke possession and exploitation of the great teak forests. England is also the principal, and since 1909 the sole, banker for the Siamese Kingdom, which has now no other foreign creditor.

Baron de Lapomarede, French military attaché, Bangkok (1929–32), *Bangkok Times*, 24 April 1934.

The main impression left upon me by our conversation is that his English training has been most salutary in imbuing him with the public school spirit in its best aspects of public service and of playing the game. He is proud of the fact that he ... was the first Siamese to obtain a commission in the British Army and to wear its uniform (though I am not sure this is accurate), and that he is the first old Etonian to become a King.

Record of a conversation with King Prajadhipok of Siam, Waterlow to Chamberlain No. 147, 17 August 1926, (Coll. 33/11), L/P&S/12/4055, IOLR.

# 2
# The West and the Last Years of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam, 1929–1932

A revised understanding of the high point of Western influence in Siam during the 1920s, and the underlying secrets of its resilience, seems central to any subsequent exploration of the thinking of policy-makers as they attempted to defend their pre-eminence against the alarming challenges and difficulties encountered in Asia during the 1930s and 1940s. Therefore, this chapter seeks to explore policies towards Siam prior to the end of the absolute monarchy in the Spring of 1932. This analysis can be divided both chronologically and thematically. First, territorial and legal encroachments by the West before 1910 are examined. These accretions, which have received much attention from historians, would later constitute an important focus for Siamese nationalist and irredentist sentiment, creating a complex and divisive legacy for British and American regional policy during the 1930s and 1940s. However, it will be suggested that the importance of these physical incursions has been overemphasized. Ironically, Siam's drive for modernization, in part to escape the bonds of unequal treaties and extraterritoriality, reinforced more important but hitherto neglected informal mechanisms of Western influence which characterized the 1920s and 1930s. The second section concerns itself with the extent and nature of Britain's dominance.

The final section of this chapter emphasizes the importance of external rather than internal challenges to Britain's position in Siam, particularly from the United States, focusing upon the international financial crisis of 1930–1. This contributed to the subsequent Revolution of 1932 which removed the absolute monarchy. Here and in the following chapter it will be argued that Britain's greatest difficulties in Siam in the period 1929–32 stemmed from turbulence in the international economic system and consequent decline in Britain's prestige relative to the United States, rather than from internal Siamese political dissonance. Conversely, it will be suggested that for as long as Britain sustained her wider

predominance at the international level, of which her position in Siam was very much an extension, even radical shifts in Siam's political superstructure would have only limited impact upon the mechanisms of British informal dominance.

## *The West and Siam before 1910*

Not unlike early Western contacts with Japan, Western relations with Siam before the liberal trade expansion of the nineteenth century were of limited consequence. The first brief recorded contacts with Siam were made by Portuguese traders in 1511–12. More substantial relations were established by the Dutch in 1608, followed by the English in 1612 and later the French in 1662. Western interests appeared to be making rapid inroads during the seventeenth century as indicated by the attempted conversion of the monarch, King Narai, to Roman Catholicism by the French. However, this was a contributory factor to a subsequent rebellion and usurpation by a Siamese general who summarily ended the Western presence in Siam.[1] There followed two centuries of relative isolation from Western influence during which Siam was preoccupied with civil wars and repeated invasions by their traditional enemy, the Burmese.

During the nineteenth century Siam proved unable to resist rapid British expansion in South-East Asia which centred upon a thriving entrepôt trade through Singapore and the progressive extension of political authority into the independent Malay States and Burma.[2] The King of Siam, P'ra Nang Klao, Rama III (1824–51), succeeded in maintaining relative isolation until 1851 by resorting to skilful prevarication and the conclusion of trade agreements of little practical consequence.[3] These treaties maintained the political *status quo*, imposed large import and export taxes and permitted each Siamese provincial governor an absolute veto upon Western commerce. Both Britain and the United States attempted to negotiate more substantial treaties during 1850, but without success.

Therefore, prior to 1850, the major Western influence on Siam proved to be the presence of American Protestant missionaries. Active as early as the 1830s, while they failed to convert significant numbers of the Siamese population, they nevertheless had a critical impact upon the élite. American missionaries such as the Reverend Dan B. Bradley not only introduced modern medicine, sanitation, printing, and educational reform, they also transformed

the hitherto xenophobic attitude of a new generation of Siamese royalty. In particular Prince Mongkut was tutored by the Reverend Jesse Caswell in a number of subjects including science. Thereafter, Mongkut remained in regular contact with a number of missionaries who kept him abreast of developments in Europe and the United States. American clerics also contributed to the development of Siam's tradition of religious toleration.[4]

Western penetration of Siam accelerated rapidly after the conclusion of a new Anglo-Siamese Treaty in April 1855 and a subsequent Siamese–American Treaty in 1856.[5] Three reasons can be identified for this breakthrough. Firstly, even within the relatively closed environment constituted by Siam before 1850, American missionaries had been permitted access to Siam's élite.[6] In 1851 a member of this Western-influenced élite, King Mongkut, Rama IV (1851–69), gained accession to the throne. Mongkut's attitude, while cautious, was accommodating. A second factor was the British subjugation of Burma during the 1820s and 1830s, followed by the Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852 which, significantly, had arisen out of trade disagreements.[7] Neither Britain nor Siam wished to see a similar episode in Siam. This was underlined in 1856 when Townsend Harris, negotiating a similar treaty for the United States, was informed by the *phra kalahom* or senior Siamese military official, that Britain had obtained more in her treaty of 1855 because of the fear induced by the First and Second Burma Wars and by Britain's growing strength in Malaya.[8]

A third factor was the status of Britain's negotiator, John Bowring, as an envoy of the Foreign Office, rather than the Colonial or India Office, for the notably divergent temperaments and regional strategies of these rival British ministries were understood by the Siamese. A diplomatic presence indicated an interest in commerce and informal influence, rather than territorial aggrandizement. Bowring's resulting treaty gave British merchants the right to purchase land and extraterritorial jurisdiction. It also replaced the cumbersome Siamese taxes upon ships with fixed *ad valorem* duties upon traded goods. Many royal monopolies were ended by this treaty. Siam was thereby thrown open to the accelerating commercial and political activity on her southern border. Trade developed with both Britain and the United States, the latter declining towards the end of the nineteenth century under the pressure of accelerating activity in neighbouring European colonies. During this period the United States, like European countries, made regular use of extraterritoriality. There were many disputes

including an acrimonious case in 1897 in which the Siamese Government was required to pay heavy compensation to American businessmen.[9]

Penetration of Siam was not confined to unequal treaties and commercial activities. Between 1863 and 1910, British and French colonial officials in Malaya and Indo-China succeeded in annexing significant areas of Siam. Particularly irksome to the Siamese was the seizure of large areas from their eastern border by the French which entailed the loss of profitable areas of paddy, important navigation rights on the Mekong River, and the subjugation of Thai peoples closely related to the Siamese. At the same time, all these areas were suzerain territories, rather than part of Siam proper, and their boundaries represented demographic 'fault lines' over which control had shifted repeatedly in previous centuries. The pattern of these colonial annexations must be examined in some detail for during the 1930s and 1940s their legacy of Siamese irredentist sentiment presented the West with unpleasant complications.

The late nineteenth century represented a period characterized by French rather than British success on the periphery of Siam. Before 1840 the French presence in Siam had amounted only to limited trade and missionary work. Subsequently, the French expanded vigorously from their colony of Cochin-China (now southern Vietnam) to encompass previously Siamese-controlled areas which now constitute northern Vietnam and parts of Cambodia and Laos. This marked the reduction of Siamese authority in Laos which had been exercised only recently. Siamese claims were underlined by the removal of the vast statue of the Emerald Buddha from the Lao city of Vientianne to the temple in Bangkok where it now stands.[10] Meanwhile neighbouring Cambodia had owed dual suzerainty to both Siam and to the Emperor of Vietnam (and subsequently to the Emperor's French superiors after 1845). The French were not content with the dual suzerainty they had inherited from Vietnam, and so in 1863 they required the Cambodian monarch to sign a secret treaty abdicating control of foreign policy and admitting a French 'Resident' to Phnom Penh. The treaty remained secret for less than a year, whereupon the dismayed Siamese, in the face of superior French forces, were persuaded to accept French suzerainty over much of Cambodia. In return the French reaffirmed Siamese control over the two large Cambodian border provinces of Battambang and Siemreap in a Franco-Siamese treaty of 1867. The border of Laos remained a matter of dispute.[11]

French aggrandizement on Siam's eastern border was halted only temporarily by the distractions of the Franco-Prussian War and by 1883 French control was fully established over all of Vietnam. Between 1887 and 1890 the energetic French Vice-Consul at Luang Prabang in Laos conspired to annex various additional cantons to Vietnam. Subsequently, the French Ambassador in London made two requests of the British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury: firstly, that Siam be declared a buffer zone between the British and the French, and secondly, that Britain accept the Mekong River as the new Franco-Siamese frontier. Salisbury's dismay at continued French expansion was indicated by his acceptance of the first request and his flat rejection of the second.[12] In 1893 mindful of recent British gains in Burma, France exploited a border incident in order to exercise a claim to all of Laos.[13] The French now controlled the entire left (eastern) bank of the Mekong River and enjoyed a common frontier with British Upper Burma, resulting in increased Anglo-French tension.

Continued French expansion during the 1890s forcibly underlined to Britain the growing utility of Siam as a buffer zone between British territories and the irascible French. This valuable function had been apparent since 1886, when Britain finally conquered Upper Burma. Almost immediately Britain had ceded two of the Shan States of Burma, East Kencheng and Tangau, to Siam in order to avoid a common frontier with the French Empire. In 1896 Britain took the initiative and formalized Siam's position as an independent, if truncated, buffer state by means of an Anglo-French convention. This convention provided for a British sphere of influence in the west, a French sphere in the east, and left the Chao Phraya River valley in the centre of Siam as 'neutral territory'.[14] The year 1904 also marked the conclusion of the Entente Cordiale in Europe between Britain and France. This *rapprochement* facilitated further French incursions into eastern Siam. In 1907 the French returned small amounts of territory to Siam, but acquired in exchange the provinces of Battambang, Siemreap, and Sisophon, along with more territory in Luang Prabang. France had now effectively absorbed all the territories which presently constitute Laos and Cambodia. This treaty was negotiated by Edward Strobel, the American General Adviser (later Foreign Affairs Adviser). He considered this to be his finest achievement, returning to Siam from leave to complete the negotiations despite blood poisoning from which he died shortly thereafter. Yet these gains, although confirmed by further Franco-Siamese treaties in 1925, 1926, and 1937, were never accepted in

the full sense by Siam and formed the basis for much subsequent friction.[15]

Meanwhile Britain had mirrored French aggrandizement by expanding into four northern Malay States, Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu over which Siam had exercised suzerainty since the eighteenth century.[16] While this pattern of expansion on Siam's periphery was superficially similar to that conducted by the French, the means employed by Britain were largely governed by the Foreign Office rather than by British colonial officials and were therefore less abrasive.[17] The indirect approach of the Foreign Office underlined their preoccupation with the wider balance of economic and strategic power in the region, seeking to exclude other Western influences rather than to acquire territory. As such these British requirements could be reconciled with Siam's desire for political and strategic security. This was reflected in a secret Anglo-Siamese convention of 6 April 1897, dealing with the Malay States of southern Siam and the strategically significant Kra Isthmus. The Foreign Office were primarily concerned that the independently minded local sultans of Siam's Malay States might be induced to offer naval facilities to a foreign power on the Kra Isthmus, thus presenting Siam with an encroachment within her own territory by a third party that she would be unable to resist. The secret convention prevented Siam from ceding any privileges to a third party south of the eleventh parallel without express British permission. It also forbade any attempt to undermine the importance of Singapore by constructing a canal across the Kra Isthmus. Meanwhile the Foreign Office urged the Colonial Office not to antagonize Siam over the Malay States.[18]

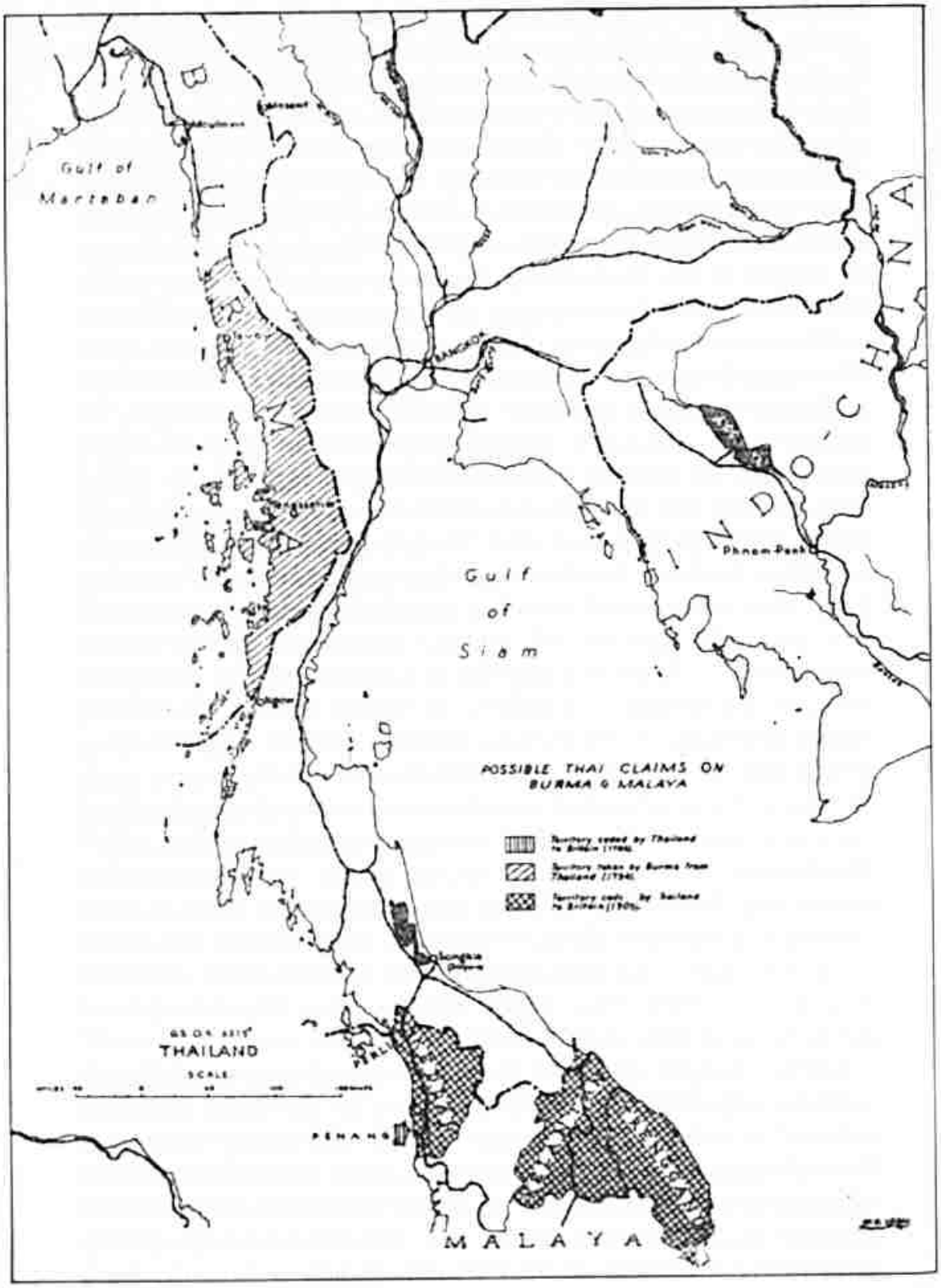
The coexistence of the appearance of Siamese suzerainty and the reality of increasing British influence in the Siamese Malay States was reinforced by an open Anglo-Siamese Treaty in 1902. While the treaty reaffirmed British recognition of Siamese suzerainty in the south, at the same time it required Siam to appoint 'Siamese Advisers' in her four southern Malay States, responsible for administrative matters. Significantly, these 'Siamese Advisers' were not only of British nationality but usually members of the Malayan or Indian Civil Service (MCS/ICS). Patterns of financial administration in particular were to be reformed, taking Johore as their model.[19] In Kedah the MCS official arrived to take the title of 'Financial Adviser'. The benefits for Britain lay mostly in the development of a colonial-style system of administration facilitating British commerce.

The fabric of this curious Anglo-Siamese condominium in southern Siam entailed strengths and weaknesses for both parties. In 1902 when Siam came to impose a modern administrative system further north in her partly Malay area of Pattani, the local Rajah, Abdul Kadir, rebelled and in vain sought British protection. Both Britain and Siam were pleased to see Kadir arrested and placed in internal exile. But at the same time Siam's American General Adviser, Edward Strobel, encountered difficulties with these arrangements. Siam bore the burden of constant reproaches from other Powers for unfair commercial discrimination in favour of Britain in the four Malay States governed by secret treaty. Meanwhile, Siam herself gained no revenue from this area.[20]

Consequently, by 1907 Strobel and then his assistant, Jens Westengard, were advocating the complete transfer of these states to British control in exchange for more concrete advantages. To convince his reluctant Siamese superiors he presented the question in the form of a medical analogy, comparing the Malay States to diseased limbs that needed to be amputated to save the body. Westengard argued that 'British influence was gradually extending in those quarters with the result that unless the situation were reorganised now and definitely settled, the prospect was that the process of British absorption might extend indefinitely. . . . Siam was well rid of a bad bargain in ceding the territory concerned.' Therefore, in 1909, encouraged by the tactful approach of the Foreign Office, a further Anglo-Siamese Treaty was signed. Britain took control of the Malay States, while in return, Britain abolished consular courts in Bangkok and offered low rates of interest for railway construction in Siam (Map 2.1).[21] Meanwhile, Siam continued to be bound by her promises concerning the absence of canals and foreign naval bases in what remained of southern Siam.[22] Ironically then, even to the extent to which Siam had strengthened her position with 'Siamese Advisers' in 1902, this merely introduced a Western-style of administration prior to British control in 1909.

These changes were the most visible indications of British strategic supremacy in South-East Asia in the early twentieth century to which Siam found herself continually adjusting. Britain's preoccupation with southern Siam owed much to the significance of Singapore and the Straits of Malacca at the eastern gateway to the Indian Ocean. To prevent a foreign power establishing a foothold on Siam's southern peninsula or driving a canal across its narrowest point, the Kra Isthmus, was now a fixed

MAP 2.1
British Territorial Gains in Southern Siam before 1910




*Source*: Public Record Office, WO 208/1902.

point of imperial defence policy, alongside the protection of the Isthmus of Suez.

Differing Siamese interpretations of the value of the 1909 Anglo-Siamese Treaty underlined an awkward paradox: Siam's formal independence in the twentieth century could not be buttressed without a period of detailed Western supervision and development. Strobel and Westengard, the American Advisers, had sought to rid Siam of a peripheral area which, they argued, would be a future source of tensions and problems with which Siam was ill-equipped to deal. In return some odious British legal privileges were relinquished. Yet the legal concessions made by Britain were insubstantial, for while British citizens would now be tried in Siamese courts, Western systems of justice would be employed and the Siamese judge would be joined by a foreign Judicial Adviser. The treaty, moreover, stated explicity that 'the opinion of the adviser shall prevail'. The related railway loan was also open to diverse interpretation. Strobel and Westengard chose to emphasize the modernization of communications as a prerequisite of a strong and independent state. Conversely, British diplomats and indeed colonial officials in Malaya viewed the railway, built with MCS assistance, as a means by which Britain might penetrate Siam further.[23]

What is clear is that the American Minister in Bangkok, William Hornbrook, held the deepest suspicions, not only of British intentions in southern Siam, but also about the loyalties of Westengard himself. In March 1916 he complained to Washington that

> the record of Westengard is such that it is the undivided opinion of those who are close observers that he was a better friend of the British than American interests. He was neither a source of information or a source of support to the American Legation and . . . was more of a liability than an asset to American interest in Siam.

Hornbrook even went so far as to suggest that Westengard had co-operated in reducing the power of this important American Adviser post, which until 1916 had carried the title of General Adviser with a correspondingly wide remit. Thereafter Siam curtailed its domestic responsibilities, styling it instead 'Foreign Affairs Adviser' and ranking it more equally with other senior adviser posts.

In the late nineteenth century the appointment of Strobel had marked a Siamese attempt to balance contending British and French pressures by turning to a less locally interested power for

its most senior foreign official. Hornbrook therefore concluded that this new development marked an alarming growth in British influence, noting that the British Government had expressly instructed her advisers not to join the British Army during the First World War, but instead to remain in Thailand to preserve British influence.[24]

By 1910 Britain and France had ceased their programmes of annexation. Siam had yielded 176,000 square miles of outlying territory, along with significant proportions of revenue and other internal concessions, in an attempt to strengthen formal sovereignty over core areas.[25] This exercise entailed an awkward paradox for to regain a greater degree of formal control over her governmental machinery Siam had first to convince the Western Powers that her administration was capable of facilitating their trade and interests. Ironically such standards could best be achieved by the employment of Western advisers in positions of influence and authority, thus, temporarily at least, undermining the object of the exercise—the reduction of Western dominance. Consequently, the employment of foreign advisers represented both a significant means by which informal Western control was extended and, at the same time, an important part of Siam's long-term strategy to rid herself of foreign controls. As suggested in the previous chapter, Western and especially British dominance in Siam during the early twentieth century owed much to these advisers and the commercial activities that their administration was intended to facilitate.

## *British 'Dominance' and American Competition, 1910–1932*

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the pattern of British encroachment in Siam was shifting away from the relatively unambiguous, if tactful, acquisition of territory and extraterritorial rights towards less overt but more powerful forms of influence. This change was not as dramatic as the parallel transformations that were taking place in the Dominions, India, Egypt, and elsewhere. Britain's policy in Siam, controlled by the Foreign Office, could not hitherto have been described as especially forward; nevertheless, after 1910 informal and indirect influence seems to have received additional emphasis and to have become more elaborate for a variety of reasons, only some of which constituted part of a long-term policy or considered strategy.

At a general level, this shift seemed to reflect developments in other parts of the British imperial system, indicating firstly, an immediate requirement to meet the demands of emergent nationalism after the First World War, primarily in the Middle East, Ireland, and India, and secondly, a convenient device by which a measure of continued control could be tied to the drive by indigenous élites for rapid modernization. In the particular case of Siam, Britain's informal influence was originally reinforced by a confluence of international agreements, notably the Entente Cordiale of 1904 and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1905 and 1907, which left Britain with the appearance of being the dominant naval power. Yet Britain's financial difficulties in substantiating a strategic role east of Suez in the inter-war period ensured that, as early as 1919, the value of Siam's continued position of formal neutrality lay in offering a remarkably cost-effective solution to the landward defence of both Malaya and Burma. Therefore Siamese neutrality was no less important to British imperial defence despite the absence of British garrisons.[26]

This section attempts to explore the nature of Western activity in Siam and the mechanisms by which it operated between 1910 and 1932, arguably the high-water mark of British influence in Siam. In so far as Britain's dominance in Siam required elaborate mechanisms and did not arise naturally out of her commercial and strategic position, or out of educational influence upon Siam's élite, its twin architects were the Bank of England and the Foreign Office. Both took care to disguise British direction and to sustain the idea that British advisers owed their loyalty to Siam.

In the nineteenth century the Siamese monarchy had demonstrated an understanding of the potential dangers of foreign advisers by their attempts to diversify their nationality, but in the early twentieth century, this policy suffered erosion. In 1920 British advisers outnumbered those of all other nationalities: the British and the Danes oversaw the police; the British and the French dominated the legal system; the British, French, and Italians executed public works; the British administered the airport and advised on mining and customs. Significantly, the British succeeded in monopolizing the important position of Financial Adviser between 1904–41 and 1945–51.[27] The only other adviser enjoying similar prestige was the Foreign Affairs Adviser, a post consistently occupied by an American due to the limited nature of American colonial interests in South-East Asia. However, as will

be seen, this American post was not integrated into the fabric of American regional policy in the same way as that of its British counterparts.[28]

The limits of the power and authority of British Financial Advisers before 1910 have been briefly, though actively, debated in the available studies of the Siamese economy. In his outline study of the Siamese economy, Professor Ingram, drawing on the official files of the British Financial Advisers that were maintained in the Finance Ministry in Bangkok, has argued that these men were highly influential at the turn of the century. Ingram states unequivocably that their role was 'to maintain order and stability, and to prevent anything from disturbing or endangering her (British) trade and investments'.[29] However, Brown's influential study of the Siamese élite and the economy between 1890 and 1920 has sought to question this assertion and advances a more complex thesis based partly on an analysis of correspondence between the King and the Minister of Finance. Brown suggests that, up to 1910, what might appear as British-directed financial policy may merely reflect the wishes of the Siamese Government itself, being influenced by the conservative economic philosophies that prevailed in the administrations of neighbouring colonial territories, or fearing that unsympathetic policies might only serve to invite more direct British intervention. Brown's convincing analysis mutiplies the sources of British influence but at the same time suggests they were 'more subtle and less tangible than that embodied in the presence of a British adviser'.[30]

There can be no doubt that the early Financial Advisers contributed much in terms of technical expertise in the context of loan negotiations in 1905 and 1907, the issue of paper currency, and the establishment of a gold exchange rate in 1908. But, as Brown points out, the available evidence sheds limited light on the important question of how far the Siamese Ministry of Finance had embraced the financial concepts and practices of their Western advisers by 1910, for many of the files of the Siamese Ministry of Finance itself remain closed to scholars.[31] However, it is clear that by the mid-1920s the role of the Financial Advisers had been recast, permitting the British Financial Adviser considerable influence over internal Siamese affairs. Fortunately, from 1924 and for all of the period that concerns this study, the role of the British Financial Adviser is thrown into detailed relief by the hitherto unexplored correspondence between the Financial Advisers in Bangkok and the Bank of England.[32]

The strong influence of Sir Edward Cook, the Financial Adviser between 1925 and 1930, did not stem merely from respect for his technical knowledge, or from Britain's commercial position in Siam. His authority was primarily rooted in Siam's dependence upon the support of the Bank of England in raising loans in the City of London, which would remain the leading international financial centre before 1939. The influence of the Bank of England was redoubled because Siam's currency was based upon sterling, in common with many states enjoying a high degree of British control at this time, for example, Egypt.[33] As we have seen, most of Siam's currency reserves were held in London and in 1929 this financial bond was strengthened by Siam's adoption of the gold standard on the advice of the Bank of England. In Britain's informal empire, sterling and a near stranglehold upon credit were two powerful levers that could be deployed by local British Financial Advisers.[34] Consequently, Cook derived much of his authority in a similar way to other British Financial Advisers in informal British colonies.[35] The position of Cook in Siam bore a close resemblance to that of L. M. Swan, Financial Adviser to the Iraqi Government after 1932. In both cases, a single influential adviser seems to have been sufficient to exercise considerable control.[36] Similar techniques were deployed by Britain in China.[37]

Between 1925 and 1930, Sir Edward Cook, fresh from the ICS, was preoccupied with enforcing the conservative 'sound money' policies that constituted the prevailing pre-war orthodoxy in both London and Delhi. Until his departure in November 1930, to assume the Governorship of the Bank of Egypt, he assisted the monarch, King Prajadhipok, in tackling the chaotic finances and deficits inherited from his predecessor, Vajiravudh. Under Cook, drastic economies were imposed upon both the Civil List and ministerial budgets and a recovery was begun, based upon the stability of the tical [baht] and Siam's growing rice exports. Government finances were further improved by Siam's recovery of control over export revenues.[38] Arguably, Siam derived some benefits from Cook who was perhaps of above-average calibre by the standards of British Financial Advisers. His presence in Bangkok was due to an attempt to escape the censure of colonial society following a sensational double divorce case in India. Upon his arrival in Bangkok a British diplomat remarked, 'God knows! . . . in Bangkok he need have no fears.' Up to the time of his departure for Bangkok, Cook had been a rapidly rising star within ICS, his last post being that of Secretary to the High

Commissioner for India.[39]

Nevertheless, there was no ambiguity concerning the Anglo-centric priorities of the Governor of the Bank of England who had nominated Cook for his post. Typically, while he did not actively seek to increase Siamese indebtedness, he was adamant that any Siamese loans should be raised in London. During 1925 Cook suggested raising loans in New York, believing that easier terms might be obtained there, but the Governor moved quickly to forbid the initiative.[40] British Advisers in Bangkok who developed divided loyalties or a strongly regional perspective could usually be restrained by London. However, where major policy decisions were not involved, Financial Advisers enjoyed significant independence.[41] The boundaries between British- and Siamese-inspired financial policies during the period 1925–30 are often difficult to delineate since, like Cook, Prajadhipok also advocated firm retrenchment. Yet even during periods characterized by congruent policy, Cook's superior command of technical detail allowed him to occupy the driving seat. Typically, in the financial year 1928/9, as Siam's budget crept into modest surplus, Prajadhipok complained that Cook had kept this surplus a 'deep secret' to prevent a wave of expenditure by Ministers. Cook, it appears, was even capable of maintaining an effective monopoly of the knowledge that Siam was solvent.

Cook's period as Financial Adviser was notable for its success, not least because during a time of improving general economic conditions, there was a perceived confluence of British and Siamese interests. In January 1926, with the retirement of a British Customs Adviser, Cook wrote to the Chairman of the British Board of Customs and Excise in London deploying the argument of common interest to elicit a good replacement: 'I am myself strongly impressed by the importance to British interests of having a really good man as Customs Adviser . . . avoiding friction between the Siamese authorities and the European commercial community, which is preponderantly British.' Cook saw no contradiction in asserting in the same breath that he was thinking 'primarily of Siamese interests'. In response D. F. Mace was dispatched from London to fill the post in November 1926.

Ironically, it was Cook's own programme of austerity more than increasing nationalist sentiment that resulted in a decline in the numbers of foreign advisers during the 1920s. Between 1925 and 1927 many minor officials, such as librarians and middle-ranking officers of the Gendarmarie, were retired. Some had in any case

ceased to be effective and had been kept on out of kindness. Cook noted in June 1926: 'Prince Damrong . . . mentioned the case of Johnson. He was fond of Johnson, who was however a dipsomaniac. The Retrenchment Commission had therefore told his Minister to get rid of him.' Yet the corps of foreign advisers was not weakened by the departure of the likes of Johnson. Senior advisers with real influence continued to be recruited through the 1930s and in 1939 some fifty still remained. Arguably their reduced numbers did little to diminish their net influence upon policy, while rendering them less offensive to nationalist sentiment.[42]

Britain's ability to influence Siamese financial policy owed much to the wider involvement of Britain in the development of the Siamese economy as a whole and Siam's integration with a growing regional economy dominated by Britain. Well before 1929, Siam had ceased to be a backward Asian state characterized by a subsistence economy and traditional social forms. This reflected a general shift in the regional economy after 1850. Previously, with the exception of Java, South-East Asia had produced predominantly luxury commodities. Subsequently, this changed to the supply of raw materials and cash crops.[43] Although American traders were established in the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies, Britain remained dominant in South-East Asia and her exports to the United States from this region dwarfed reciprocal imports, resulting in important dollar earnings.[44]

The primary significance of Siam for the British imperial economy lay in the production of rice for Malaya which, while increasingly preoccupied with rubber and tin production, was dependent upon Siam for food. Siamese rice was exported in jute bags obtained from India, creating an important triangular pattern of commerce between India, Siam, and Malaya. Consequently while only 5 per cent of Siamese rice was exported in 1850, this had risen to 50 per cent by 1900. By 1920 rice formed 80 per cent of all exports.[45] Meanwhile, British and Australian concerns, such as the Bombay-Burmah Company, dominated the production of teak in northern Siam. Firms such as the Anglo-Siamese Tin Syndicate were equally prominent in the south where the production of tin was increasingly mechanized after 1900.[46] At about the same time a burgeoning rubber industry began to develop in the same area under British and Chinese auspices employing expertise drawn from Malaya. British activity was equally strong in the service sector of the Siamese economy,

particularly the shipping lines, merchant houses, banks, insurance firms, and the English language press. Therefore, the important aspects of British economic control in Siam were less the result of the unequal provisions and tariff restrictions of the Bowring Treaty of 1855 and more due to an imperial economy in search of raw materials, markets, and investment opportunities throughout South-East Asia.

Throughout the early twentieth century American commercial activity was in contrast negligible. The American community consisted largely of clergy and only two American firms, Standard Oil and Singer Sewing Machines, retained Bangkok offices. As early as 1902 the American Consul despaired of improvement, complaining, 'There is not in the whole of Siam at present one American (business) house competent to consider a business proposition or a government contract, to push necessary trade or represent American interests. Other nationalities are well represented.' European concerns, particularly the Danish East Asiatic Company, were active in shipping, while the Chinese community dominated mercantile activity within Siam.[47]

Moreover, in the 1920s, American diplomats suspected Britain of attempting to undermine the only significant American official post, that of Foreign Affairs Adviser. In 1922 Dr Eldon James, the incumbent, announced his intention to resign, sending a wave of panic through the American Legation. 'It is no secret', they reported to Washington, 'that the employment of an American in this position is resented by the British Foreign Office, the post being the only one of principal advisory character not occupied by a British subject.' They now expected pressure for a British adviser or, failing this, the abolition of the post. They warned that the British Financial Adviser, 'through faithfulness to interests of his own country', had recently shut out American banking concerns from a £2 million loan floated in 1921. Various British advisers now 'exercised a dominating influence over the financial affairs of Siam' and now wished to extend control over foreign policy. In a subsequent conversation with the American Minister, the King suggested that Britain might well offer Siam immediate tariff autonomy in return for British dominance of the post of Foreign Affairs Adviser. In the event, however, James was replaced by another American Harvard-trained lawyer.[48]

Meanwhile, Britain's dominant financial and economic positions in Siam were mutually supportive. Partly because of the high proportion of Siam's exports that were destined for British

Empire ports, British advisers could present a valid case for Siam retaining a close relationship with sterling. Equally, while Siam was bound to sterling, the incentives to trade with British territories remained high. Importantly, Siamese commodities such as tin ore, exported to Malaya for processing and thence to the United States, contributed to Britain's dollar earnings rather than those of Siam. Meanwhile, Britain retained the capability to influence Siam's sources of imports by restricting her supply of dollar exchange.[49]

A more ephemeral but none the less significant conduit of British influence before 1932 was provided by the British education of much of the Siamese élite. Although the numbers of those receiving a Western education remained small, they came from the most influential families and returned to pursue careers in government with the added prestige of a close knowledge of the West. Some students studied in Paris and enjoyed the opportunity to embrace radical new ideas free from indigenous control. However, the 'overwhelming majority' studied in England and usually returned with an urbane, class-conscious, and conservative outlook that reflected their experience at the major public schools, the older universities, and the service academies of Sandhurst, Woolwich, and Dartmouth.[50] King Vajiravudh, for example, had been privately tutored in England, before undergoing military training at Sandhurst and finally studying English and History at the University of Oxford. British diplomats in Bangkok were regularly called upon to attend the dinners of the Oxford and Cambridge Club.[51] These patterns of education and their attendant norms, often considered to be axiomatic to British Government service during this period, constituted an important area of commonality between British officials and the Siamese political and administrative élite. Ironically, the Siamese usually enjoyed a more prestigious British education than the products of minor public schools who thronged the colonial civil service and the Asiatic branches of the British consular service before 1941. However, not all of the fruits of Western education were to Britain's taste, for this also served to reinforce the embryonic growth of élite nationalism in Siam.[52]

At the same time the impression must be avoided that Britain wholly dominated the education of the Siamese élite in the 1920s. Not only were universities and service academies in Germany and France popular with the middle classes, but colleges in the United States and the Philippines recruited growing numbers of Siamese

students, particularly in fields such as medicine and agriculture. While the colleges and institutes of Bangkok retained staff of almost every nationality, the United States took a lead in expanding indigenous education. Within this programme was the Royal Medical School, developed under a Rockefeller Foundation programme during the 1920s and which began awarding degrees in 1923. American journalists were also recruited to assist in developing the Bangkok press.[53]

While British officials did not welcome the growth of Siamese nationalism, its preoccupation with the Chinese community in Siam constituted a further area of Anglo-Siamese co-operation rather than a source of anti-Western sentiment. The Governments of British Malaya and Siam witnessed a parallel growth in concern over the nationalist activities of their respective Chinese communities in the 1920s and 1930s, ensuring close police and security co-operation against the Kuomintang (KMT). Therefore, in 1931 the Siamese joined the British and the Dutch in refusing contact with a mission led by Mr Chow, the Special Commissioner of the Nationalist Government of China for the Inspection of Overseas Chinese Affairs.[54] In the same year a Chinese resident of Singapore, arriving at Bangkok, was questioned as to the significance of his black armband. When he explained that it denoted the Kuomintang's disapproval of the Japanese incursion into Manchuria, 'he was promptly arrested' to the satisfaction of the British Legation in Bangkok. British advisers shared the circumspection of the Siamese Government towards the Chinese community.[55] As in Malaya, the Chinese minority dominated the smaller scale mercantile activities within the Siamese economy, particularly rice-milling. Since 1900 the immigration of Chinese women had resulted in a decreasing rate of assimilation and this, combined with outbursts of Chinese nationalism after 1910, raised the political profile of the Chinese community.[56] The impact of European ideas upon Siamese nationalism showed its least pleasant aspect in an essay by King Vajiravudh in which he referred to the Chinese as 'the Jews of the East'. Nationalism also translated into increased military expenditure to the perennial dismay of British Financial Advisers but to the delight of British arms manufacturers such as Armstrong Vickers.[57]

The 1920s and 1930s saw a growth in the activities of indigenous Asian nationalists, communists, and more centrally directed Comintern agents operating in Asia.[58] One of the principal day-to-day duties of the Consul-General at the British

Legation in Bangkok was to exchange information with the Siamese police concerning the movements and activities of 'communist agitators'.[59] Liaison visits to Bangkok by the Head of the Special Branch of the Straits Settlements (Singapore) Police were a common occurrence. Co-operation extended beyond the exchange of information. In 1930, the British Government was delighted to learn of thirty-one sentences, each of fifteen years, passed in Siam upon some convicted communists. Further arrests followed during 1931 as a result of information obtained by the British from the capture of a Comintern agent, Joseph Ducroux, at Singapore.[60] Consequently, Siam was not quite the haven for 'agitators' during this period that some have suggested.[61] In contrast, France, the Netherlands, and China did not enjoy the same degree of security co-operation. Meanwhile the American security authorities in the Philippines did not appear to have liaised with Bangkok, partly because Siam depended upon senior police officers seconded from British Burma. Siam was also restrained by the knowledge that execution was the likely sequel to the extradition of communists to French or Dutch territories. Britain and Siam followed similar policies relating to this sort of extradition. In 1931 the Governor of Hong Kong firmly refused a French request for the extradition of Ho Chi Minh, knowing full well that the Government of Indo-China had sentenced him to death *in absentia*.[62]

The arguments advanced above suggest that British informal authority in Siam appears to have been strong, if not expanding, in the period 1910–32. But at the same time it must be emphasized that British formal privileges, as guaranteed by unequal treaties, were correspondingly in decline. Although the end of the irksome Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1855 was in keeping with a wider pattern of concessions in Asia by the Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, they abandoned Britain's formal privileges in Siam only with reluctance. While this retreat conformed to a contemporaneous pattern of remodelling throughout the Empire, nevertheless it owed little to the growing sophistication of thought in Whitehall and more to Siam's skilful exploitation of changes in the international system and legal framework that resulted from the First World War. In this sense it fits a wider pattern of Siamese success against British influence before 1950, depending upon international events rather than upon specific internal pressures applied by Siam in Bangkok or London.

In common with China, Siam had joined the First World War

on the side of the victorious powers in 1917.[63] Although Siam's contingent of infantry arrived too late to participate on the Western Front, Siam nevertheless became a signatory of the Treaty of Versailles and her consequent status as a member of the League of Nations allowed her to recover under Section VI of the Versailles Treaty all extraterritorial rights ceded to Germany and Austria-Hungary. More significantly, Siam was then in a better position to employ international law against her unequal treaties with other powers.

It is worth noting that Siam entered the war a few months after the United States and employed American Foreign Affairs Advisers to manage the revision of her unequal treaties. In common with their predecessors, Eldon R. James (1917–23) and Francis B. Sayre (1923–5) emanated from Harvard Law School and viewed the protection and expansion of Siam's independence as their most important task. The Foreign Affairs Advisers, not unlike the Financial Advisers, operated a self-perpetuating dynasty, arranging on their departure for a replacement from the same source, in this case Harvard Law School. This tradition was only broken in 1935 with the arrival of the Yale lawyer, Frederic Dolbeare. But in contrast to their British counterparts who were dispatched by the Bank of England, this was a locally managed phenomenon and had little to do with Washington.[64]

President Woodrow Wilson of the United States was foremost in recognizing the inequality of Siam's position and began negotiating a revised Siamese–American Treaty in Washington in 1920. This was ratified in 1921 and while the Treaty was not entirely reciprocal, its tone nevertheless conveyed a distinct air of reciprocity wholly different from other treaties concluded by Siam before 1918. Yet even the United States was not beyond seeking to improve her commercial position, believing firmly that the end of extraterritoriality would benefit her position. Typically, through the early 1920s the United States pressed for treaty revision to facilitate the American ownership of land. This objective was thwarted because reciprocity could not be achieved on account of local legislation by some American states that forbade the ownership of land by Asiatics. Thus the United States failed to turn political goodwill to economic advantage at a time when British manufacturing strength was in decline. The United States also refused to relinquish her control over tariffs enjoyed under the old treaty until this had been conceded by her competitors who also enjoyed treaty relations with Siam. In 1923 this mammoth task

was entrusted to the Foreign Affairs Adviser, Francis B. Sayre, who was son-in-law to Woodrow Wilson.[65] It was thus in the 1920s that British officials began to perceive the United States as a significant potential rival in Siam.

The British Consul-General in Bangkok (later to become Minister in 1934), Josiah Crosby, forecast correctly that the liberal American position was bound to be employed as an effective lever against European states.[66] Britain also understood that Siamese expectations had been raised further by parallel British concessions elsewhere. One official, offering a typically baleful *tour d'horizon*, suggested that the Siamese could 'point to the general trend of policy since the war, particularly to our own policy—the independence granted to Ireland and Egypt—the more or less complete capitulation in Turkey—the far-reaching concessions made by us in India and Burma'.[67] Negotiations with Great Britain for treaty revisions were successfully undertaken in 1925. Britain finally agreed to tariff increases, but only on condition that tariffs on the bulk of British exports to Siam would be fixed at 5 per cent *ad valorem* for a decade. As a result of this British stipulation the impact of many of these revisions would not be felt for ten years. Nor would other states, including the United States, concede before Britain. It was therefore not surprising that Sayre recalled that the British constituted the most serious obstacle to his mission. Nevertheless, the treaty revision was a significant achievement for until 1921 Siam had been bound by treaty to a mere 3 per cent tariff. Siam's ability to set her own tariffs contributed to the recovery of government finances by 1927 from their previously parlous state.[68] Therefore Francis B. Sayre, who led the exhausting negotiations in Europe during 1925, derived enormous kudos from this achievement to the irritation of the British Legation, which noted him as a 'singular influence over the Siamese Government'.[69] Even after his retirement and departure from Siam, Prajadhipok sometimes chose to consult him, rather than the remaining British or American advisers.[70]

British irritation over the elevated stature of Sayre denoted more than specific alarm. It also indicated a growing perception in British financial departments that the United States was displacing Britain's commercial position in Asia. Examples of this could be found even before the First World War, typically in struggles over railway finance in China. This concern grew after 1918 as Britain found herself transformed into a debtor nation. While British officials could often be found co-operating with the

United States against Japan, they remained fixated with the new power of the dollar. Accordingly, the 1920s were characterized by a constant undercurrent of British concern that an untoward event might trigger a Siamese switch to more American advisers or even a dollar-based currency.

Ironically, in retrospect, the activities of Sayre, which so alarmed British officials, appear at variance with the heroic role accorded to him by some standard accounts of Siamese–American relations. Firstly, the most recent study of the treaty negotiations suggests that Siamese figures, particularly Prince Charoonsak Kridakorn and Prince Devawongse, deserve much of the credit. (Sayre, it might be noted, had achieved little impact upon policy in Bangkok, having departed from Siam within twelve months of his arrival on account of his dislike for the climate.) Secondly, Sayre reappeared in the 1930s in an attempt to undo some of his achievements during the treaty negotiations of the 1920s.[71]

Other aspects of the interpretation of the 1925 treaty negotiations stand in need of revision. The dominant understanding of this treaty revision as denoting a significant decrease in British influence over Siam is misplaced. Some studies have even sought to characterize the period 1910–25 as 'roads to fiscal and judicial autonomy'.[72] While this description remains accurate in the strictly legal sense, nevertheless, it must be recognized that the most important levers of British influence now lay elsewhere at the informal level. Meanwhile, the growing burden on the Siamese administration that resulted from treaty revision and the corresponding growth in Siamese responsibilities only served to increase the short-term requirement for technical assistance from foreign advisers. It was only natural that Siamese *amour propre* should focus upon the public indignity of extraterritoriality, but Britain attached far less importance to this matter. Siam's contrasting inclination to ignore the more discreet conduits of British influence remained central to the smooth Anglo-Siamese relationship. Therefore the key to this revised relationship was an understanding within the Far Eastern Department that what Britain required in Siam, and understood to amount to informal British dominance in that country, was not generally incompatible with what the judicious Siamese élite chose to interpret as formal independence.

Significantly, in 1925 Britain's primary concern was clearly not to protect the unequal treaties with Siam; rather she feared that their removal might facilitate a subsequent attack on the more

important aspects of Britain's position. Consequently, before Britain consented to the very public process of treaty revision, the Siamese Government were required to give Austen Chamberlain, the British Foreign Secretary, private reassurances that Siam would not attack British interests or rush to dispose of her foreign advisers.[73] With appropriate assurances extracted, British officials were confident that their influence would survive the Anglo-Siamese treaty revision of 1925. In stark contrast, it was the international upheavals of the 1930s, rather than treaty revision in the 1920s, that were to offer serious challenges to the British position in Siam.

## *The World Economic Crisis, 1929–1932*

The extended world economic crisis developing towards the end of 1929 subjected the fabric of Britain's dominant position in Siam to a variety of severe tests. As a result British officials were forced to identify essential elements of that position that required protection. Accordingly, an analysis of the British position during such a period of tension and uncertainty is likely to prove to be illuminating. It will be suggested here that Britain's position was vulnerable to global or regional crises because the shock waves transferred themselves to Siam through the British imperial system of finance and trade of which she was a part, thereby directly calling British power and prestige into question. Meanwhile, dissonance in the British imperial system offered opportunities for Britain's competitors to defeat the accumulated momentum of her position in Bangkok. Between 1929 and 1932 both the British and the Siamese Governments speculated presciently on the potential successors to Britain's position in Siam, in itself an ominous exercise. Both identified the United States as the power most likely to displace British influence.

The role of the United States in this crisis was, however, more than that of a potentially interested bystander. The economic problems that engulfed the world in the period 1929–31 were to some extent the result of the failure of Britain, Europe, and the United States to resolve their differences over reparations and war loans. Britain believed that with the right sort of American economic co-operation, London could remain the premier financial centre and sterling the most important currency. Indeed Britain's return to the gold standard in the 1920s was partly an attempt to shore up sterling and British financial influence. The Bank of England

had detected wavering confidence in sterling and typically Sir Charles Addis, a prominent Far Eastern banker, wrote in July 1924 that he noted a 'tendency to fly from sterling, not only on the continent but also in Egypt and Siam'. Just as the return to gold was partly about Anglo-American competition, so it was failure to resolve Anglo-American disagreements over war debts that increased currency speculation and triggered a run on the pound in 1931. The result was devaluation in September 1931.

At a more parochial level, some American officials recognized that the period 1929–31 offered new opportunities for American finance to make an entrée in Siam. In June 1930 Francis B. Sayre, back at Harvard for a short spell before moving to the State Department, advised that now was the time for the United States to focus on Siam. The key to potential American success, he counselled, was the colonial mentality of the Europeans which invariably placed the United States in a good light:

> Many of the British Residents lose out because of their treating the Siamese as an inferior race. Some of them even make no attempt to hide their feelings. I believe the first concern of the American Minister should be to avoid regarding the Siamese as inferior to the Whites . . . once he assumes a superior or patronising attitude his power and opportunity are gone.

Yet in 1931 the United States failed to adopt Sayre's advice and instead, when Siam turned to Washington in her hour of crisis, the American attitude appeared no less predatory than that of the Europeans.[74]

Consequently, Britain preserved her position in Bangkok despite a singularly maladroit response to Siam's economic difficulties. Three main factors explain this survival: firstly, there was the accumulated momentum of British activity; secondly, Siam lacked the technical expertise to offer a confident indigenous alternative to British fiscal management; and thirdly, Britain's rivals, preoccupied with their own difficulties, were ill-prepared to mount an adequate challenge. Indeed, predatory American overtures in 1931 only served to underline what Britain sought to present as the relative benefits of continued British financial management.

The period 1929–31 also illustrates the enhanced significance of local and regional 'departments' in British policy-making, both in Siam and elsewhere during periods of general crisis. In such circumstances, senior officials in London were often too preoccupied with Eurocentric concerns, or with major components

of the imperial structure such as India, to offer detailed direction to subordinates at a local level in outposts such as Siam. The ironic consequence of this for British officials in Bangkok was that their ability to augment local autonomy expanded in direct relation to the scale of any general crisis. This phenomenon can be clearly observed in Siam during September 1931, and in later periods. In contrast, as Chapter 3 will show, local crises such as the Siamese Revolution of June 1932, permitted various sorts of officials in London ample scope for centralized and leisurely deliberation over policy, albeit respectful of views proffered by their local counterparts in Bangkok.

The British position in Siam faced a range of separate but related economic difficulties prior to the Revolution of 1932. The first was specific to Siam, a product of overspending during the previous reign (1910–25) and was well managed with the help of the Financial Adviser, Sir Edward Cook, to Britain's credit. A second problem was the world depression that followed the 1929 market crash. The subsequent slump in commodity prices in Asia was far more drastic than the decline of industrial production in the West. The depression consequently afflicted non-industrialized Asian states such as Siam to a far greater degree than the West, although the burden was suffered quietly by Siam's peasantry. In contrast, Siam's élite were most directly affected by the subsequent attempts by Cook to transfer some of this burden to the higher echelons of society by further government retrenchment. Britain's specific association with the economic plight of Siam's élite was reinforced by a third problem of a fiscal nature. In September 1931 Britain made the shocking announcement that sterling had departed from the gold standard without first informing Siam. This dealt a severe blow to British prestige and was compounded by British mismanagement of the resulting Siamese currency crisis. Britain's association with these problems will be examined in turn.

The reputation of the British Financial Adviser was perhaps at its peak in the late 1920s. In 1925 Prajadhipok (Rama VII) succeeded his brother Vajiravudh (Rama VI) and by a determined programme of economic retrenchment and reform implemented by Cook, he was able to rectify much of the damage wrought by the profligacy of his elder brother. Indeed by 1929 Cook forecast that if progress was sustained, Siam would be able to relinquish half her overseas debt by the mid-1930s. The extent of Cook's standing was such that even Sayre, no friend of British influence,

praised his policies. But the success that had been achieved by 1929 was swept away by a world-wide recession. South-East Asia was badly affected because, as a producer of cash crops and raw materials, she was especially vulnerable to the collapse in world commodity markets. Typically, rubber prices, which had reached a high point of over US$3.40 per pound in 1925 had fallen to an average price of around US$0.70 per pound for the period 1931–2.[75] Additional problems were created by the growth of protectionism amongst the developed economies, the development of synthetic rubber, and a shortage of shipping tonnage. The crisis was only reversed by the stockpiling of rubber and tin due to growing international tensions in the late 1930s. Siam's predicament was compounded by her place in a chain of commodity production within which she supplied rice to tin- and rubber-producing areas like Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. As the depression began to bite, not only did the price of Siam's exports of rice fall dramatically but so did their volume. This was a result of the fall in rubber prices which persuaded peasant smallholders in Malaya and the Dutch East Indies to abandon competition with the European rubber plantations and to turn to subsistence farming. The Dutch East Indies were never more self-sufficient than during the early 1930s.[76] In 1931, Cook's successor as Financial Adviser, Edmund Hall-Patch, offered the pessimistic assertion that in the short term, little could be done to cure 'the ills of this *pays classique de monoculture*'.[77]

Because of the collapse in commodity prices, Hall-Patch was unable to extract loans from his superiors in London in order to cover Siam's budget for 1931, which consequently went into deficit.[78] Ordinarily, Siam would have had few difficulties in raising loans in the City of London, but in 1930 and 1931 the little available liquidity was being directed elsewhere. The Bank of England was preoccupied with managing its own domestic crisis and even formal dependencies such as India, whose currency rested on sterling in common with Siam, found London loath to render any financial assistance.[79] For both India and Siam, one of the few options available was to sell reserves of silver regardless of the collapse in its price and the resulting heavy loss.[80] Consequently, as early as January 1931 there was talk of devaluation to lower the cost of Siamese exports in an attempt to rectify Siam's growing trade imbalance.[81]

From the point of view of Siam's élite, the greatest economic shock was yet to come. On 21 September 1931, as a result of her

own difficulties, Britain abruptly announced her decision to depart from the gold standard.[82] The Siamese Government had been given no prior warning, and in the words of the British Minister in Bangkok, Cecil Dormer, the news 'came as a bombshell'.[83] Most Siamese currency reserves were held in London and overnight their value fell considerably. This episode was given a bitterly ironic twist by the fact that Hall-Patch's predecessor, Cook, had only persuaded Siam to link her reserves to the gold standard in 1929.[84] Indeed, Cook had achieved this in the face of considerable Siamese resistance and only on 18 December 1928 had he triumphantly reported to the Bank of England that he had 'got them on the run'.[85] Clearly Siam had not taken to the gold standard with equanimity and now, less than two years later paid dearly as a result of this British-inspired decision.[86]

'There was panic' in Bangkok, reported Hall-Patch in an illuminating and highly confidential letter to his superiors at the Bank of England. Siam's Supreme Council had expressed a wish to convert all Siam's London reserves from sterling into a currency that was still on the gold standard, with dollars being the most likely option. 'I had', he continued, 'the greatest difficulty in preventing the sterling holdings (about £12 million) being thrown overboard.'[87] For their part, the British Treasury, in the midst of a tremendous run on the pound, issued the accurate but hardly disinterested warning that if 'Siam goes to dollars she will lose heavily on her reserves', as if these had not already taken a beating.[88]

The priorities of the Bank of England's representatives in London and in Bangkok were now divergent. During the last year, Hall-Patch, beset by a collapse in commodity prices, had adopted the classic remedy of retrenchment, hoping that by battening down the hatches, Siam would ride out the storm of world depression and emerge free of the ravages of inflation or massive overseas debt. The gold standard and sterling had been the twin fixed points by which Hall-Patch was determined to navigate and therefore the events of September 1931 were seen as a catastrophe in Bangkok. In contrast the attitude in London was almost flippant. Viewing Siam as an integral part of a British regional economy linked to sterling, they insisted that Siamese exports would be protected by this system against currency fluctuation and instability. A supremely confident senior official, Otto Niemeyer, lectured Hall-Patch insisting that 'as your liabilities and trade are in sterling and all march along it makes no odds',

adding dismissively that Siam's discomforture was therefore 'all psychological'. Niemeyer, preoccupied with problems in London, did not pause to consider the political ramifications of such 'psychological' discomfiture in Bangkok, or the possibility that Siam might choose to abandon London for New York as a financial centre.[89]

The extent to which Siam's confidence in London had been shaken was underlined by the transfer of some Siamese reserves. In late 1931 in a conversation with Dormer, the Siamese Foreign Minister for Foreign Affairs, Prince Devawongse, asked if they could convert sterling reserves into a gold-based currency (meaning dollars). Dormer replied that Siam was free to do so, but requested that Siam wait because of the pressure upon sterling. Siam, however, was in no state to continue to support sterling at her own expense. Siam therefore converted some of her reserves first into gold dollars, and subsequently into gold bullion on news of a financial crisis in the United States, losing 13 million ticals on these transactions. This matter had international ramifications far beyond narrow fiscal policy, for sterling was in some ways a leitmotif for the British position in South-East Asia and elsewhere. Accordingly, American diplomats in Bangkok, sensing an opportunity, marked this episode, more than King Prajadhipok's recent state visit to Washington, to be 'an important step in relations between Siam and the United States'.[90]

In consulting Dormer on the question of reserves, Siam sought to exploit a growing division between the British Minister and the British Financial Adviser over whether Siam should follow Britain into devaluation and thus leave the gold standard. From his diplomatic perspective, Dormer identified three objectives for British policy: to protect British interests, to maintain British influence over Siamese financial policy, and to maintain Siamese goodwill. In pursuing these objectives, Dormer recommended that Siam follow Britain into devaluation. By doing this, he aimed to boost Siamese exports, to keep Siam and Britain aligned, and also to pander to prevailing opinion within Siam's Supreme Council. More importantly, he sought to protect British interests, particularly the British-owned banks which were now losing heavily both on forward contracts and on currency exchange. Dormer stated frankly in his annual report that the bottom line was the fact that the banks were 'overbought in sterling'.[91] British firms, responsible for much of Siam's rice export trade and all tin

exports, were finding that exchange rates had rendered business near impossible. Hall-Patch was inundated with their requests for devaluation, reinforced by pressure from the British Legation. All companies expected to suffer badly if Siam held to the gold standard.[92]

Hall-Patch was at odds with Dormer and the British business community, and his views were informed by a much more complex range of considerations. Devoid of instructions from preoccupied officials in London, Hall-Patch sought to reconcile a range of contradictory British and Siamese claims on his allegiance. He was conscious that devaluation would please the Siamese Government, the British and Chinese business communities, and British diplomats. Yet his classical financial training counselled that the gold standard offered the best long-term prospects for stability in the Siamese economy, and hence for both domestic and foreign interests alike. He added the significant observation that devaluation would shift too great a burden from the Government and commerce to the ill-used peasantry.[93]

Hall-Patch was reinforced in his obstinate commitment to gold by a most important additional factor, a complete contempt for the Siamese administration which he served and a deep distrust of Siamese officials. Little more than a week after the surprise devaluation of sterling, Hall-Patch wrote to Niemeyer at the Bank of England arguing that Siam could not follow Britain into devaluation because the system of financial administration in Bangkok was 'archaic and quite inelastic'. More precisely his officials could not be trusted with a managed exchange rate because, he insisted, they were 'incompetent' and 'corrupt'. He then broadened his assault to attack all the achievements of Prajadhipok's administration and, by implication, his distinguished predecessor, Sir Edward Cook:

> This is not the place to enlarge upon the vast humbug which constitutes modern Siam, it is only necessary to say that the one high spot is the currency system which, as long as the gold standard is maintained, cannot be monkeyed with. If once the gold standard is relinquished, I fear . . . the financial edifice will tumble.[94]

Additional evidence suggests that this distrust and disdain constituted an important reason for Hall-Patch's misguided attachment to gold. More than any other British official serving in Bangkok, he was inclined to view the locality from behind a collar stud and

his reports to London employed a particularly righteous tone. Raymond Stevens, the American Foreign Affairs Adviser, enlarged on this in a private letter to Sir Edward Cook in Egypt some months later (which the latter forwarded to the Bank of England). While conceding that he felt sorry for Hall-Patch, not least because his Minister carried little weight in the Supreme Council (or 'Cabinet'), Stevens added: 'Part of the trouble comes from lack of sympathy on his own part. He has made no effort to cultivate friendly relations and from almost the start he began to count the days to his banishment ... he is somewhat contemptuous of the whole local environment.'[95]

Hall-Patch remained a notably unsympathetic figure when he rose to become Economic Adviser to the British Foreign Office during the late 1940s. When Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, heard that a member of his staff was optimistic about finding a solution for a particular problem he snorted, 'Optimistic, is he? Send for 'all-Patch. 'E'll chill his bones.' Little advice was proffered by the Bank of England, nor was it sought by Hall-Patch. London officials had no time for Siam's problems, but where opinion was expressed *en passant*, it threw doubt upon Hall-Patch's policy. As early as 1 October 1931, Niemeyer argued that Siam 'will certainly be forced off gold and ... would probably be wise to go', the British Treasury agreed.[96] The Foreign Office added that if Siam could not sustain her position on the gold standard, Hall-Patch's advice would appear 'unwise'.[97]

The divergence between Dormer and Hall-Patch over devaluation stemmed partly from the nature of their roles and seems to have been a perennial characteristic of relations between Financial Advisers and Ministers in Bangkok. Typically, in 1902, Tower, the British Minister, had complained bitterly to his Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, of the activities of the first British Financial Adviser, Rivett-Carnac. The latter, he insisted, was 'impetuous' and 'tactless' and could not restrain himself from involvement in every intimate detail of Siamese administration, while giving no regard to the impact of this on Britain's political position. Similar friction could be identified between their successors in 1931.[98]

Yet the major threat to the British financial position in Siam during the period 1929–31 arose, not out of the disarray that beset British policy, but out of the opportunities offered to the United States and France to supplant Britain as Siam's major creditor. As early as January 1931, Siam had applied to the Bank

of England for loans to cover the deficit in her annual budget that had resulted from the collapse of her rice export trade. Dormer urged the Foreign Office to support Siam's request. Predictably, Siam did not rank high amongst the priorities of London's harassed financial officials and was refused credit.[99] In late September 1931, in the wake of Britain's surprise devaluation, an appeal by Hall-Patch for gold credits was rejected by the Bank of England as 'out of the question'.[100] Both Dormer and Hall-Patch understood that Britain's economic crisis would provide other Powers with a matchless opportunity for the economic penetration of Siam. Dormer complained that foreign interests were deliberately circulating rumours in Bangkok that British devaluation would eventually amount to 40 per cent; meanwhile the Bank of England gave him no information to counter such stories.[101] These British fears were confirmed when Siam publicly announced that she was seeking credit amongst Britain's rivals to cover her budget deficit.[102] Despite Dormer's ineffectual attempts to steer Siam towards 'benign' sources of credit in Canada and Switzerland, Siam now approached two of Britain's regional competitors, the United States and France.[103]

Siam initially approached the National City Bank of New York, which ordinarily dealt with Siamese Government financial transactions in the United States. Siam had expected that the recent state visit of Prajadhipok to the United States would have smoothed the path, but they received a rude shock when the most predatory terms were advanced. The National City Bank required that before any credits were provided, Siam should convert all her sterling assets and exhaust them, thus ending currency links with the British system. More importantly the Siamese Government would be required to entrust all future financial business exclusively to the United States. Siam also declared the proposed rate of commission to be 'monstrous' and the interest rate to be very high. Yet so desperate were the Siamese Government to cover their growing deficits that they were ready to accept even these unfavourable terms or to offer Siam's northern railway system as security. A horrified Hall-Patch did not so much dissuade the Siamese Government from accepting the American terms as impede the arrangements by refusing to provide technical assistance for the negotiations. Dormer reported, 'So fascinated is the Siamese rabbit by the American python that, according to Mr Hall-Patch, the Government were ready to accept these or any terms had it not been for his blank refusal to

lend a hand to it.'[104] Yet the American bankers themselves hampered the proceedings for, at the eleventh hour, the National City Bank had contrived to give personal offence to the chairman of the only Siamese bank. 'Consequently', enthused Hall-Patch, 'the City Bank is now taboo.' Siam's deteriorating position and the growing shortage of liquidity in New York ensured the rejection of subsequent approaches to the J. P. Morgan Bank and Chase National Bank.[105]

With some trepidation the Siamese Government had also approached the French, expecting tough terms for credit.[106] They were not disappointed, for the French demanded in return 'a lien on the northern railways and customs' in Siam. These terms were rejected by Siam on the grounds that public animosity in Bangkok might endanger the Government. Subsequently, the French Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok conveyed a less ambitious offer to cover half of Siam's credit requirements on the sole security of Siam's sterling assets. But before the Siamese Government could respond, there was a further financial crisis in Europe and so the offer was withdrawn.[107] Consequently, the difficulties that had weakened the British position had conspired to restrict rival powers hoping to exploit this opportunity and also rendered their financial institutions improbably ambitious. Britain thus remained Siam's major creditor only by default.

In late 1931, with the option of foreign credits denied to them Hall-Patch and the Siamese Finance Minister, Phya Komarakul Montri, attempted to confront the financial crisis on the basis of Siam's own resources. Their proposals provoked a most acrimonious conflict over economic and fiscal policy between Hall-Patch and the majority of the Supreme Council. Hall-Patch and his weak and unpopular Minister were fighting a rearguard action to impose a deflationary programme, consisting of a commitment to the gold standard and severe retrenchment designed to allow Siam to live within her much-reduced means. They also advocated a shift away from indirect taxation, which meant declining revenue in lean times and an increase in capitation tax. Their opponents advocated an inflationary programme and departure from the gold standard in the hope that devaluation would improve Siam's exports and obviate cuts in ministerial budgets and the civil list.

Hall-Patch argued that as long as Siamese rice exports held their own against competition from Saigon, the economy would take the strain. Conversely to devalue was merely to protect the Siamese ruling classes, the Chinese merchants, and European

interests, and consequently, 'the man who will be the ultimate sufferer is the Siamese peasant, who contributes the bulk of the revenue in taxation and is already overburdened'. Moreover, he added, to protect the Chinese merchants who dominated the rice trade was doubly foolhardy given that much of their profit was remitted to China.[108]

The question of devaluation illustrates, amongst other things, the strong political influence of the British Financial Adviser, in this case well beyond that enjoyed by his own Finance Minister.[109] In the short term, the political and economic costs of this programme were so unpalatable that during November 1931 Hall-Patch found himself attempting to keep Siam on the gold standard single-handed. During November 1931 his minister's policies had been 'completely crushed' in the Supreme Council. Quite unabashed, Hall-Patch secured an audience with Prajadhipok on 12 November and proceeded to deliver a most forcible presentation on the virtues of the gold standard. The King asserted that Hall-Patch's *tour de force* 'had completely convinced him that devaluation must, if possible, be avoided, and that he "had now put his foot down" in the Supreme Council'.[110] On 15 November 1931 a royal proclamation announced that Siam would remain on the gold standard.[111]

The depth of political opposition was only revealed when Hall-Patch secured Prajadhipok's agreement to a related overhaul of the Government's financial system. When Prajadhipok suggested this be undertaken by a team from the League of Nations, Hall-Patch recoiled in horror. Such findings would have to be published and, as Hall-Patch delicately put it, 'certain facts might be brought to light'. He was alluding to the numerous financial irregularities relating to the Princes who dominated the Supreme Council. But Prajadhipok insisted that, 'so strong were the "vested interests" of his family, that it was only by full publication, with all its *force majeure*, that escape from taxation could be prevented. He himself had to face opposition from these vested interests which Mr Hall-Patch could hardly appreciate.' Prajadhipok certainly did not underestimate the political dangers entailed in imposing Hall-Patch's retrenchment, particularly in relation to military spending. He revealed that 'during the last reign, there had been a mutiny amongst the officers, which, although it had not been generally known to the public, had been extremely serious. Something of the kind was in the air today, and to cut down the number of officers would be a real danger.'[112] Both

understood that retrenchment held serious political implications.

Prajadhipok's predictions regarding political opposition were well founded for by 21 December 1931 Hall-Patch's political situation had deteriorated and Dormer reported that the inflexible Adviser intended to resign if his measures were not accepted. The King supported him but confessed to being overwhelmed by the Supreme Council. Dormer continued:

> The lot of the Financial Adviser just now is not a happy one, for on the one side he is being harassed by the banks, and on the other the Government cannot be brought to make up their minds. The trouble is partly that the Minister of Finance is cordially disliked, and partly that one or two members of the Government cannot believe that the Financial Adviser is not serving two masters. . . . Anyone in his position who had to tell the Government unpalatable truths would be suspect, and much more so if he is a foreigner.[113]

For all Dormer's differences with Hall-Patch, he contemplated this intention to triumph in the name of sound money or else to resign with abject horror. Resignation, Dormer insisted, would be catastrophic for 'not only the Siamese Government, but British interests as well, for there was no knowing who might succeed him'.[114] The Far Eastern Department were equally alarmed, for they knew only too well who might succeed him. 'He must not resign,' they exclaimed, 'an American would come in.'[115]

Hall-Patch temporarily reasserted his views at a meeting of the Supreme Council on 18 January 1932, at which the five senior foreign advisers were all present. Consequently, on 5 February 1932 the King gave a speech outlining Hall-Patch's proposed policy.[116] But as other historians have shown this unusually frank speech confessed to terrible uncertainty, and, as such, departed radically from the norms of Siam's absolute monarchy:

> The financial war is a very hard one indeed. Even experts contradict one another until they become hoarse. Each offers a different suggestion. I myself do not profess to know much about the matter and all I can do is listen to the opinions of others and choose the best. I have never experienced such a hardship; therefore if I have made a mistake I really deserve to be excused by the officials and the people of Siam.[117]

Clearly, Hall-Patch was dependent upon his status as an 'expert', rather than upon logic, in his attempts to convince his audience. But his increasingly fragile authority was swept away during late February 1932 when the Supreme Council reasserted itself. Prince Purachatra, the Minister of Commerce and Communica-

tions, and Hall-Patch's arch-opponent had now 'virtually taken over the post of the Minister of Finance' from Hall-Patch's Minister.[118] Rumours circulated suggesting that Siam would leave the gold standard once a balanced budget had been achieved. In the event Hall-Patch failed to impose his balanced budget and only attained a dubious compromise.[119] The righteous Hall-Patch was more offended to discover that the Government's baseline figures on which this compromise was reached were 'illusory'. He therefore resigned on 22 March 1932. The last effective bastion of Siam's conservative financial policy had gone and so Siam left the gold standard on 11 May 1932.[120]

Dormer moved quickly to shore up Britain's position in the wake of Hall-Patch's unpleasant resignation. He called upon the Foreign Minister, Prince Devawongse, professing that he had come to express Britain's general desire for continued harmonious relations. But Dormer then turned the conversation to address his real concern that, in their search for a new Financial Adviser, 'the Siamese were tending to seek new friends instead of old and tried ones'. Devawongse replied that Siam had the right to choose her own advisers. Dormer agreed, but then added, rather pointedly, that the selection of a non-British Financial Adviser 'would affect confidence in the city', thus prejudicing Siam's chances of raising loans in London to cover her growing budget deficit. Dormer's hand had been strengthened by the rejection of Siam's suit in the financial centres of New York and Paris the previous year, and her consequent continued dependence upon London for credit. Devawongse took the point and assured Dormer that while Siam in principle reserved the right to choose a Financial Adviser of any nationality, in practice her policy was always to turn to London.[121]

Having obtained this crucial assurance Dormer began a frantic search for a British replacement for Hall-Patch. The matter was urgent, but at the same time Dormer was anxious to avoid a successor whose attitudes might bear even a passing resemblance to those of his unfortunate predecessor. Both Dormer and Devawongse approached the revered Sir Edward Cook, Hall-Patch's successful predecessor, for help.[122] Nothing would induce Cook, now Governor of the National Bank of Egypt, to return to Siam, but with his assistance a replacement was finally found in James Baxter, who had been Financial Secretary to the Egyptian Government.[123] Considered with other foreign adviser appointments in Siam during 1932, Dormer had maintained

Britain's numerical predominance in the field of advisers.[124] But Dormer had only achieved this by crudely flexing the visibly wasting muscle of London's financial power. Moreover, Devawongse's assurance was given before the legacy of Hall-Patch had been completely assessed in Siam or London.

Britain's position and prestige in Siam had suffered damage. In January 1932, even before Hall-Patch's final contretemps, Dormer lamented, 'The [financial] loss which they have suffered has undoubtedly shaken their confidence in us, and a certain feeling of resentment is noticeable at what is considered the fact that part of the loss might have been avoided had their finances not been so subject to British guidance.'[125] The extent to which British guidance could be held responsible for losses only became clear later that year. The decision to cling to the gold standard had overpriced Siam's rice exports and had further reduced demand, thereby exacerbating her perilous balance of payments position. Sir Edward Cook in Egypt, in a letter to the Bank of England written in May 1932, argued that the attempt to cling to the gold standard had been a serious mistake and that even the righteous Hall-Patch 'now practically admits that he was wrong'. The views of the much-revered Cook reached the Government of Siam in a more elliptical way. Only in the aftermath of Hall-Patch's departure in May 1932 did his Finance Minister, Komarakul, admit that he had received a private letter from Cook some months earlier, advising departure from the gold standard. Prajadhipok rebuked him for keeping such influential advice from the Supreme Council.[126]

By 1932 it was clear that Hall-Patch had been both inept and stubborn. As late as November 1931, Siam's financial system threatened to disintegrate and even the Siamese Legations in Berlin and Paris were pleading to be sent dollars rather than a sterling-based currency. Yet Hall-Patch protested at this point that he was 'quite optimistic' about the medium-term availability of funds. He also appears to have been at a loss to know how to handle Siam's large silver reserve.[127] Matters were made worse by a clear lack of personal sympathy. In December 1930, shortly after he had arrived in Bangkok, he confessed to the Bank of England that 'I have not yet made up my mind whether I did the right thing coming here. . . . I have serious doubts', hinting strongly that he was hoping to be moved 'elsewhere' sooner rather than later. Hall-Patch's feelings were reciprocated by the Siamese Government who appear to have been suspicious of him and were

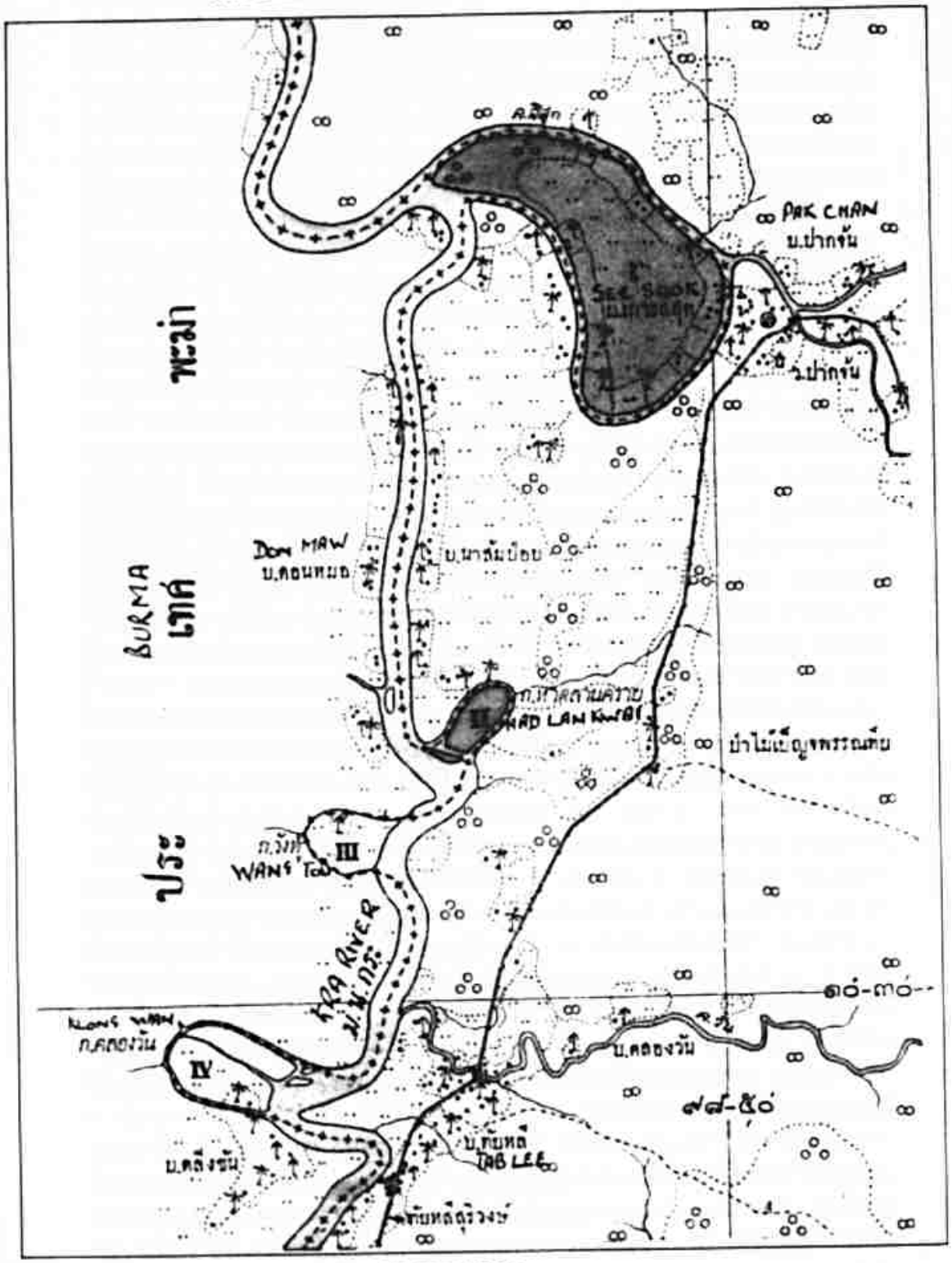
almost certainly attempting to intercept his correspondence with the Bank of England. In 1930 Hall-Patch warned the Bank that 'your letter of October 15th . . . and subsequent letters have been delayed in a somewhat inexplicable manner which I had hoped to elucidate before writing to you, but investigations take a long time here and I am still at a loss to explain the delay which has occurred in each case'. The Bank of England responded by issuing his successor with an elaborate and secure code system for communication with London.[128]

Taking stock of Britain's general position in his annual report, Dormer drew only limited comfort from the fact that in all other respects Anglo-Siamese relations were 'as harmonious as ever'. Minor changes in Siam's frontier with Burma had been amicably decided upon the internationally recognized 'thalweg principle' and both parties had agreed that demarcation of the border was quite unnecessary (Map 2.2). The Siamese Government had moved quickly to toughen passport restrictions upon Indians travelling from Penang to Bangkok 'without any formal request being made'. Meanwhile, the Royal Air Force and the Royal Siamese Air Force were co-operating in an aerial survey of southern Siam as a preliminary to developing an air passenger service between Burma and Malaya. In such matters the Siamese had 'in every instance shown an accommodating spirit'.

Conversely, Dormer revelled in the fact that Franco-Siamese relations were, as ever, 'lacking in harmony'. A minor dispute over customs duties placed on liquor had escalated into a major trade war that closed the border of Laos to commerce. Such pointless and rancorous quarrels seemed to typify Franco-Siamese relations as being 'a matter of face rather than substance'. Meanwhile, the Siamese had become less co-operative in handing over supposed 'communists' to the French authorities. They had begun to 'feel the movement in Annam (Vietnam) . . . is chiefly of a nationalist nature and that communism is not the root of all evil'.[129] This was a significant decision in the context of the substantial uprisings that had developed in the Nghe-Tinh area of Vietnam during 1930 and early 1931.[130]

Dormer had a particular reason for seeking to discredit the crucially different style of aggressive diplomacy employed by the French. Dormer was presently being pressed by senior figures within the British business community in Bangkok and Malaya, and among some sections of the MCS, to emulate the French in whipping the Siamese into line over trade agreements. Amongst

MAP 2.2
The Burmese–Siamese Frontier Adjustment, 1931




*Source*: Public Record Office, FO 371/17176.

those espousing a hard policy was Sir Adam Ritchie, Chairman of the Borneo Company Limited, dealing predominantly in Siamese teak. He stressed that he also spoke for the three other major British firms operating in Siam when he advocated a combined effort against all foreign competition.[131] Ritchie urged Dormer to 'shake the big stick' when addressing the Siamese Government on such issues.[132]

Dormer attacked such ideas as nothing short of disastrous. Writing to Charles Orde, Head of the Far Eastern Department in May 1932, he developed his counter-arguments at length. Central to his case was Siam's general significance in the wider context of neighbouring imperial territories and to illustrate this he alluded to British difficulties in Iran, another area of strong but faltering British informal influence:

> If we are to copy the French and bully the Siamese, we cannot expect the latter to continue as friendly as they have hitherto shown themselves in such matters as the control of Indian agitators and aviation. It is worth remembering that Siam cuts off the Federated Malay States from Burma and if she were to behave as a second Persia we should have a lot more trouble than we have now.[133]

Dormer advanced a lucid appreciation of the extent to which the position of Britain in Siam was dependent upon presenting a benign face relative to her Western rivals. While this was maintained, and while Siam considered herself to be in a position whereby she seemed likely to fall into the informal economic and strategic orbit of some power or other, she would be inclined to accept the benefits, supposed or real, of tactful British management. This was no place for the application of the French 'bludgeon'.

This precise understanding of the nature of Britain's position in Siam, tolerated as the lesser of a range of potential evils, also assists in explaining why British officials identified the United States, with seemingly few overt interests in South-East Asia, as the more substantial threat to Britain's informal hegemony.[134] The relatively liberal attitude of the United States in the Philippines, combined with the resilience of the dollar was potentially most attractive to Siam. Therefore, the Far Eastern Department had been discomfited by the visit of Prajadhipok to the United States for an eye operation during 1931, a visit that had doubled as a state occasion during which the King met President Hoover and senior American officials. For Dormer and

Hall-Patch, this 'appeared to herald a triumph for American interests in this country', the sequel to which would be 'an American loan accompanied by concessions on a large scale'.[135]

By 1932 Dormer was able to report that Siam's unpleasant experience with the so-called 'American python' during the unsuccessful Siamese–American loan negotiations had put paid to the Siamese infatuation with the United States. Siam had expected lenient American terms in the wake of the state visit. Prajadhipok in particular had supposedly confessed to 'complete disillusionment' with the United States. Dormer also expressed profound satisfaction that the King's visit had not passed wholly without incident. For while Prajadhipok's reception there was universally friendly, nevertheless, he reported that 'the Royal Party were apt to be treated as interesting curiosities'. This had irked the King so much that he had engaged an American press agent in an attempt to counter ideas about 'the prevalence of Siamese twins, white elephants and the nine umbrellas'.

Thus, focusing his attention upon the sentiments of Siam's absolute monarch, the delighted Dormer concluded that, as a consequence, 'Siamese feelings towards the United States have cooled off and for the moment at any rate, American hopes of carrying all before them in this country have had a setback'.[136] Predictably perhaps, the American Legation in Bangkok received a different account of the state visit from Prince Svasti who assured them that 'His Majesty the King detested Europe but admired America and Americans'.[137] Neither British nor American officials were aware that the political backwash from repeated economic crises was about to trigger dramatic political change in Siam, rendering the monarchical context of such speculation quite obsolete.

1. D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South East Asia*, London: Macmillan, 1981, pp. 380–94; F. Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1965, p. 29.

2. C. D. Cowan, *Nineteenth-century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 4–67, 91–123; Hall, *South East Asia*, p. 551.

3. Sir John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1969 (1853), Vol. II, p. 183; *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. XXIII, London: Ridgeway, 1865, pp. 1152–7.

4. O. Frankfurter, 'The Unofficial Mission of John Morgan, Merchant, to Siam in 1821', *Journal of the Siam Society*, XI (1914–15): 31–42; D. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984, pp. 178–9.

5. Darling, *Thailand*, pp. 13–15.

6. A year before the accession of King Mongkut, the American Under Secretary of State had sent a failed merchant, Joseph Balestier on an unsuccessful attempt to open negotiations. Sir James Brooke, the British Rajah of Sarawak had made an equally unsuccessful attempt in the same year. Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, Vol. II, pp. 226–7. Siamese agreements followed with France in 1856, Denmark in 1858, Portugal in 1859, the Netherlands in 1860, Prussia in 1862, and Sweden and Norway in 1868.

7. Nevertheless, Bowring, in his correspondence, made it abundantly clear that he was prepared to use force. Hall, *South East Asia*, p. 470; Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp. 183–4; N. Tarling, 'The Mission of Sir John Bowring to Siam', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 50, 2 (1962): 179–92.

8. M. E. Cosenza (ed.), *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris*, New York: Doubleday, Donovan and Co., 1930, pp. 25 ff.; Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp. 170–2.

9. Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp. 183–4; V. Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam*, New York: Macmillan, 1941, pp. 201–10. Interestingly the Siamese Government attempted to play off the Quai d'Orsay against the French Colonial Government of Indo-China after 1858. In contrast to the British Foreign Office, French diplomats were often eclipsed by colonial officials.

10. Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp. 183–4. The author is most grateful to E. Bruce Reynolds for drawing some of these matters to his attention.

11. D. P. Chandler, 'Cambodia's Relations with Siam in the Early Bangkok Period: The Politics of a Tributary State', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 60, 1 (1972): 153–70; J. F. Cady, *South East Asia*, New York: New York University Press, 1954, p. 107; K. P. Landon, 'Thailand's Quarrel with France', *Far Eastern Quarterly*, I, 1 (1941): 30–1.

12. Landon, 'Thailand's Quarrel with France', p. 32; Hall, *South East Asia*, p. 653.

13. Columns of French troops moved into the Lower Mekong delta while French naval vessels sailed up the Chao Phraya River to Bangkok and were fired upon by the Siamese. Siam appealed in vain for British assistance before capitulating to France on 3 August 1893. Hall, *South East Asia*, p. 696.; Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai-Malay Relations: Traditional Inter-regional Relations from the Seventeenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 137.

14. Memorandum by F. C. Jones of the Foreign Research and Press Service (FRPS), RB VIII (b) 4/iv, 18 February 1943, F1010/1010/40, FO 371/35982, PRO; FRPS handbook, 'The Frontier of Siam and Indochina', F1490/1010/40, FO 371/35982, PRO. This convention was re-affirmed in 1904.

15. C. M. Andrew, 'The Entente Cordiale from its Origins to 1914', in N. Waites (ed.), *Troubled Neighbours: Franco-British Relations in the Twentieth Century*, London: University of Reading, 1971, pp. 13–16; K. T. Young, 'The Special Role of American Advisers in Thailand, 1902–49', *Asia*, 14, 1 (1969): 1–31.

16. C. B. Bradley, 'The Oldest Known Writing in Siamese: The Inscription of Phra Ram Khameng of Sokothai', *Journal of the Siam Society*, VI (1909): 33; F. Cooray, *The Thai: Our Neighbours*, Kuala Lumpur: Kyle and Palmer, 1941, p. 232.

17. Meanwhile, where local British colonial authorities had previously achieved a hand in policy-making they had demonstrated a preference for the direct tactics employed by their French counterparts. Typically, in 1862, they had shelled Kuala Trengganu in connection with Siamese interference in a succession dispute in the British-dominated Malay State of Pahang, Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. 185.

18. Both Thamsook and Kobkua emphasize the divergent nature of departmental policies to the point where the Foreign and Colonial Offices were required to keep the 1897 treaty secret from Swettenham, the British Governor in Malaya. Kobkua suggests that Britain and Siam functioned as 'joint guarantors' of the Malay peninsula. Thamsook Numnonda, 'The Anglo-Siamese Convention of 1897', *Journal of the Siam Society*, LII, 1 (1965): 51–2; Thamsook Numnonda, 'The Anglo-Siamese Negotiations, 1900–2', in Wanwaithaykorn (ed.), *History and Culture*, Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1971, pp. 33–42; Kobkua, *Thai–Malay Relations*, pp. 77–8, 155; Vikrom Koompirochana, 'Siam in British Foreign Policy, 1855–1938: The Acquisition and Relinquishment of British Extraterritorial Rights', Ph.D. thesis, Michigan State University, 1972, pp. 169–72.

19. The extent to which these advisers pursued 'pro-British' policies is difficult to determine. Kobkua has demonstrated that W. A. Graham in Kelantan was unsympathetic to British commercial agents and the forward party led by those such as the High Commissioner, Sir Frank Swettenham at Singapore. But to what extent this indicated a preference for the ideas of the Foreign Office rather than the Colonial Office is not clear. Graham was on loan from the Government of India rather than from Malaya, and therefore had no prior links with MCS officials. In contrast, the arrival of Duke, the Siamese Adviser in Perlis, seems to have offered Swettenham openings for a proposal for joint police administration. Meanwhile, Trengganu resisted the appointment of an adviser until 1909 despite the combined efforts of the Siamese Government and Swettenham. The interest taken in financial administration on the Malay Peninsula mirrored British practice in the Indian States. Kobkua, *Thai–Malay Relations*, pp. 106–8, 137, 143, 202–3; *Who's Who, 1934*, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1934; Shaharil Talib, *The Trengganu Experience*, pp. 177–81, 207; R. Jeffrey, 'The Politics of "Indirect Rule": Types of Relationship Among Rulers, Ministers and Residents in a "Native State"', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, XIII, 3 (1975): 261–81.

20. Equally in 1900 Siam was able to threaten Kelantan rebels with arrest if they fled to Malaya, citing the reciprocal case of the Siamese arrest of rebels from Pahang for the British. Kobkua suggests that the decision in 1909 for the secession of the Malay States also owed something to Swettenham who was attempting to undermine the Siamese position in Kelantan. Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. 213; Kobkua, *Thai–Malay Relations*, pp. 148–9, 172.

21. Memorandum of a conversation with Westengard, 26 November 1909, M730, reel 1, 711.922/37, RG 59, NARA. The Siamese Government was also persuaded by recent military defeats at the hands of the French in 1902 and 1904 while resisting their less polite initiatives on the left (east) bank of the Mekong. The 1909 Treaty also marked a change of attitude in the Foreign Office which, owing to the departure of Salisbury and the arrival of Lansdowne as Foreign Secretary, was temporarily inclined to follow Chamberlain's forward colonial policy, Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', pp. 175, 182; Kobkua, *Thai–Malay Relations*, p. 142. On railway loans, see also Burstead to CO, 16 July 1930 (A/183 FMS) CO 717/69/72317, PRO.

22. C. M. Wilson, 'Thailand', in G. M. Kahin (ed.), *Governments and Politics*

*of Southeast Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962, p. 13; Memorandum by F. C. Jones of the Foreign Research and Press Service (FRPS), RB VIII (b) 4/iv, 18 February 1943, F1010/1010/40, FO 371/35982, PRO; FRPS handbook, 'The Frontier of Siam and Indochina' (1st draft), F1490/1010/40, FO 371/35982, PRO. British objections regarding judicial matters were met by the promulgation of a Western style criminal code in 1908. Much of this dispute centred around a tin concession in Kelantan. Judicial privileges of Asian colonial subjects had been exploited well beyond the spirit of the original agreements; see Wyatt, *Thailand*, pp. 172–3.

23. Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', pp. 193–6.

24. Hornbrook to SoS, No. 51, 3 March 1916, M726, reel 6, 892.01a/23, RG 59, NARA; Young, 'American Advisers', p. 25.

25. Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. 208.

26. J. Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War, 1918–1922*, London: Macmillan, 1981, p. xiv; R. F. Holland, *European Decolonization, 1918–1981*, London: Macmillan, 1985, pp. 15–26; P. Lowe, *Britain in the Far East: A Survey from 1819 to the Present*, London: Longman, 1981, pp. 64–81. In 1928 officials in Malaya reflected on 'the present tendency of the Siamese to break away from France and to lean more towards British territorial influence', Malaya Command Intelligence Notes No. 57, 8 May 1928, not foliated, AIR 5/758, PRO.

27. Memorandum by the Overseas and Foreign Department (BE), 31 July 1935, fol. 50, OV 25/4 (669/3), BE; Waterlow to Chamberlain No. 17, 21 January 1927, (Coll. 33/12), L/P&S/12/4068, IOLR. Brief biographical details of Financial Advisers are given in Appendix 1, pp. 376–7.

28. Their brief was to end the unequal treaties; Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 89.

29. Ingram advances the argument that at the turn of the century 'British Financial Advisers largely decided whether additional foreign loans were wise or not'. Part of this debate turns on policy with regard to irrigation work undertaken for the Siamese Government by T. Ward and R. C. R. Wilson of the Punjab Irrigation Service, and also arguments over the motivation behind railway development. J. C. Ingram, *Economic Change in Thailand, 1850–1970*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971, pp. 198–200; D. Feeny, *The Political Economy of Productivity: Thai Agricultural Development, 1880–1975*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1982, pp. 81–4; I. Brown, *The Élite and the Economy in Siam, c. 1890–1920*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 33–7; I. Brown, 'British Financial Advisers in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn', *Modern Asian Studies*, 12, 2 (1978): 195.

30. I. Brown, 'The Ministry of Finance and the Early Development of Financial Administration in Siam, 1885–1910', Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1975, p. 337. Brown has stressed the 'strong similarities . . . often in detail' in economic administration in Burma, Siam, and Indo-China; see Brown, *The Élite and the Economy*, pp. 3–4, 6.

31. Brown's masterly dissertation remains the definitive account of Siamese financial administration during this period; see Brown, 'The Ministry of Finance', p. 312. This matter is indicative of the wider problems surrounding many categories of modern Siamese records.

32. Even on the basis of the abundant evidence available in the Siam files of the Bank of England, it is sometimes difficult to establish the predominance of

British or Siamese influence in policy formulation during periods when their policies were largely congruent. The authority of the British Financial Adviser becomes clearer after 1930 when the Adviser was often at variance with the Siamese Government.

33. After 1939 the sterling area consisted of the Dominions (except for Canada); all colonies, protectorates, mandates and areas of informal influence such as Iraq. R. Mikesell, 'Sterling Area Currencies of the Middle East', *Middle East Journal*, 11, 1 (1948): 161–4.

34. Credit was a perennial British mechanism of inter-war informal control and its operation can be widely observed. As late as 1948, the Foreign Office informed Iraq that they would not be considered to have achieved financial stability until a British Financial Adviser had been appointed. Furthermore there would be no loans until Iraq had met Britain's criteria for 'stability'. Foreign Office to Baghdad, 10 May 1948, T 236/1193, PRO, cited in J. Sassoon, *Economic Policy in Iraq, 1932–1950*, London: Frank Cass, 1987, p. 23.

35. Cook's influence was nevertheless partly dependent upon the Siamese Government's concern for Siam's international financial credibility. This concern had not been greatly in evidence during the reign of King Vajiravudh, Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 18.

36. Sassoon, *Economic Policy in Iraq*, pp. 24, 48, 107–8. Brown notes that in 1902, two British banks, the Standard Chartered Bank and the Hong Kong Bank, were able to force the Siamese Government to revise their currency exchange rate policy by threatening to bring foreign trade to a halt through their monopoly of currency dealings. Financial Advisers had blocked proposals for the establishment of a Siamese bank since the 1890s. The Siamese Commercial Bank was finally founded in 1907 and, after unhappy Chinese management, it passed to American and British managers in the period 1917–42, Brown, *The Élite and the Economy*, pp. 126–7; see also below fn. 114. On the Bangkok branch of the Hong Kong Bank see, Thiravet Pramuanratkarn, 'The Hong Kong Bank in Thailand: A Case of a Pioneering Bank', in F. H. H. King (ed.), *Eastern Banking: Essays in the Early History of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*, London: Athlone, 1983, pp. 421–34.

37. Lieth-Ross wished the Chinese to take British loans to exercise control over Chinese central banking and customs, R. Dayer, *Finance and Empire: Sir Charles Addis, 1861–1945*, London: Macmillan, 1988, p. 301.

38. Siam's debt to London remained low, at approximately £11,000,000, during this period. The servicing of this loan amounted to about 8.9 per cent of Siam's annual expenditure; see Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 94.

39. Greg to Waterlow, 23 July 1925, F4201/183/40, PRO, cited in Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 17; *Who's Who, 1954*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1954, p. 614.

40. Cook to Governor (BE), 14 July 1925, fol. 190, 630/14 (4040/1), BE; Governor (BE) to Cook, 14 September 1925, fol. 74, ibid. Yet there was nothing implausible in the idea of British personnel defending Siamese rather than British interests. In 1909 W. J. Archer, a British subject, was even serving in London as Siam's consular representative.

41. In a similar way British officials in London and Cairo expressed irritation when Swan, the British Financial Adviser in Baghdad, developing a degree of local loyalty, pursued Iraqi interests and thus acted, as they delicately put it, without 'regard for the general situation'. Record of a meeting between Swan and France

(Middle East Office, Cairo), 18 August 1944, 8(114)/44/2, FO 921/269, PRO, cited in Sassoon, *Economic Policy in Iraq*, p. 27.

42. Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 95; Cook to Hamilton, 19 January 1926, fol. 13, K Kh 0301.1.8/17, TNA; Cook memorandum of a conversation with Damrong, June 1926, fol. 103, K Kh 0301.1.26/1, TNA and Appendix 2, p. 377.

43. By 1940 the region supplied almost all the world's rubber, manilla hemp, kapok, pepper, and teak; it produced three-quarters of all tapioca and copra and more than half of its palm oil. It produced significant quantities of strategic minerals such as petroleum, tin, iron ore, manganese ore, and chromium. J. Pluvier, *South-East Asia from Colonialism to Independence*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 23.

44. Malaya was of enormous importance to the sterling area after 1919 and between 1945 and 1953 it contributed more dollars to the sterling area than the metropole itself. By the 1930s, rice accounted for 95 per cent of Siamese land under cultivation. J. Darwin, *British Decolonisation since 1945*, London: Macmillan, 1988, pp. 108, 138; Feeny, *The Political Economy of Productivity*, pp. 12–35.

45. This requirement also extended to the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines, Feeny, *The Political Economy of Productivity*, pp. 49–56; Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 7; Ingram, *Economic Change in Thailand*, pp. 37, 52, 95.

46. The Siamese Department of Mines was an area where European officials were suspected of favouring Western mining interests. British firms dominated teak extraction and in 1901 Siamese officers of the new Forestry Department were trained at the Imperial Forestry College at Dehra Dun in India; see Brown, *The Élite and the Economy*, pp. 107, 112–16.

47. Hamilton King to SoS, November 1902, in Thompson, *Thailand*, pp. 204–5.

48. Brodie to SoS No. 251, 19 December 1922, M726, reel 6, 892.01a/66, RG 59, NARA; Pluvier, *Colonialism to Independence*, p. 23.

49. This would become a major issue in Siam during the mid-1930s as dollar exchange became increasingly scarce. For parallels with Iraq and the sterling area, see Sassoon, *Economic Policy in Iraq*, pp. 204–6. Brown notes that construction of a modern Siamese smelter at the port of Phuket had been under consideration as early as 1890 by King Chulalongkorn; see Brown, *The Élite and the Economy*, p. 109.

50. Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. 238; Batson, basing his figures on the *Bangkok Times*, suggests that in 1924 the major groups of Siamese students abroad were distributed as follows: Britain, 301; United States, 47; France, 24. British officials in Bangkok gave different figures suggesting that there were 301 Siamese students overseas *in total* distributed as follows: Britain, 204; British dependencies, 7; United States, 47; France, 24; the others were studying in other European countries or Japan. Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 78; Greg to MacDonald No. 85, 18 April 1924 (Coll. 33/12), L/P&S/12/4068, IOLR. British officials attached importance to British education. Dismayed officials noted in 1928 that; 'Prince Yugala, one of the King's half brothers, proved a failure and was retired on account of his inability to resist alcoholic excess. Educated at Cambridge, the Prince is ardently pro-British and, but for the above failing, would be an asset to his country. He has departed to Europe', Malaya Command Intelligence Notes No. 57, 8 May 1928, not foliated, AIR 5/758, PRO.

51. In November 1932 the *Bangkok Times* reported a speech by Prajadhipok at Vajiravudh College at which he urged them to model themselves upon Eton.

Prajadhipok had himself attended Eton, the Woolwich Academy and the Ecole Supérieure de Guerre in Paris; see *Bangkok Times*, 17 November 1932. Flood notes that Japanese diplomats placed great emphasis on British education as a barrier to Japanese initiatives in the late 1920s: 'As long as these staunchly pro-British princes maintained their grip on the Kingdom, there was little hope that the Japanese Minister, Yatabe, would succeed in his objectives in Bangkok', E. T. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand, 1928–1941', Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1967, p. 48.

52. This was particularly noticeable during Vajiravudh's reign (1910–25). Characteristically he formed the 'Wild Tiger Corps', a fierce para-military unit composed of civil servants and the wealthy designed to encourage devotion to the 'Fatherland'. Education, and drama were employed as means of promoting nationalist sentiment, Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. 229.

53. Darling, *Thailand*, pp. 14, 19; G. B. McFarland, *Reminiscences of Two Decades of Service in Siam*, Bangkok: W. H. Mundie/Bangkok Times, 1936, available at M730, reel 1, 711.922, RG 59, NARA.

54. Dormer to FO No .7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO.

55. Ibid. When Craig, a British adviser to the Interior Ministry was asked to advise on local elections, he immediately pointed to the danger of a Chinese majority in some areas of Bangkok, Craig memorandum, n.d., K Kh 0301.1.19/5, TNA.

56. Chinese immigration peaked in Thailand in the early 1930s when the community constituted 12.2 per cent of Siam's population, V. W. W. S. Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, London: Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 84–5, 118–24; Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. 237.

57. Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. 229. Malayan officials clearly shared this paranoia. In 1928 they noted that 'ten years hence Siam will be more or less swamped by Chinese', Malaya Command Intelligence Notes No. 59, 13 September 1928, not foliated, AIR 5/758, PRO.

58. E. H. Carr, *The Twilight of the Comintern*, London: Macmillan, 1977, p. 24.

59. Annual Report for 1930, 19 February 1931, F1873/1873/40, FO 371/15532, PRO. See also references to conference between officers of the Siamese Ministry of the Interior and the Secretaries for Chinese Affairs of the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States (the focus was upon KMT and communist activities), Malaya Command Intelligence Notes No. 57, 8 May 1928, not foliated, AIR 5/758, PRO.

60. This information also led to the arrest of Ho Chi Minh in Hong Kong and the capture of the registry of the Comintern Far East in Shanghai. A letter intercepted during March 1931, by the Special Branch of the Singapore police, revealed that, 'owing to the White terror over 100 members of the Siamese Communist Party had been arrested, that there were only 200 members left, and that their quality was not very good', Dormer to FO No. 7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO.

61. Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, pp. 8–9, 169.

62. Both Ho Chi Minh and Tan Malaka were able to operate in Siam during this period, albeit taking care to confine themselves to the remote north-east of the country, D. Duncanson, 'Ho-Chi-Minh in Hong Kong, 1931–2', *The China Quarterly*, 57, 1 (1974): 96–101.

63. Significantly, when Siam declared war in 1917 enemy subjects were

handed to the British in Burma rather than French Indo-China, Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', p. 206.

64. Young, 'American Advisers', p. 11. Siam argued for example, that in the absence of control over her own tariff system, opium necessarily formed a major source of state revenue. Consequently, without treaty revision Siam would be unable to implement the International Opium Convention of 1912. Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', pp. 250–1.

65. *FRUS*, 1920, Vol. II, pp. 857–905; F. B. Sayre, 'Siam's Fight for Sovereignty', *Atlantic Monthly*, 140 (1927), p. 679; see also F. B. Sayre, 'Siam', *Atlantic Monthly*, 137 (1926): 841–51.

66. Crosby to FO, 25 August 1921, FO 422/78, PRO cited in Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', p. 228. See also Darling, *Thailand*, p. 17.

67. Greg to Macdonald No. 79, 7 April 1924, FO 371/10347, PRO, cited in Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', p. 238.

68. See Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', p. 246; F. B. Sayre, *Glad Adventure*, New York: Macmillan, 1964, pp. 105–13.

69. Waterlow to Chamberlain, 29 July 1926, F3572/78/40, PRO, cited in Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 37; Cook memorandum, 21 August 1926, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.18/21, TNA.

70. Prajadhipok to Sayre, 23 July 1926, File correspondence (1924–65), Box 27, Sayre papers, Library of Congress, enclosing an important and lengthy memorandum he had drafted entitled 'The Problems of Siam'. On this, see Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. 236; B. Batson (ed.), *Siam's Political Future: Documents from the End of the Absolute Monarchy*, Ithaca: South East Asia, Cornell University, Data Paper No. 96, 1974, pp. 9–41.

71. Dayer, *Sir Charles Addis*, pp. 62, 78, 84–5; Oblas, 'Unequal Treaties', pp. 250–3. For the traditional view, see Darling, *Thailand*, pp. 17–20.

72. See Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', p. 206.

73. See Vikrom, 'Extraterritorial Rights', pp. 250–1; Stevens to Cook, 3 August 1926, fol. 2, K Kh 0301.1.35/28, TNA. See Cook to Stevens, 4 June 1926, fol. 56, K Kh 0301.1.8/24, TNA.

74. Dayer, *Sir Charles Addis*, pp. 112–13, 117; Sayre to Geissler, 23 June 1930, File correspondence 1930, Box 1, Sayre papers, Library of Congress.

75. Sayre, 'Passing of Extraterritoriality', pp. 688–9; Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 188; C. P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939*, London: Allen Lane, 1973, pp. 89, 124–5.

76. Holland, *European Decolonization*, pp. 13–15; P. T. Bauer, *The Rubber Industry: A Study in Competitive Monopoly*, London: Bentinck, 1948, pp. 59–64.

77. Hall-Patch to Montagu Norman (Governor), 20 February 1931, fol. 1, 6 1/377 (2542/1), BE. Hall-Patch rejected a visit to Siam by a team of advisers from the League of Nations as, 'travelling circuses' who could not resolve the fundamental problem of monoculture.

78. In the financial years 1929–30 and 1930–1, the deficit was 2.5 million ticals and 12 million ticals respectively. This was despite drastic cuts in expenditure, including a controversial reduction in military spending by 4 million ticals. Dormer to FO No. 7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO. Report of the Cabinet (Budget) Subcommittee, 4 January 1931, fol. 71, K Kh 0301.1.1/12, TNA.

79. B. R. Tomlinson, 'Britain and the Indian Currency Crisis, 1930–2', *Economic History Review*, XXXII, 1 (1979): 89–90.

80. Hall-Patch to Siepmann, 10 March 1931, fol. 49, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE. On the Indian parallel, see Tomlinson, 'Indian Currency Crisis', p. 90.

81. Dormer to Henderson No. 237, 21 January 1931, F466/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO; Williams (commercial attaché) to SoS, 15 January 1931, File 121, RG 84, NARA.

82. Deputy Governor (BE) to Hall-Patch, 20 September 1931, fol. 66A, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE. See also D. Williams, 'London and the 1931 Financial Crisis', *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, XV (1963): 513–28.

83. Dormer to FO No. 7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO.

84. Meeting between Cook and Niemeyer, 18 July 1928, fol. 12, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE.

85. Ibid.

86. Cook complained at the time of 'old fashioned and conservative elements which . . . are apt to come to life and display amazing industry and ingenuity when its a question of finding reasons for *not* doing something that is proposed', Cook to Niemeyer, 18 December 1928, fol. 16, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE.

87. Hall-Patch to Niemeyer, 2 October 1931, fol. 66, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE.

88. Bewley (T) to Charles (FO), 6 October 1931, fol. 70, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE.

89. Niemeyer to Hall-Patch, 27 October 1931, fol. 71, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE.

90. Minister of Finance to Siamese Legation, London, 18 October 1931, fol. 25, K Kh 0301.1.25/25, TNA. Siam attempted to minimize the embarrassment by continuing to hold some of its converted reserves in London, Dormer to FO No. 7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO. English to SoS No. 107, 31 October 1931, 892.00 PR/31, RG 59, NARA.

91. Dormer to FO No. 7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO. Also Kauffman to SoS No. 14, 30 November 1931, 892.00 PR/32, RG 59, NARA.

92. Typically the Pungah Tin Dredging Company claimed to be losing about $10,000 per month due to exchange problems, Director Pungah Tin to Minister of Finance, 27 October 1931, fol. 39, K Kh 0301.1.23/39, TNA. Hall-Patch to Johns (British Legation), 30 December 1931, fol. 46, K Kh 0301.1.23/39, TNA; Pattani Tin Company to Minister of Finance, 17 December 1931, fol. 50, K Kh 0301.1.23/39, TNA.

93. Dormer to Reading No. 178, 29 September 1931, F6311/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO. Hall-Patch was anxious to maintain spending on agricultural development, Hall-Patch memorandum to Minister of Finance, 14 January 1931, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.18/17, TNA.

94. Hall-Patch to Niemeyer, 2 October 1931, fol. 66, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE.

95. Stevens (Bangkok) to Cook (Egypt), 22 March 1932, fol. 146, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE; A. Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary*, New York: Norton, 1983, p. 98, n. 2.

96. Niemeyer to Bewley (T), 1 October 1931, fol. 63A, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE; Bewley (T) to Charles (FO), 6 October 1931, fol. 70, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE.

97. Roberts minute, 29 September 1931, F6311/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO.

98. Tower to Lansdowne, 10 March 1902, Lansdowne Papers, FO 800/142, PRO, cited in Brown, 'The Ministry of Finance', pp. 116–17.

99. Dormer to Reading No. 178, 29 September 1931, F6311/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO.

100. Hall-Patch to Niemeyer (presumed), 27 September 1931, fol. 60, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE; Niemeyer to Bewley (T), 1 October 1931, fol. 63A, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE.

101. Dormer to Reading No. 178, 29 September 1931, F6311/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO.

102. Aide memoire left with Dormer by Siamese Minister for Foreign Affairs, enclosed in Dormer to Reading No. 179, 2 October 1931, F6312/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO.

103. Dormer to Hall-Patch, 27 September 1931, fol. 628, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE.

104. Dormer to Reading No. 179, 2 October 1931, F6312/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO; Minister of Finance to Siamese Legation, Washington, 27 September 1931, fol. 7, K Kh 0301.1.25/35, TNA.

105. Dormer to Reading No. 179, 2 October 1931, F6312/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO; Minister of Finance to Siamese Legation, Washington, 18 October 1931, fol. 25, K Kh 0301.1.25/35, TNA.

106. Hall-Patch to Niemeyer, 2 October 1931, fol. 66, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE.

107. Dormer to Reading No. 179, 2 October 1931, F6312/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO.

108. Meanwhile, he continued, the suggested devaluation of 25 per cent would increase Siam's expenditure by 10.5 million ticals while decreasing her revenue by 11 million ticals. Without a healthy balance of payments, he insisted, there was no hope of raising credit to cover even Siam's present deficits, Dormer to Reading No. 182, 14 October 1931, F6644/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO. Hall-Patch memorandum, 'Transitory Fiscal Projects', 28 November 1931, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.1/12, TNA.

109. Dormer to Reading No. 182, 14 October 1931, F6644/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO. Dormer to FO No. 7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO.

110. Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. 185.

111. Dormer to FO No. 7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO; Williams (commercial attaché) to Washington, 19 November 1931, RG 84, NARA.

112. Dormer to Simon No. 205, 13 November 1931, F7528/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO.

113. Dormer to Reading No. 182, 21 December 1931, F6644/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO.

114. Dormer to Simon No. 205, 13 November 1931, F7528/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO. Hall-Patch memorandum to King of Siam, 5 November 1931, F7529/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO. Dormer subsequently reported that Prince Purachatra was attempting to find an American manager for the Siamese Commercial Bank, where the previous incumbent had been British. A British manager was eventually appointed, Dormer to Simon No. 9, 9 January 1932, F1134/200/40, OV 25/2 (669/1), BE.

115. Dormer to FO No. 53, 21 December 1931, F7636/9/40, FO 371/15531, PRO; Roberts minute, 22 December 1931, FO 371/15531, PRO.

116. In practice the matter seems to have been decided in a previous and more private exchange between Hall-Patch and his principal adversary, Purachatra, in

the presence of the Prajadhipok and several of the foreign advisers, Johns to FO No. 53, 5 March 1932, F3385/200/40, FO 371/16259, PRO.

117. Batson, *Siam's Political Future*, pp. 77–81.

118. Dormer to FO No. 21, 25 January 1933, enclosing Annual Report for 1932, F1558/1558/40, FO 371/17178, PRO.

119. Johns to FO No. 8, 28 March 1932, F2864/200/40, FO 371/16259, PRO; Johns to FO No. 59, 10 March 1932, F3388/200/40, FO 371/16259, PRO.

120. Dormer to FO No. 233, 19 December 1932, F8696/200/40, FO 371/16260, PRO. See also Hall-Patch to Komrakul, 22 March 1932, (F1260/01), T 160/435, PRO.

121. Dormer to FO No. 233, 19 December 1932, F8696/200/40, FO 371/16260, PRO. Dormer to FO No. 34, 11 February 1932, F2717/2717/40, FO 371/16261, PRO.

122. Cook (Egypt) to Niemeyer (BE), 11 May 1932, fol. 152, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE; Cook (Egypt) to Niemeyer (BE), 30 May 1932, fol. 167, ibid. A number of British candidates were under consideration in Egypt, London, and India, the initial favourite being A. F. L. Brigue (ICS), who was Deputy Financial Secretary at Simla.

123. Dormer to FO No. 23, 27 July 1932, F5828/200/40, FO 371/16260, PRO. On connections between Bangkok and Cairo, see Brown, 'Siam and the Gold Standard', *passim*.

124. Two British nationals were appointed, Dr A. Kerr as Director-General of Agricultural Research, and W. Reeves to overhaul the Customs and Excise Department. M. Christiansen, the Manager of the Dutch-owned East Asiatic Company was appointed to the important posts of Trade Commissioner and Director-General of the Commercial Intelligence Bureau. Dormer considered the latter appointment to be 'anything but welcome'. Dormer to FO No. 7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO.

125. Dormer to Orde, 18 May 1932, F4260/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO.

126. Cook (Egypt) to Niemeyer (BE), 30 May 1932, fol. 167, OV 25/1 (668/3), BE. Cook added, 'You are very affected by the environment there'; Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 216.

127. Hall-Patch memorandum, 20 November 1931, fol. 18, K Kh 0301.1.23/31, TNA; Siamese Legation, Berlin to Devawongse, 25 September 1931, fol. 21, K Kh 0301.1.23/39, TNA; Siamese Legation, Paris to Devawongse, 4 December 1931, fol. 60, K Kh 0301.1.23/39, TNA. On silver, see Hall-Patch to Siepmann, fol. 11, K Kh 0301.1.23/45, TNA.

128. Hall-Patch to Siepmann, 31 December 1930, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.23/45, TNA. On codes, see pp. 155 and 196.

129. According to the 'thalweg principle' the international border followed the deepest channel of a waterway, and accordingly shifted when it changed course. Dormer to FO No. 7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO. See also National City Bank to Brett, 12 January 1932, Folder 1, Box 1, John Hall Brett papers, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University.

130. D. G. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, pp. 378–86.

131. Ritchie had expressed a fear that leases permitting them to work the teak forests would not be renewed, or that a preference might be shown to the Danish East Asiatic Company, Dormer to Orde, 18 May 1932, F4260/2717/40, FO

371/16261, PRO; Dormer to Makillop, 12 June 1932, F4761/2717/40, FO 371/16261, PRO.

132. Dormer to Orde, 18 May 1932, F4269/2717/40, FO 371/16261, PRO. British firms dominated the teak industry and were responsible for 80 per cent of Siam's production. For further details, see Johns to FO No. 3, 27 August 1932, F4529/4529/40, FO 371/16262, PRO.

133. Dormer to Orde, 18 May 1932, F4260/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO.

134. American diplomats in Bangkok were themselves painfully conscious of the comparatively poor figure that they cut here and complained of the 'flimsy structure of the American Legation', Rodgers to SoS No. 44, 2 June 1931, 892.00 PR/25, RG 59, NARA.

135. Dormer to FO No. 7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO.

136. Ibid.

137. English to SoS, 7 July 1931, 892.00 PR/26, RG 59, NARA.

# 3
# The West and the 'Young Turks', 1932–1935

THE Revolution of June 1932 which removed the Siamese absolute monarchy is generally understood to constitute the most significant landmark in the twentieth-century political development of Siam. But in contrast to the frenetic political turmoil that characterized Bangkok, the West contemplated the Revolution and its aftermath with surprising equanimity. Discerning that these events initially represented little more than a *coup d'etat*, British officials expressed confidence in the continued resilience of the mechanisms of British influence under new political conditions. Admittedly, few of the new Siamese élite had passed through Marlborough, Sandhurst, or Oxford; moreover, there was now a greater emphasis upon nationalism. But these significant differences appeared to be offset by the opportunities offered to Britain by an inexperienced Siamese Cabinet floundering in the unfamiliar medium of a Western-style constitutional system. Such problems initially served to reinforce, rather than reduce, the dependency of Siam upon foreign advisers such as James Baxter. Therefore, Siamese politics between 1933 and 1935 was partly characterized by close co-operation between the more conservative-minded revolutionaries and foreign advisers. Surprisingly, Britain was most embarrassed by the displaced princely élite, some of whom refused to believe that Britain had transferred her loyalties and would not support their restoration.

The resilience demonstrated by the British position in Siam during 1932 and 1933 was peculiar. It contradicted wider economic and strategic developments in Asia which pointed to the continued decline of British power, most importantly Britain's prolonged series of embarrassments in East Asia at the hands of Japan against a background of American isolationism. It is a matter of some historical irony that political events in Bangkok during this period took place within a framework characterized by fear of British or French intervention, since some British military officials were so unsure of British military power east of Suez by

1932 that they doubted the feasibility of such action. In the event Siam, nevertheless, believed Britain capable and willing to effect such an intervention. Only in 1934 did Siamese officials in Bangkok begin to recognize the disparity between British prestige in Bangkok and the reality of her predicament in Asia. Therefore, by 1935, while Britain retained various traditional levers of influence in Siam, at the same time the strength of Britain's position in Asia had become a matter of constant and unresolved debate within ruling circles in Bangkok.

Accordingly, before 1935 two contradictory themes can be observed in relation to the West and Siam. First, in Bangkok, the mechanisms of British influence were characterized by surprising stability and continuity at a time of rapid political change. Moreover, Siamese fear of Western intervention, however misplaced, assisted in extracting certain critical guarantees regarding the British position. Therefore, even in 1934, those British officials concerned with internal events in Siam continued to express confidence. However, at the same time, this skilfully conserved position in Bangkok was being outflanked by a second theme developing at the international level. After 1933 Siamese attention was increasingly engaged by the shifting strategic matrix in Asia. By 1935 the Siamese Cabinet and Siamese military circles were actively if inconclusively debating the implications of the West's humiliation by Japan in China and the growing importance of Japan. Some had already begun to conclude that Britain's position was increasingly dependent upon American support and accordingly the new Siamese élite were conscious of the need to seek approval, not only in London but also in Washington and Tokyo.

## *The Revolution, 1932*

On the morning of Friday, 24 June 1932, Prajadhipok, the last absolute king of Siam, was displaced by a bloodless revolution executed by a clique of officials and military officers. Prajadhipok was at his new Summer Palace, Klai Kangwol, at Hua Hin on the southern coast entertaining, amongst others, a sales delegation from the British arms manufacturer, Vickers Armstrong Limited of Barrow, led by Lieutenant-Colonel R. S. Ryan.[1] Ryan reported the subsequent events to his Director in London, General Sir Noel Birch:

On Friday morning early I was playing golf and I was one hole in front of the King. Coming up to the ninth green I met the Master of Ceremonies

doing a sprint up the course towards His Majesty bearing news of the revolution. The King went at once back to the Palace and the rest of the day was spent trying to get information.

The Palace had initially received the news of the revolution by radio. This was confirmed by the arrival of Prince Purachatra who had escaped the revolutionaries by means of a special train. On learning of the extent of the revolution, the King accepted defeat without offering resistance.[2]

Ryan, who had previously served in Military Intelligence, offered the observation that what was no more than a *coup d'etat* had succeeded as a result of not only the careful preparations undertaken by the revolutionaries, but also the 'inefficiency of the Government'. He found it 'inconceivable' that in a country such as Siam 'where nothing can ever be kept a secret', no information had come to the attention of those in power. There had been 'a feeling in the air' that something was going to happen. Ryan continued:

An oligarchy such as exists in Siam, and which is practically devoid of support in the country, might at least be thought to have provided itself with a good intelligence service, but this was far from being the case. Having 150 years of peace and comfort behind it, there seemed I suppose, no reason why they should not go on in the same fashion forever.[3]

Ryan neglected to point out that many of those to whom Prajadhipok would have turned were themselves responsible for the revolution.

Certainly, the revolutionaries or 'Promoters', as they styled themselves, had secured a near monopoly of modern military power in Bangkok. Ryan was fascinated by the prominent place taken by Vickers manufactured armaments in the seizure of power, particularly the tanks and armoured cars. 'I am told the revolutionaries made great use of them', he continued, 'and are full of their praise.' Meanwhile the Promoters chose to deliver their ultimatum to Prajadhipok not by rail, but by means of a Vickers naval craft, the *Sukothai*. Ryan, sensing a promising new market, was quick to move his personnel from Hua Hin to Bangkok. There, outside the Throne Hall, the leaders of the revolution climbed on to the back of a Vickers 6-ton tank to proclaim constitutional government to their troops.[4]

In the short term, the revolution of June 1932 was partly precipitated by the recent economic turbulence, in the face of which

the King had made unprecedented confessions of bewilderment to Siam's senior military officers.[5] The various economic difficulties faced by Siam between 1925 and 1932 had also generated discontent within the military and administrative classes. As early as January 1932 Dormer had warned that

> in a year of world-wide financial and economic depression ... the Siamese peasant with ... his modest needs and simple tastes, has at least, had as much to eat as in previous years. Those who have felt most the effects of world conditions in Siam are the foreign element, the Chinese and the European, and, in a lesser degree, the Siamese official class, particularly in the capital.[6]

Moreover, Prajadhipok had pursued fiscal retrenchment at great political cost reducing the expenditure of the Royal Household and of the administration in general. Several Cabinet-style committees were introduced at the centre, albeit still dominated by the princes. The number of administrative provinces were reduced, destroying the power base of some powerful notables. He reformed the civil service, instituting a Western-style system of competitive examinations, but the numerous princes were exempt from such barriers. This merely served to exacerbate a much more complex pattern of internal stress created by a long-term programme of rapid and somewhat uneven modernization imposed from above.[7] The result was a growing, Western-educated, and frustrated administrative middle class and a number of alienated princes.

Prajadhipok was certainly conscious of disaffection amongst the administrative and military élites and of their desire for a greater role in government. Indeed, during a visit to the United States in 1931, he had announced his intention to introduce a constitution.[8] But Prajadhipok's initial efforts had been forestalled by the vested interests of the other princes in the Supreme Council, led by Prince Boripat.[9] He had repeatedly admonished the princes with the prescient warning that the consequence of such obstruction would eventually be a revolution and rule by the military.[10] Prajadhipok's views on constitutional reform mirrored those of some officials in neighbouring British colonies in advocating experiments with local and municipal council elections as an educative process that would lead towards full democracy.[11] Accordingly, when officials were instructed to draw up a draft constitution in early 1932, they looked to Burma and India to provide a model. When R. D. Craig, a British adviser with the

Interior Ministry, was ordered to head a Municipal Commission to examine the legislative form this might take, he also looked to the example of recent reforms in neighbouring British territories.[12] In spite of all this, interest in politics beyond the small élite in Bangkok remained limited even after the Revolution of 1932.[13]

Western officials were quick to recognize that although the Revolution achieved a provisional constitution and a Western-style assembly, in reality its democratic credentials were thin. Half the members were elected but half were directly appointed by the Promoters themselves.[14] In practice this provisional constitution became permanent and real power remained with a committee of thirteen to fifteen of the Promoters. They were led, partly by Pridi Banomyong, a barrister educated in France and identified by Dormer as 'the brain of the movement', and partly by three colonels who had been educated in Germany, namely, Phya Phahol Balabayuha, Phya Song Suradet, and Phya Ritthi Akaney.[15] Siam appeared to have become 'to all intents and purposes a military directorate'.[16] The primary source of reassurance for the Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office was Dormer's reports that the Promoters desired a constitutional monarchy rather than a radical republic. Prajadhipok consented to remain as a constitutional monarch and with great tact and some accuracy declared the resulting constitution to be something that both the King and the Promoters had been working towards from different directions.[17] Wright, a Far Eastern Department official, remarked, 'The King has not been dethroned, and this fact seems to be the only one which really concerns us, the new government, like the old one, is the government of the King of Siam.' Charles Orde, Head of the Department, added blithely, 'So falls another autocracy.'[18]

Despite the phlegmatic attitude of British diplomats, Siamese fear of British intervention, nevertheless, constituted a powerful brake on the pace of post-revolutionary change in Bangkok. Even in September 1932, three months after the revolution, the Promoters remained 'obsessed' with the possibility of foreign intervention on behalf of the Anglophile monarch.[19] These fears were deliberately played upon by Raymond B. Stevens, the American Foreign Affairs Adviser, who had served since 1925 and retained a strong affection for the monarchy. Stevens was unable to threaten American intervention but deployed the European bogey, warning the new Government that Indo-China, Burma, and Malaya would not tolerate upheaval and disorder. Stevens appears to have been encouraged in this by Francis B. Sayre who

also entertained strong royalist sentiments.[20] These fears were exacerbated by rumours spread by moderate Siamese factions and also British commercial concerns to discourage the more reformist Promoters. Dormer reported:

> All through July the air was full of rumours and warnings. British, French and Japanese warships were waiting in the Gulf of Siam; troops were being mobilised in Singapore and on the Burma frontier; the British Minister and the consul-general were to be assassinated, and, I have no doubt, the French Minister, too. . . . Foreign intervention was a card that was clearly being played by someone.[21]

As a direct consequence of this climate of intimidation, the Promoters were quick to communicate assurances of respect for foreign nationals, for property, and for Siam's international obligations. Further reassurance was offered by the temporary retention of the old Foreign Minister within the Cabinet.[22]

Dormer suggested that the surprisingly peaceful conduct of the revolution itself was due to the recognition that disorder would have presented any European power with an excellent excuse for foreign intervention.[23] When Dormer met the new Foreign Secretary, Phya Sri Visarn Vacha, the dominant topic of conversation was again foreign intervention and Dormer was anxiously questioned about rumours of the mobilization of British troops at Singapore. Indeed Sri Visarn decided to retain a British passport in case of emergency.[24] If the smooth transfer of power had been calculated by the Promoters to reassure London, then it was successful. 'Both sides appear to have behaved admirably,' enthused Victor Mallet to his colleagues in the Far Eastern Department.[25]

Sri Visarn's concern reflected the confusing diversity of Western responses to the revolution. While diplomats had adopted a relaxed attitude, much of the foreign business community in Siam remained enamoured of the idea of gunboat diplomacy and a monarchical restoration. British companies enlisted the support of William Nunn, MP, himself a retired Director of the Siamese Customs and Excise, to urge military intervention upon the Foreign Office. Like Dormer, Nunn stressed the retention of a British Financial Adviser as a centre-piece of British influence in Siam, but, unlike Dormer, he wished to see this institution maintained by force. Nunn's ideas were rejected by Anthony Eden, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, who supported Dormer in insisting that the fundamental equilibrium would be upset rather than reinforced by military action.[26] Assured of the

confidence of his superiors in London, Dormer and the editors of the two English language newspapers set about publishing material sympathetic to the new regime. American diplomats remained in the background but worried that Siam was now 'ripe for communist ideas'.[27]

Dormer's policy prescription for post-revolutionary Siam appeared to be effective. Although few Promoters were Anglophiles and some entertained a distaste for foreign advisers, nevertheless visible efforts were made to reassure the West of Siam's commitment to the *status quo*. This was underlined by the Promoter's co-option of the conservative and respected judge, Phya Mano Nitthithada, as Prime Minister.[28] Sri Visarn, the new Foreign Secretary, was an ultra-conservative, who had previously served as a high-ranking Foreign Ministry official close to the King. More importantly, during a meeting on 28 July 1932, Sri Visarn assured Dormer that not only did the new Siamese Government wish to accept the Bank of England's proposed candidate as their new British Financial Adviser but they also wished to appoint another British Judicial Adviser. Sri Visarn added, somewhat unconvincingly, that they did not wish for foreign advisers who were 'yes-men', but instead desired officials 'who would really advise them and tell them what ought to be done'. Dormer was delighted, drawing a favourable comparison with the recalcitrance of some of the princes under the old regime.[29] For the Far Eastern Department, this amounted to 'all that could be desired from our point of view'.[30]

The prospect of intervention, therefore, served as a highly significant factor within Siam during 1932, as it would continue to do during the subsequent upheavals of 1933. Yet, ironically, both British diplomats and the Promoters in Bangkok appear to have been labouring under a misapprehension as to Britain's ability to effect such an intervention. As early as December 1923, British military officials in London had received a report that Siam was developing an airforce of 300 modern aircraft which would be 'the best in Asia and superior to even that of Japan'. Accordingly, the report maintained that British gunboat diplomacy would be ineffectual, for 'Siamese aeroplanes could easily prevent any blockade of the mouth of the Menam [River]. In any case the country is self-contained and the chief victims would be the foreign community and foreign firms.'[31] In London, the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) noted, 'This report interests me very much. . . . It seems important to know of this rising aeronautical power in

the East which comes as a great surprise to me.' The CAS subsequently recommended dispatching a mission to Bangkok with the ulterior motive of assessing Siamese air strength.[32] By 1932, given the chronic state of British defences in Asia, Siam enjoyed the largest airforce anywhere between Tokyo and Baghdad.[33] Yet, in retrospect, the reality of Siamese air power counted for little. British policies were compartmentalized and therefore British diplomats seemed to have been unaware of the alarm of defence planners. Meanwhile, what counted in Siam was the perceived likelihood of Western intervention. This misplaced presumption acquired yet more importance during the political turbulence of 1933.

## *Coups and Counter-coups, 1933*

Western policy during 1933 was characterized by self-congratulatory Western attitudes reflecting the copious reassurances and promises of continuity offered by the new élite who feared foreign intervention. Yet arguably the efficacy of this implicit threat, particularly in preventing short-term political dissonance, also served to disguise certain long-term problems that stemmed from underlying changes in Siamese politics and the increasingly narrow range of levers available to Western policy in the absence of an Anglophile princely élite. Undoubtedly, the fear of foreign intervention, to some extent exaggerated by foreign advisers, foreign commercial interests, and conservative politicians, continued to operate as a significant restraint upon radical elements during 1933. The period April–September 1933 saw a successful *coup d'etat* by Prime Minister Mano's conservative faction within Government, an equally effective counter-coup by their opponents and finally the failure of a monarchist rebellion. While these political convulsions deliberately avoided a direct challenge to Western influence, nevertheless young radical politicians of the left and right were establishing themselves. Consequently, by early 1934, although Britain's dominant position appeared little changed, at the same time new political forms, combined with the first signs of Siamese scepticism concerning British naval power in the East, pointed to future trouble.

In the months following the Revolution of June 1932 Western diplomats had remained confident, focusing upon conservative figures in the new Siamese Cabinet, who obscured, rather than eclipsed, the influence of the radical factions. The extent to which

political developments had been rendered opaque can be illustrated by the debate amongst Western officials as to the objectives of the Promoters.[34] Dormer drew a parallel with events in Turkey in 1908 to advance a typically complacent perspective:

> Instead of the [Turkish] Committee of the Union of Progress there is the [Siamese] People's party. In both cases, the civilian leaders, who were theorists and idealists, had been trained in France; the military leaders who carried out the plot had been trained in Germany. The Army as a whole was loyal. . . . The only demand made at first was for a Constitution, the Sultan's person and dignity were carefully respected. . . . If the King is substituted for the Sultan, the above might be a description of what has happened in Siam since June.[35]

Moreover, in October 1932 confidence in continued stability was reinforced by the arrival of the new British Financial Adviser, James Baxter.

Baxter shared Dormer's conviction that the twin fears of a renewed economic crisis and foreign intervention would ensure that Mano's Cabinet remained suitably pliable. In Baxter's first report to the Bank of England entitled 'Form of Government' and completed on 1 November 1932, he emphasized that the Ministers 'have a great fear of foreign intervention and fear—unduly—that England will intervene unless they are very good boys'. Baxter's particular concern was financial discipline and in this regard he was perhaps in a minority of one in finding words of praise for his unpopular predecessor, Hall-Patch, whose policies, Baxter insisted, while dubious from the financial point of view, had at least resulted in an obedient Cabinet. Indeed, even Hall-Patch's final correspondence had contained blunt instructions on how his successor might achieve a contrite Cabinet. Hall-Patch suggested that 'the best solution is to let things slide for a bit, and when they [the Siamese Government] find things becoming really messy in a few months' time they will probably be ready for another adviser whose advice they will take however unpalatable it may be'. 'Hall-Patch', Baxter reflected, 'did Siam a good turn by putting the fear of God into them. They have economised in many ways ruthlessly. Their coat is now cut pretty nearly according to their cloth.'[36]

In the climate of trepidation arising out of possible intervention and also Hall-Patch's activities, Baxter had no difficulty in achieving one of his primary objectives, namely, the transfer of most of Siam's currency reserves back to London. In the panic that had prevailed during 1931–2, large sums had been moved

from London to Paris and New York in search of currencies that remained on gold. But now that the dollar had also departed from the gold standard and France seemed about to follow, Baxter pronounced Siam's reserve policy 'unsound' and urged 'immediate transfer to London'. With this and a fixed exchange rate agreed, Baxter declared with satisfaction that 'ticals and sterling are practically synonymous'.[37]

British confidence appeared to be confirmed by the fate of radical doctrines surfacing within Mano's Cabinet during the Spring of 1933. Some civilian ministers were advocates of novel economic doctrines which they had encountered in Europe, predominantly at French and German universities. Foremost amongst these civilians was Pridi Banomyong, Minister of Finance, and widely regarded as the leading intellectual amongst the Promoters. In March 1933 Pridi announced a controversial programme of nationalization that appeared to owe much to socialist ideas and became known as the 'little yellow book'.[38] While Dormer warmed to Pridi personally, he denounced his programme as being 'based on Soviet principles—nationalisation of land, labour and industry'.[39]

Yet Dormer and Baxter were permitted only fleeting impressions of Pridi's scheme before it was suppressed by an alliance of conservative Promoters and foreign advisers. The Prime Minister threatened resignation if Pridi's measures were passed in the Assembly while Sri Visarn expressed his conviction that it would provoke foreign intervention. On the eve of the major Assembly debate, Sri Visarn visited Dormer personally and assured him that, if Pridi appeared to be gaining support, Mano would dissolve the Assembly and suspend the constitution.[40] Subsequent to a tense debate in an Assembly building lined with soldiers, Mano obtained Prajadhipok's approval to dissolve the Assembly and appoint a new Cabinet which excluded Pridi and his more radical supporters. Vigorous anti-communist legislation followed. Meanwhile, Pridi was watched by well armed detectives before being banished to Marseilles, albeit with a healthy allowance of £1,000 per annum.[41] A conservative budget, far removed from Pridi's programme, was formulated under the direction of James Baxter and other advisers. Baker, the American Minister, asserted that this would 'greatly enhance' the stability of government.[42] Dormer was also able to assure his superiors that the Cabinet remained committed to stability and 'cautious development'.[43] In effect these events constituted a *coup d'etat*, condoned by the monarchy.

But Western confidence in Mano was misplaced, failing to

appreciate the extent to which Mano and Sri Visarn were figure-heads, having taken no part in the Revolution of June 1932. Meanwhile Pridi's banishment had resulted in discontent among the military officers who had constituted the majority of the Promoters for, while few of them shared Pridi's radical outlook, they were nevertheless bound by ties of personal loyalty to him. The result of this military disaffection was a counter-coup, on the morning of 20 June 1933, which removed the Mano Government. This seizure of power by Pridi's fellow Promoters passed off almost as smoothly as the Revolution of the previous year. The only outward sign of these important events was the closure of the gates to the various government ministries and the parading of newly purchased Vickers tanks in front of the Throne Hall.[44] Colonel Ryan and his team had remained in Bangkok and were able to observe the psychological effect of this machinery and provide technical advice.[45] On 23 June 1933 he reported that the Pridi faction 'were assisted by the old Carden-Lloyds and by four of the new six ton tanks. The last named are still out on patrol, but are likely to be withdrawn today or tomorrow, as everything seems to be settling down.'[46]

Western officials found that events were following a familiar pattern. Few of Pridi's 'supporters', led by the new Prime Minister, Phya Phahol, shared Pridi's radical ideas and were reportedly 'very afraid' of foreign intervention.[47] Therefore Phahol's first priority was to reassure the more sceptical elements of the foreign community in Bangkok: 'The representatives of the foreign banks and leading business houses were quickly summoned by Phya Bahol [Phahol], who assured them that the Government had not the slightest intention of doing anything communistic, but would carry on the same moderate policy of their predecessors.'[48] While Pridi was recalled from exile, he did not resume his post as Finance Minister. Phahol's public reassurances were reinforced by more significant and very private promises offered to Dormer on 10 July 1933. Addressing a focal point of British concern, Phahol asserted that he intended to act 'with the utmost moderation and with the utmost prudence in financial affairs and in a manner friendly to all foreign interests'. Importantly, in the words of the delighted Dormer, Phahol added that he had 'carefully chosen for the post of Minister of Finance a man who would be sure to get on with the Financial Adviser (meaning, no doubt, a man who would listen to advice)'. Dormer could hardly have asked for more specific undertakings.[49]

With the central question of the British Financial Adviser clarified, Britain offered reciprocal assurances to Phahol. Taking great care to avoid even mentioning 'the word intervention', Dormer proceeded to deprecate the 'foolish rumours' that had circulated as to Britain's 'intentions'. Such rumours had been 'pure imagination' and there were 'no clouds large or small' overhanging Anglo-Siamese relations. Yet Dormer sought only to moderate, rather than to dispel, Phahol's fears, which had a clear utility. Victor Wellesley, the Deputy Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office for Far Eastern Affairs, on receiving parallel assurances from the Siamese Ambassador in London, emphasized that 'fear of British or French intervention may help keep developments within bounds'.[50] Focusing upon these copious reassurances, Britain threw her weight behind the new regime.

Promises from Phahol concerning the British Financial Adviser can be contrasted with the declining fortunes of the American Foreign Affairs Adviser. Unprotected by the prospect of economic pressure from the Bank of England or a powerful legation, the new government had already begun to undermine his importance. The close association between Prajadhipok and Stevens, the present incumbent, exacerbated this process. Consequently, during Stevens's prolonged absence on leave in the United States, Prince Wan Waityakorn Voravan was appointed to a new parallel post of Siamese Foreign Affairs Adviser. The American Legation noted with regret that Prince Wan was clearly a man of energy and brilliance who would soon eclipse Stevens. In February 1934 Siam informed Sayre that they did not want Stevens back. Stevens returned in 1934 but only on the understanding that he would be replaced quickly. Frederic Dolbeare, his Yale-trained successor, broke the long line of Harvard Law School products that had held this post. Sayre, who also held royalist sympathies, cut his formal links with Siam in 1935 and entered the State Department as Assistant Secretary of State.[51]

By the Autumn of 1933 most Western diplomats considered that the residual threats now emanated, not from the more radical Promoters such as Pridi, but from die-hard monarchist elements that nurtured hopes of restored absolutism. This view was underlined by the cool British response to a bizarre private suggestion, advanced by Prajadhipok in August 1933, who wrote to the senior foreign advisers, including Baxter, protesting at Siam's 'drift towards Communism' signified by Pridi's return. He added: 'The chief fight is against Communism. Perhaps you and other foreign

advisers can still help by threatening to resign en bloc. They are still afraid of the bogey of foreign intervention. One must use that bogey to the last even if there is no chance of foreign intervention taking place.'[52] Prajadhipok had perhaps been encouraged by the undoubted turmoil prevailing within Phahol's new Cabinet. American officials noted that the Phahol Government was fraught with division between conservatives and moderates and also beset by inter-service friction between the Army and the Navy over budgetary allocations. At one point Phahol despaired of ever achieving cohesive government and tried to submit his resignation, but Prajadhipok refused to accept it, expressing his wish that Phahol should 'lie in the bed which he has made'.[53] Upheavals continued into the Autumn of 1933.[54] But Prajadhipok had failed to understand the essential criteria by which the West had assessed the new Government. Bailey, the British Consul-General, offered a distillation of these criteria in October 1933: 'The King is mistaken in thinking that many foreigners hope that "the King will make war upon Bangkok".... All the foreigners want is a stable regime and as little taxation as possible; they would not mind much how this was brought about if only they were not discommoded in the process.'[55] But Prajadhipok had misunderstood British policy which sought stability and continued British financial control, not renewed political turmoil. 'There is no turning back,' officials in London asserted. 'All efforts must be concentrated on making the new constitution work.'[56]

If Prajadhipok eventually recognized Britain's unswerving support for the Phahol Government, then this information seems not to have permeated to extreme royalist factions. During October 1933, royalists, led by Prince Bovaradet, Minister of Defence under the old regime, tried unsuccessfully to execute Bangkok's third *coup d'etat* of 1933. Perennial rumours of foreign intervention circulated, strengthened by the support of the European business communities for the royalists.[57] Meanwhile, Prajadhipok wavered, repudiating the rebellion only in mild terms.[58] The persistent Colonel Ryan of Vickers was on hand and the technical assistance offered by Vickers to Government forces during the rebellion was significant.[59] Ryan worked with a prominent army officer and Promoter, Luang Phibul Songkram, who distinguished himself by orchestrating the campaign against the royalists. Although Phibul was the leader of the junior rather than the senior military faction in Government, he was nevertheless the most powerful man in Siam because 'he has the tanks and all the arms'.[60]

The declared royalist sentiments of the foreign business communities in Bangkok ensured that no European power succeeded in avoiding suspicion of counter-revolutionary activity during the Bovaradet rebellion. The attempts of the British and French officials to absolve themselves were confounded by the use of neighbouring colonial territories as sanctuaries by the various political factions. In Singapore, the authorities found themselves required to offer Pridi police protection against attack by royalist extremists during a brief visit. Meanwhile, Prajadhipok fled from Bangkok to within a few miles of the border with Malaya where he expressed a wish to see the British Consul at Songkhla. The Princes were greatly preoccupied by the fear of assassination. Letters from Prince Purachatra, intercepted by the Singapore Special Branch, disclosed several attempted attacks on his train in southern Siam and a general state of terror.[61] Bailey, the Consul-General, acting in Dormer's absence, forbade any contact with Prajadhipok, fearing British implication with the royalists.[62] Meanwhile, the Far Eastern Department worried that Prajadhipok might choose to seek refuge in Malaya, instead of returning to Bangkok to lend credibility to Phahol's Government and exercising a restraining influence upon the radicals.[63]

Prince Bovaradet failed to capture Bangkok and fled across the eastern border into the province of Battambang within French controlled Cambodia.[64] The Chief of the Indo-China Sûreté complained bitterly of the severe embarrassment this had caused. The Dutch were equally discomfited by suspicions surrounding Siamese royalty living in Java.[65] Ironically, by mischance and accident, British diplomats were close to intervention in October 1933, despite their own attempts to distance themselves from the royalists. A telegram to the Admiralty giving advance warning that a gunboat might eventually be required was misinterpreted and a ship was dispatched by accident, only to be recalled. The comic manner in which this message became confused as it was relayed over a weekend, from Bangkok to Singapore and on to Hong Kong, serves to underline, albeit in microcosm, the difficulties in co-ordinating different British regional agencies.[66]

The underlying nature of British thinking on 'intervention' was illustrated by a delightfully ambiguous exchange between Dormer and Phahol's Foreign Minister, Phya Abbaibal, towards the end of the royalist Bovaradet rebellion. Dormer opened the conversation by complaining 'that mischief-makers had been active spreading rumours about British intervention and the presence of warships in the Gulf'. Developing this pious theme he then spoke

of 'how much I disliked this pretence that we were standing over them with the big stick'. But in the same breath, Dormer then proceeded to add the ominous and contradictory remark that 'if we intervened it would be because the Siamese had forced our hands'.[67] Therefore, Britain sought simultaneously to reinforce Phahol's misgivings, while at the same time avoiding the odium of delivering overt threats.

Siam's princely élite had served British purposes well since 1900. Often British-educated, amenable to advice, and conservative-minded, they had fulfilled a role akin to colonial collaborators.[68] But by October 1933 they had become an embarrassment. The problem was only compounded in October 1934 when, during a visit to Britain, Prajadhipok declared his intention to abdicate and remain in Britain. This appeared to open the door to further disturbances in Bangkok and Charles Orde, the Head of the Far Eastern Department, offered a pessimistic analysis:

> If the interval during which Siam is kingless is too long, republican and quasi-communist elements may get the upper hand, aided by the supine character of the Siamese people. This would be unfortunate and not free from repercussions on foreign policy, since the radical elements in the Siamese government are critical of the employment of foreign advisers, anxious to try risky experiments with Siamese currency (against which the present British adviser stood firm), and possibly yield to the blandishments of Japan, who has been recently paying particular attention to Siam and encouraging the thought of herself as a protector of Asiatic peoples against European exploiters.[69]

This dismay was redoubled because of the lavish entertainment extended to the King during his recent visit to London at a time of governmental stringency. 'There has been an orgy of entertainment during the King's visit,' declared the exasperated Orde, 'and now he abdicates.' The British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, encapsulated Foreign Office feelings: 'It is a pity we spent so much time and money on this poor little man.'[70]

In Bangkok the Phahol Government shared London's displeasure. The Promoters had been at great pains to retain the monarchy in a constitutional role, not least because of its central place in the cultural and religious life of Siam's apolitical peasant masses. Two delegates were dispatched to Britain to plead with the King to reverse his decision. This initiative was not well received in London for in October 1934 two British Special Branch officers, provided for the King's protection, informed the

Home Office that Prajadhipok had received secret information that the Siamese delegates intended to assassinate him if they could not persuade him to return.[71] The Home Office was not reassured to learn that the two delegates were in fact none other than Pridi, now Minister of the Interior, and his right-hand man, Luang Thamrong Nawasawat.[72] The visit passed off peacefully, but Prajadhipok was not persuaded to return to Siam.[73] Instead the King took up residence at Virginia Water, where he served as the perennial focus for rumours of plots and rebellions which continued to embarrass the British Government until his death in 1941.[74]

Prajadhipok had fundamentally misunderstood the nature of Western requirements in Siam, associating them with an absolute and often Anglophile princely élite, rather than with the abstract qualities of political stability and amenability to financial advice. Meanwhile the Promoters had proven themselves adept at advancing specific and convincing reassurances, particularly with regard to the role of Baxter. Nevertheless, Prajadhipok enjoyed a clearer understanding of the unhappy state of affairs within Phahol's Cabinet and questioned the extent to which the new regime could deliver administrative stability. Prajadhipok also understood that a Government consisting entirely of Promoters was a very different prospect to its predecessor, led by the conservative Mano. Therefore, to what extent had Britain focused too narrowly on the private assurances of Phahol regarding the retention of advisers and respect for the *status quo*? Was Britain now overdependent upon a diminished range of levers to sustain British influence? How well would the mechanisms of British informal influence function in the face of novel constitutional systems and unfamiliar, even radical, personalities? Some answers to these questions can be discerned by examining the post-Revolutionary experience at the financial and economic levels during the period between 1933 and June 1935.

## *Baxter, Financial Policy, and the Rise of Phibul, 1933–1935*

During 1932 and 1933 Siam had attempted to avoid confronting Western governments with stark choices. The volatility of political events in Bangkok during 1932 and 1933 appears to have been deliberately circumscribed by the Siamese in an attempt to avoid

provoking intervention. Furthermore, senior Promoters sought to blur foreign perceptions of the changing nature of the ruling élite by offering specific reassurances, especially regarding the retention of advisers. Moreover, in the wake of the 1932 Revolution, the West had been presented with a constitutional monarchy led by the respected lawyer, Mano, rather than by a Promoter. Therefore, the real shape of post-revolutionary Siamese politics was only emerging in 1934 after a year of coups and counter-coups which finally brought the Promoters, under Phahol, into full control. This was not the Government that Western officials had thrown their weight behind in 1932.

The nature and extent of British influence under the new constitutional system remained largely untested even in the Summer of 1934. Only during late 1933 were the various military and radical factions, led by the *enfants terrible* that were to dominate Siamese politics well into the 1950s, apparent. Moreover, given their preoccupation with internal events in Bangkok, the Promoters had not yet begun to reflect at length upon the shifting balance of strategic and economic power in Asia resulting from the sterling devaluation in September 1931 and Britain's ignominious confrontations with Japan between 1931 and 1933. However, the relative stability prevailing after 1933 permitted both Britain and Siam to begin a process of mutual reassessment. In exploring Western and particularly British influence after 1933, two important areas might usefully be considered: firstly financial influence and secondly, in the following section of this chapter, the resilience of British commerce in Siam.

At the financial level, James Baxter, the new Financial Adviser, faced not only the expected challenges from radicals and nationalists but also the chaos that arose from an untried political system. In August 1933, British diplomats lamented, 'Siamese playing at politics make one think of twenty-two Eskimos suddenly given bats stumps and a ball, but no rules and no umpires, and told to play cricket.' They added, 'Until a coach or a leader materialises there must be confusion.' The turbulence was not exaggerated.[75] In December 1933, before his abdication, a nervous Prajadhipok had returned from his refuge near the border with Malaya to open the newly elected Assembly.[76] There were few rules governing its activities and consequently there erupted 'a perfect orgy of legislation' with bills being passed before their drafting was completed. This included a bill introduced by the Government reducing existing pensions, but opposed on the floor of the House

by the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister. Baxter recounted his own ordeal in a letter to Sir Edward Cook at the Bank of Egypt: 'I cannot describe to you the confusion and disorder which reigns in the conduct of public affairs. Fortunately Siam enjoys the inestimable blessing of a minimum of administration. So life goes on much the same. The people so far have not been touched.'[77] For Baxter, who had previously served in Egypt, this offered parallels with the chaotic new democracy in Cairo in the 1920s which had resulted in the eventual emergence of *de facto* autocracy. During 1934 and 1935 Siam also gave way to increasingly autocratic rule by Phahol's Cabinet of senior Promoters.

Because of deep divisions at cabinet level, Baxter's dealings with the Phahol Government were acrimonious and partisan. There was confrontation between the 'eloquent' extremists and the moderates, the latter being 'honest and patriotic men, but without the brilliance of their opponents'. In late 1933 the leader of the moderate faction emerged as Chao Phya Sri Dharmadhibes, the Minister of Finance, who relied 'for advice and arguments mainly upon Mr James Baxter, the British Financial Adviser'. The balance of power was held by the Prime Minister, Phahol, who was 'at a loss' to know how to resolve Cabinet division, and whose own neutrality ensured continued deadlock.[78] Arriving in August 1934, the new British Minister, Sir Josiah Crosby, declared that Siam was governed by 'a pack of schoolboys', adding that, 'the soldiers had seized power but lack the conviction to be autocratic' and as a result Siam was 'drifting'.[79] These difficulties offered both opportunities and impediments to the West.

The impediments appeared amid the confusion that prevailed during late 1933 and early 1934. With the administration 'practically at breaking point', Baxter attempted to fend off the economic proposals advanced by Pridi, now Minister of the Interior, and Phra Sarasat Pholkand, Minister of Economic Affairs, who had temporarily captured the initiative within Cabinet. 'These two are the real Government,' Baxter lamented during early 1934. 'And their intention is undoubtedly to work for a Socialist state. I do not believe they will succeed. But they may well rule the roost for some time.' Meanwhile, the 'wretched' Finance Minister, Dharmadhibes, found that detailed preparation of the budget had been taken out of his hands and passed to the whole Cabinet, numbering eighteen people. Dharmadhibes was 'decent' but 'no fighter' and found himself repeatedly overruled.[80] Pridi took care

not to resurrect his controversial nationalization plans which had resulted in his temporary banishment and indirectly in a coup and counter-coup in 1933. Instead, Pridi turned his attention to currency and fiscal policy.[81] In early 1934 Pridi addressed the currency reserve and declared that it was 'a pity' to have one at all. He advocated a Siamese central bank which 'could lend the Government all the money it needed'.[82] The Prime Minister, Baxter continued, is very accessible to a group of young men 'who want to make Siam rich and powerful overnight . . . by buying a printing machine for turning out tical notes. . . . Siamese pockets are stuffed with quack remedies for economic ills.'[83]

In the short term, Baxter established his authority by resorting, like many of his predecessors, to intimidation and technical obstruction:

> I stand guard over the currency reserve and the debt redemption fund. I write long and erudite and difficult notes on the nature and function of Central Banks with intent to baffle the State Councillors. So far successfully. They are still frightened to touch the currency or set up a Central Bank whose duty it would be to inflate. Fortunately the word 'inflation' terrifies.[84]

Baxter's robust tactics persuaded the Cabinet to declare against devaluation.[85] Furthermore a conservative budget for 1933 and modest financial estimates for 1934 were passed in the Assembly on 20 February 1934. This was Baxter's budget, even to the exent that Dharmadhibes, the Minister of Finance, read out Baxter's notes on the state of the economy, translated but unamended, as his budget speech in the Assembly.[86] A triumphant Baxter reported that despite Cabinet interference his budget balanced 'more or less genuinely'. More importantly, he added, 'the spectre of devaluation has not dared appear for the past six months. That is my one positive achievement since I came to Siam. I fought that single handed.'[87]

In the long term, Baxter reinforced his authority by undertaking a drastic realignment of his position in Cabinet, with significant consequences for Siamese politics in the mid-1930s. From the early Summer of 1934, Baxter operated a successful alliance of convenience with conservative military figures such as Phibul. The effectiveness of this co-operation was illustrated in May 1934 when conservatives defeated a radical 'triangular economic scheme' proposed by Sarasat, the Minister of Economics. This had included a central bank which would also have dealt in property.

On 17 May 1934, in the wake of his victory, Baxter wrote confidently to the Bank of England describing the defeated Sarasat as 'very naughty indeed' and outlining his role as the bane of the left: 'I am committing one of my major murders. I am getting uncannily expert as public executioner. . . . It is a strange jazzy life.'[88] Baxter was in the ascendant and happily endured vilification in the Bangkok radical press.[89]

Baxter's alignment with the military facilitated further successes during February and March 1935, including the defeat of Pridi's proposed Local Government Act. Baxter had denounced the social security provisions contained in this act as 'a cause of endless expenditure in the future—a bottomless well for spending'.[90] He added that Pridi was 'busy digging a number of bottomless pits into which to pour oceans of money Siam hasn't got'.[91] By the same criteria, Baxter was impressed by Phibul, who had recently been appointed Minister of Defence, and who declared that Pridi and his supporters 'had no idea what socialism meant, but were simply out of line with their own pockets'.[92] Phibul's support was also central to the defeat of Pridi in a key budget debate in the Assembly on 24 February.[93]

Baxter seriously misrepresented his new relationship with the military when he enthused that Phibul was 'dead against left economics'.[94] Phibul did not share Baxter's love of economy, for in late 1933, Baxter and his Minister had worked to resist Phibul's own proposals for lavish military spending.[95] However, during the Spring of 1934 Baxter had concluded that the support of the military was essential to overall budgetary control and that the price of this co-operation was increased defence spending.[96] In any case, Baxter recognized that nationalist sentiment in the Assembly was bound to result in some expansion of the defence budget. More importantly, he judged defence expenditure to be finite, and therefore preferable to the 'open-ended' social schemes advanced by the radicals, which he viewed as a threat to the fiscal system itself.[97] Crosby, the new British Minister, reported:

> [Baxter] tells me that, although he cannot give unqualified approval to the demands which the Ministry of Defence is making upon the Treasury, he prefers to see the money spent, if spent it must be, upon armaments rather than upon implementing the visionary schemes of Luang Pradit [Pridi]. With assignments for guns or ships of war, he says, one knows where one is, but the requirements of the Ministry of Interior bid fair to become limitless. He has confided to me his belief that the safety of the country now depends on the ultimate success of Luang

Bipul [Phibul] in his struggle for supremacy with Luang Pradit [Pridi], and he says that henceforth such influence as he possesses will be cast into the scales in favour of the former.[98]

Baxter's economic arguments echoed the political criteria of the Foreign Office officials in the Far Eastern Department in London who also favoured Phibul as 'the "strong man" designate of Siam', offering stability and, in early 1935, evincing anti-Japanese sentiment. Conversely, during 1934 and 1935, the Far Eastern Department associated Pridi not only with potential 'chaos' but sometimes also with pro-Japanese and Pan-Asian movements.[99]

There were other examples of Baxter's willingness to depart from conservative financial principles in pursuit of political objectives of his own choosing. On 1 May 1933 Baxter wrote to the Bank of England and to his predecessor, Cook, proposing to raid the currency reserves for capital expenditure on agriculture. Writing shortly after the defeat of Pridi's radical socialist economic programme and his temporary exile, Baxter explained:

Six weeks ago the Communist Party [*sic*] was vanquished and driven into the wilderness. It was routed because of its economic programme which was à la russe. Still it had a programme though a rotten one. The present government believes, and rightly, that its existence depends on carrying out a comprehensive programme of agricultural development. . . . Unless it shows a reasonable degree of energy in this respect the Communists will win the day. It needs money for capital expenditure.

Baxter therefore advocated selling Siam's entire silver reserve. Cook agreed but the Bank of England was apprehensive. Nevertheless, in late 1933 Baxter sold the silver reserve while simultaneously resisting a similar proposal from the radical faction that he styled 'communists'.[100]

In Bangkok, Crosby resented Baxter's right-wing influence on Siamese politics. Crosby had begun to develop contrary lines of thought which reflected his political rather than financial responsibilities. He raised the possibility of a *coup d'etat* by Phibul, if supported by other leading officers such as Thamrong and Song Suradet. Then, he added, the respectable Prime Minister, Phahol, would become 'a Hindenberg with one of these others as Hitler'.[101] Meanwhile, he emphasized that Pridi was now a moderate who worked with less radical colleagues, resulting in a 'less aggressive policy than in the past'. Nevertheless, Crosby accepted that if Pridi began to veer towards radicalism once more, 'then a *coup d'etat* might very well prove necessary', in the interest of

stability.[102] He conceded, 'What I fear most is the collapse in the course of time of effective government through sheer inefficiency and break down of the administrative machine. Such a calamity might be averted by the arrival upon the scene of a dictator; he would be in the best Siamese historical tradition.' Phibul, he added, had 'a certain reserve about him which tends to inspire confidence'. While the watchword of Western policies in Siam remained 'stability', Crosby would enjoy only marginal room for his dissent against Phibul.[103]

Therefore, despite the acceleration of nationalism subsequent to the Revolution of 1932 and the political upheavals of 1933, the British Financial Adviser remained far more than a mere adviser. Baxter held firm opinions as to where Siam's growing government revenue should or should not be directed and, in co-operation with Phibul and the military, he was able to assert those views. The consequences of this approach extended far beyond the narrow limits of financial policy. Moreover, Baxter's views, aligned with those of the Foreign Office Far Eastern Department in London, representing a policy consensus, focused upon economic requirements for internal stability rather than upon Siam's potential significance at the international level. In contrast, within months of his arrival, Crosby, the new British Minister, had begun to develop a heretical line, detecting future political problems inherent in the nature of Phibul's military faction. However, as yet, Crosby chose not to press his reservations regarding Phibul and instead resolved to remain within the mainstream of diplomatic and financial opinion.

## *New Economic Patterns*

During the 1930s, Baxter, the Financial Adviser, represented the most overt and deliberate instrument of Western influence in Siam. But Baxter and his superiors at the Bank of England were far from enjoying a monopoly on all aspects of Western economic policies towards Siam. Contradictory policies emanated from neighbouring British colonial territories. Colonial officials did not share Baxter's perspective, nor were they privy to his reports upon the inner workings of the Siamese Cabinet.[104] Consequently, before shifting the focus of this chapter to consider the diffuse area of Western economic policies, the diverse and confused perspectives that informed Western policies towards Siam between 1932 and 1935 should be underlined.

The Revolution of 1932 had prompted every sort of Western agency and official concerned with Siam to begin a process of reappraisal. These 'revised' appreciations of the new Siam reflected the narrow departmental preoccupations of each particular official and assist in explaining the departmental focus of resulting divergent policies. Arguably, such reports throw as much light upon the 'culture' of their department of origin, as upon the subject-matter with which they were concerned. The diversity of these views can be usefully illustrated by an analysis of the various interpretations of Pridi and his economic policies between 1933 and 1935.

Baxter's view of Pridi was dominated by concern that he might be reappointed to the Finance Ministry. The idea was raised in October 1933: 'One idea which found some favour in Government circles was to make him Minister of Finance, that is—clear the ring, take your seats in the stalls and watch the feathers fly, the two cocks being Pradist [Pridi] and me. I hope I have squashed that bright idea for the time being.'[105] But despite this hostility, Baxter and many officials in the Bank of England were well informed and came to accept that Pridi had abandoned the extreme views on nationalization of the economy which had secured his banishment in the Spring of 1933.[106] While British diplomats also accepted Pridi's claims to new-found moderation, their assessment owed more to political than economic considerations. They had always considered Pridi's views to be those of an agrarian reformer and a socialist, rather than someone with pro-Soviet inclinations. Even when faced with Pridi's short-lived 'yellow book' of April 1933, Dormer had doubted that Pridi was in any sense a true communist. Meanwhile, he found Pridi 'intelligent, agreeable and perfectly rational', adding that he had 'no trace of anti-British prejudice which in a Communist one might expect to find'.[107] By February 1934, Dormer was describing Pridi's followers as 'ardently nationalist' younger politicians who were merely 'avid of new nostrums and profoundly blind to their own ignorance', a view echoed by Crosby, his successor. The Far Eastern Department agreed that Pridi was not so much a communist as a socialist, an idealist, and 'a dreamer'.[108] The limited analysis offered by the American Legation echoed this interpretation almost word for word, persuading Washington of Pridi's status as 'a dreamer and a theorist rather than a communist'.[109] Nevertheless, as suggested in the previous section, this consensus was dissolving by the Spring of 1935. Baxter and the Far Eastern

Department continued to look to Pridi's rival, Phibul, emphasizing economic stability; meanwhile, Crosby tended to focus upon what he judged to be Pridi's more Anglophile and liberal qualities.

These increasingly divergent, but nevertheless relatively well-informed, perspectives were thrown into sharp relief by the suspicious outpourings of some British colonial officials. Caution must be exercised here, for most of the Colonial Office material dealing with Siam has been destroyed and in consequence the reconstruction of British colonial views of Siam presents difficulties.[110] However, much can be deduced from surviving reports by A. H. Dickinson, the Director of the Singapore Special Branch, who was dispatched to Siam on an investigative tour by the Governor of Singapore, Sir George Clementi, during 1933.[111] Dickinson reported that

> 'Luang Pradit [Pridi] is more than an idealist', and pointed out the probability of his being approached by the Third International, while his party had proved its sympathy with movements not far removed from and in some cases identical with Communist activity in this part of the world. Mr Dickinson thought that if he succeeds in getting Russian help there is in Siam sufficient inflammable material to cause a fairly serious conflagration, and was struck by the resemblance between the policy of Luang Pradit [Pridi] and that of Tan Malaka.

A further paragraph noted that Pridi had been refused a visa by the Japanese authorities because 'he was a communist'. Notwithstanding his suspicions of Pridi's involvement with the Comintern, Dickinson also singled him out as a potential agent for Japanese Pan-Asianism and 'clearly the man for Japan to back'. Dickinson then developed a third and yet more exotic theory linking Pridi to a plot to unite Siam, Malaya, and Indonesia into one radical Muslim South-East Asian Republic.[112] Dormer denounced Dickinson's report to the Foreign Office as 'fantastic', but could not prevent it reaching the Governor at Singapore.[113] During September 1933, British diplomats were disconcerted to discover Dickinson connecting Pridi with a further French conspiracy.[114] The impact of this material upon the colonial authorities is not easy to assess in detail, but Dickinson was undoubtedly an influential and respected figure in Singapore.[115]

During 1935, an equally unenthusiastic interpretation of Pridi's policies could be found in a restricted Indian Police handbook entitled *India and Communism*, prepared by Dickinson's counterpart in India, Sir Horace Williamson, Director of the Intelligence

Bureau at Delhi. Although Williamson conceded that there was 'no evidence that the Third International was in any way connected with Luang Pradit's [Pridi's] party', he nevertheless explained the development of their ideas partly in terms of visits by Ho Chi Minh to Bangkok. He concluded with a silly warning that the provisions of Pridi's proposed Local Government Act would result in 'a form of government not dissimilar from that which Russia herself has adopted'.[116] Diplomats in Bangkok attempted to reverse the suspicious views of their counterparts in India, but without success.[117]

The significance of these divergent appreciations lay less in the relative accuracy of their understanding of Pridi as 'dreamer' or 'communist', and more in their implications for the diffuse nature of Western policies.[118] Predictably, India and Malaya pursued harsher, but by no means consistent, policies towards Siam during the 1930s. This was partly because of the divergent interests identified by each agency, but also because each agency perceived a different sort of Siam.

The upshot of this diversity of opinion upon the formulation of economic policies is well illustrated by the question of tariff and international commodity producer agreements. During December 1934, Christopher Eastwood of the Colonial Office complained bitterly to Orde, Head of the Foreign Office Far Eastern Department, that the India Office was pressing the Board of Trade for an increase in the duty levied on Siamese rice imported into Malaya.[119] The India Office was also seeking the elimination of the duty charged upon rice from Imperial Preference areas such as Burma. All this amounted to an Indian attempt to undercut Siamese rice. But the High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States at Singapore, Sir Shenton Thomas,[120] protested that Siam was Malaya's nearest and largest supplier of rice and should not be antagonized.[121] Meanwhile, the Far Eastern Department viewed the question from the political angle, concluding that the India Office proposal would 'make the Siamese sore', and therefore sided with Malaya against the India Office.[122] When the tariff proposal was eventually defeated, the diplomats noted that the 'India Office can no longer carry off their coup behind our backs'.[123] Such policy debates became yet more complex with the formation of the Burma Office in 1936.

The efforts of Eastwood and others at the Colonial Office to defeat the India Office over rice did not indicate any altruistic attitudes towards Siam, only different priorities. The Colonial

Office was of the opinion that increased tariffs against Siamese rice should be reserved as a weapon to coerce Siam into signing various international commodity restriction agreements. These agreements, designed to support the price of tin and rubber by a system of production quotas, were of high importance, for these commodities, widely produced in British colonial territories such as Malaya and Nigeria, assisted greatly in maintaining the value of sterling. It was no accident that Eastwood was also serving as Secretary of the International Rubber Regulation Committee (IRRC), representing producers, during 1934.[124] Difficult negotiations regarding rubber restriction had been underway for over a year in London and Singapore when, during May 1934, the Siamese delegates were persuaded to accept a production limit of 15,000 tons per annum. However, the Siamese Assembly subsequently refused to approve the agreement, calling instead for a quota of 40,000 tons. The issue achieved the status of a nationalist *cause célèbre*, and resulted in the resignation of the Minister for Economic Affairs, Phra Sarasat Pholkand. During September 1934 the Siamese Cabinet went through the motions of resignation over the issue.[125] Thus Britain failed to enforce her desired limitations on Siamese rubber production.

To the surprise and dismay of colonial officials, one of the traditional levers of British influence in Siam, Malayan tariffs on Siamese rice, now seemed ineffective, at least in the context of issues such as rubber that had passed out of the hands of the Siamese Cabinet to the volatile Assembly. While British threats to increase tariffs could be applied privately to Ministers, they could not be used publicly and were therefore ineffective. The efforts of Baxter to support the IRRC were equally futile. While he could lecture the Ministry of Economic Affairs, dismissing the claims of Siamese rubber producers as 'nonsense', he was powerless against the Assembly. At a meeting to discuss Siam on 25 September 1934, the IRRC concluded that because of the 'nationalist fervour of revolution' existing in the Assembly they 'doubted whether threats or reprisals would lead to any useful results'.[126] Possible 'reprisals' were therefore postponed and left to the discretion of Crosby at the British Legation.[127] In 1935 the IRRC was finally forced to concede the hugely inflated quota of 40,000 tons. In Bangkok, Crosby dismissed this reverse as an anomaly, noting that few matters reached the Assembly and that Siam was in a peculiarly strong position in matters involving international commodity restriction. Siam was only a small rubber producer and so

the danger lay in the possibility of a 'free market' in Bangkok to which rubber from neighbouring producers would be smuggled. 'Siam', Crosby continued, therefore 'possesses a nuisance value which her Government recognises to the full and is skilful to exploit.'[128] In addition, as the IRRC privately admitted, rubber prices were notoriously weak.[129] However, the Colonial Office were accustomed to a dominant position in their economic dealings with Siam and so complained of Siam's 'outrageous blackmail'.[130]

The blunting of the British weapon of Malayan tariffs was doubly alarming given that Siam's parallel restriction agreement with the International Tin Committee was due to expire on 1 January 1937.[131] Since 1931 a number of agreements had been reached to which Siam was a party.[132] In the summer of 1933, American diplomats believed that the British Colonial Secretary, Cunliffe-Lister, had secured Siam's co-operation over tin restriction by employing the time-honoured threat of tariff increases on Siamese rice exports to Malaya.[133] However, subsequent to Britain's defeat over rubber restriction in 1934, the Colonial Office expected the Siamese Assembly to demand 'impossible terms' in the tin negotiations of 1936.[134] The Western business community in Bangkok also anticipated trouble.[135]

Yet if the experience of commodity restriction schemes seemed to suggest that Siamese economic nationalism offered a substantial challenge to British interests by 1934, it must be remembered that few other issues reached the arenas of the press or the Assembly. Contrary evidence relating to tin smelting suggests that, at Cabinet level at least, British informal influence remained substantial. Tin smelting is also worthy of consideration since it illuminates firstly, the importance of American competition, and secondly, the priorities of Baxter as Financial Adviser in the commercial field. As early as October 1933 Baxter himself expressed doubts about the durability of his authority in the post-revolutionary context. 'Altogether,' he informed his superiors, 'unless they run amok, there is no cause for alarm. But will they? Nobody knows.'[136]

Until the 1930s tin was an area of unchallenged Anglo-Australian dominance in Siam. As early as 1890, Straits Trading Limited, one of two large British smelting concerns in Malaya, had asked for a formal monopoly on the purchase and export of Siamese tin from southern Siam, but were refused. However, such an agreement proved quite unnecessary. The pressure of

large-scale modern smelters at a short shipping distance resulted in the collapse of local tin smelting by small Chinese concerns in southern Siam. By 1920 Siamese smelting was 'negligible' and by 1930 all exports were in the form of ore, 90 per cent going to Malaya. Malayan smelting usefully illustrates the impact of the critical mass of the British imperial economy and its corresponding ability to dominate without formal agreements.

During the Summer of 1933, the lucrative British *de facto* monopoly upon the smelting of Siamese tin faced an American challenge. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, all of Siam's increasing output of tin ore, whether mined by British, Australian, or Chinese firms, had been dispatched to British tin smelters in Malaya. Subsequent to smelting, most of the tin was exported to the United States, earning valuable foreign exchange and hence, like rubber, supporting the value of sterling. In contrast, the export of tin ore from Siam to the smelters of Malaya was a wholly sterling transaction, earning no dollars for Siam and hence indirectly encouraging Siamese imports of British goods.[137] But in June 1933, P. K. Horner of British American Mines Limited approached Mano's Government, enjoying its last weeks in office, with plans to undermine this British monopoly.

British-American Mines Limited was an interesting company.[138] It typified a number of American 'false-flag' commercial operations within the British Empire in the inter-war years.[139] As the Charge d'Affaires of the American Legation in Bangkok explained to his superiors in Washington, this company, 'with an office in London, is British in name, but controlled largely by American capital, a fact which the company does not wish to be made public, as it would seriously affect their business, which is carried out for the most part in British territory'. Moreover, the purpose of Horner's visit was to negotiate discreetly with the Siamese Government for the establishment of a tin smelter in Siam. Horner's purpose was to break the *de facto* smelting monopoly enjoyed by British Malaya.

The complex scheme advanced by British American Mines was designed to overcome a number of obstacles. As there was only sufficient business in Siam to sustain one smelter, it would be necessary to prevent competition. A monopoly arranged by the Siamese Government would have provided a simple solution, but such monopolies were forbidden by the Anglo-Siamese treaty of 1925 and by unequal treaties with other powers, including the United States. Horner therefore proposed to circumvent the

treaty by creating a *de facto* monopoly whereby the Government would institute an exorbitant tax of 10.00 ticals per picul for the smelting of tin, while granting British American Mines alone a subsidy of 9.50 ticals per picul.[140]

Everyone understood that the powerful British smelting companies in Malaya would resent the American challenge. This would be exacerbated by the recognition that an independent smelter would increase Siam's opportunities for breaking with international tin restriction by shipping direct to the United States, while benefiting from the high prices achieved by British-led cartelization. In short Siam would be a 'free rider'. Barry O'Connell, the Director of the Bureau of Mines and, like Baxter, a British adviser, noted that a Siamese smelter would need government protection if Malaya was not to destroy it with artificial cost-cutting. He explained, 'The tin production in Siam under the restriction scheme . . . would be barely or just sufficient to keep one plant going . . . without protection amounting to exclusion, the Malayan companies would come in, smash the newly established company [with artificially low prices] and then go quietly home again.' Consequently, Horner's scheme not only threatened Malaya with American competition, it also pushed Siam towards departure from the restriction scheme to the detriment of the big three tin producers: the British, the Dutch, and the Bolivians. Conversely, this scheme favoured the interests of American tin importers generally as the target of tin cartelization.[141]

During June 1933 Horner gained the support of the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister and also of the Director of the Bureau of Mines. Surprisingly O'Connell, the Director-General of Mines and a British national, also expressed approval of this anti-British scheme, albeit at the cost of being regarded as a traitor by the British Minister.[142] The 'most serious opposition', noted the American diplomat, 'has come from Mr Baxter, the Financial Adviser, who has so far prevented the scheme being accepted'.[143] But how did Baxter succeed in imposing a British veto over and above what appeared to be a consensus of opinion within the Siamese Cabinet and the authority of his own Minister and the Prime Minister?

Initially, Mano had kept the smelter question confidential by creating a special *ad hoc* committee for the purpose. Eventually, however, the structure of the Siamese Government required the question to come before the Economic Council which included Baxter and within this arena a most revealing exchange took

place.[144] Baxter moved to oppose the smelter scheme, at first suggesting that this would violate the clauses of the Anglo-Siamese treaty relating to monopolies. But his predictable objections were countered by the prepared tax and subsidy solution. Baxter then consulted the Legal Adviser, M. L'Evesque, before declaring that this solution would violate the 'most-favoured nation clause' of the same treaty. The interpretation of this general clause, which guaranteed equality of privileges with other nations, was a somewhat grey and technical area on which the Siamese Government was reluctant to contradict the advisers. It was perhaps significant that the American Foreign Affairs Adviser, Stevens, was absent in the United States and Baxter deputized in his absence, further strengthening Baxter's hand.[145]

This case partly turned upon the fact that the Anglo-Siamese Treaty revision was only conceded by Britain in 1925 on the basis that its provisions would continue for ten years. Thus, until 1936 the most favoured nation clauses were more strictly interpreted than in many other states. In May 1934, Stevens, the American Foreign Affairs Adviser, explained to the State Department that 'the foreign consuls in Siam, particularly of European countries, who functioned in the old days under old treaty powers, are on the watch all the time to retain all the power they can and we are held very strictly to favoured nation treatment. They are on the watch every minute.' Significantly, Washington later refused to surrender the same most favoured nation clause which also protected her oil interests.

Yet for the time being, American diplomats complained bitterly at this interpretation of the most favoured nation clause, 'apparently brought forward in a desperate attempt to oppose plans for the smelter'. Baxter's own loyalties were further illuminated by his subsequent interventions:

> It was then suggested that as the British treaty was due to expire in 1935, the plans be kept in abeyance until the expiration of the treaty. Mr Baxter stated that there was no reason to suppose that the treaty would not be renewed in its present form and if Siam was not willing to renew it, there would be a probability of Britain placing a preferential duty against Siamese rice imported into the Straits Settlements [Singapore] and Burma. In other words, Mr Baxter, an adviser to the Siamese Government, was threatening the government with reprisals from Great Britain.

Had Baxter's allegiance been overtly challenged, he would have doubtless replied that his duties encompassed an obligation to

forewarn the Siamese Government of potential British counter-pressures. But the style and pattern of Baxter's behaviour was hardly consistent with disinterested advice. Instead, Baxter 'was bringing forward every argument he could think of, some of them not very plausible, to oppose the granting of this concession'.[146] Conversely, Baxter appears to have given no consideration to alternative means by which Siam could have proceeded with an American-sponsored independent smelting capacity, even at some future date.[147] It is also significant that Hall-Patch, Baxter's predecessor, had pursued a completely opposite policy when approached about a similar monopoly for ICI in 1931. ICI was, of course, a British company.[148]

While the smelter episode offers a fascinating glimpse of Baxter's influence and priorities, nevertheless, it should be emphasized that other factors were operating to strengthen the British position. Firstly, the problems relating to Siam's rice exports in the last few years had given unusual weight to the veiled threat of increased British tariffs on Siamese exports to Malaya. Secondly, the United States insisted that Siamese tin policy had also been affected by direct threats from the British Colonial Secretary.[149] In addition, Baxter's advice was probably driven by complex motives, including his dislike of Siam's use of state industries as part of a drive against the 'familiar bogey' of the 'wicked middle-man', either Chinese or European. He also asserted that state industry offered opportunities for corruption and 'political nepotism'.[150]

Baxter's dislike of American influence also extended to more than a simple fear of dollar penetration. Like his predecessors, he was deeply committed to the conservative ideas of 'sound' finance as expounded by the Governor of the Bank of England, Sir Montagu Norman, and constantly sought to impress these upon the Siamese Government, along with the value of an 'impregnable currency'. Consequently, he regarded American ideas, notably the deficit financing of the New Deal, as subversive. He blamed the United States for sabotaging the World Economic Conference held in London in 1933 through sudden dollar devaluation and warned his Siamese superiors that the New Deal 'follows its chequered course and springs perpetual surprises on a nervous, suspicious and harassed world'.[151]

Although such American challenges appeared to suggest that the dollar remained the key threat to British hegemony in Siam during the early 1930s, two quite contradictory themes were now

beginning to emerge, which would complicate Anglo-American commercial rivalry. Firstly, as illustrated above, the traditional American challenger had discovered the advantages of advocating projects favoured by Siamese nationalists. Secondly, by 1934, British and American officials, as well as businessmen, had begun mutual consultations, unprecedented in the Siamese context, to counter suspected Japanese economic initiatives similarly designed to appeal to Siamese nationalism. The result was some emerging elements of Anglo-American commercial co-operation against Siam and Japan.[152]

In the Summer of 1934 American oil interests suggested that the Siamese Government intended to follow Japan in extending a Government monopoly over the distribution of oil, perhaps with Japanese technical assistance. Charles Adams, the Bangkok Manager of Asiatic Petroleum Limited, forwarded similar reports to Crosby in December 1934, although these were denied by Prince Wan, an adviser on foreign affairs.[153] Hitherto, the refining and distribution of oil in Siam had been dominated by three rival companies, Socony Vacuum Oil (US), Standard Oil (US), and Asiatic Petroleum (a subsidiary of the Anglo-Dutch company, Royal Dutch-Shell). The dismay created by these rumours in Washington and London reflected the recent imposition of monopolies by Spain, Italy, and Japan in Manchukuo.[154] Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, expressed alarm and his reservations were directly responsible for a lengthy postponement in the renegotiation of the Siamese–American commercial treaties in March 1935.[155] In anticipation of what they perceived as Japanese-inspired nationalization in Siam, strong and uncharacteristic Anglo-American co-operation developed rapidly between both oil companies and Government officials at many different levels.[156] Typically, by 1935 Joseph Grew, the American Ambassador in Tokyo, was exchanging information on oil in Siam with Sir Robert Clive, his British counterpart. Clive maintained that Japan was urging Siam to declare a government oil refining and marketing monopoly.[157]

In conclusion, and contrary to orthodox interpretations, a careful examination of the mid-1930s suggests that, perversely, the Revolution of 1932, and the subsequent upheavals during 1933, served to strengthen various aspects of Western financial and economic influence in Siam. Some studies have noted correctly that during the late 1920s and early 1930s there had been much Siamese emphasis, particularly in the press, on the

reduction in the numbers of foreign officials and advisers.[158] But this has been overemphasized, for in reality the reduction had amounted only to the retirement of insubstantial figures.[159] New evidence suggests that, instead, the British Financial Adviser's authority within Cabinet, though not in the Assembly, appears to have increased after 1932. This can be explained, firstly, by the initial fears of foreign intervention and the threats of the Colonial Office; secondly, by a subsequent *de facto* alliance with the conservative military; and thirdly, by the general inexperience of government displayed by the Promoters. Moreover, in 1933 Baxter was joined by the powerful figure of Sir Robert Holland, the newly appointed Judicial Adviser.[160] Therefore, in the short term, presumptions regarding the resilience of the Western and particularly the British position in Siam were largely correct.

The very formulation of some American operations in Siam under the cover of British-American Mines Limited served as a leitmotif for Siam's continued importance within the British imperial economy. Colonial officials had been shocked by Assembly interventions over commodity restrictions, but for the time being nationalist sentiment appeared to be directed primarily against Siam's large Chinese mercantile population rather than the West.[161] Consequently, the principal threats to Britain appeared to be the changing nature and direction of external threats. Hitherto the growing power of the dollar had been perceived as Britain's main long-term problem in Siam, but now unprecedented Anglo-American economic co-operation in Siam was emerging in the face of vigorous Japanese export policies and what were seen as Japanese-inspired nationalization schemes. These new patterns, increasingly focusing upon Japan, were emerging only slowly at the economic level in 1934 and 1935. Nevertheless, they were accelerating and prefigured wider patterns of political and strategic rivalry with Japan that would become more apparent in South-East Asia during the late 1930s. Therefore, by 1935, while the position of the West appeared to have suffered surprisingly little erosion, nevertheless, significant underlying developments inside and outside Siam promised a fluid and challenging context in the late 1930s.

## *A New Strategic Landscape: Siam, Japan, and the West*

In principle, Siam and Japan appeared to have had the basis for a close relationship.[162] Both countries had remained closed to the West until the mid-nineteenth century. Both had adopted rapid modernization and Western reforms in a critical manner, partly as a means of resisting the West. Both countries revered their monarchies. In 1915 the American Minister in Bangkok had warned that Japan looked at Siam with great interest and with a view to expansion. He considered that Japan was paving the way for military and political influence at a later date.[163] But this view was an aberration and prior to 1935 Western officials spoke dismissively of the possibility of close relations between Siam and Japan. As late as 1933, presumptions about cultural differences between the two countries ensured that Japanese political overtures to Siam, increasingly phrased in Pan-Asian language, enjoyed the status of a long-standing joke among diplomats in Bangkok. In some respects these presumptions were correct for in private Japanese diplomats regarded South-East Asian peoples as both distinct from and inferior to themselves. Moreover, they regarded Bangkok as a career backwater to be avoided at all costs.[164] But during 1934 and 1935 this Western tone changed dramatically. Officials in Bangkok, London, Washington, and especially Singapore began to express anxiety regarding Japanese ambitions in Siam and in South-East Asia. This rapid shift of opinion can be traced at the economic, political, and strategic levels.

The British understanding of what they termed the 'Japanese problem' varied widely between different types of officials and their location. At the economic level, Japanese strength in the piece-goods market had been established in Siam since the 1920s and had been accepted with a degree of fatalism, thus lending a long-term cast to Japanese economic activities. Nevertheless, Japan redoubled her efforts in South-East Asia during the 1930s on account of her exclusion from potential markets in Africa and both North and South America. Therefore economic objectives enjoyed a high priority within Japanese policy towards Siam.[165] Even after devaluation of the pound in September 1931, Britain could not compete with Japanese piece-goods in Asia, notably cotton textiles, outside areas protected by extensive tariffs.[166] In September 1934 Crosby complained that 'Japan is underselling us

all along the line and I must confess I see no remedy for the evil'.[167] By 1935 the volume of Japanese imports into Siam had eclipsed Britain in most sectors.[168] Japan also demonstrated an interest in the growing market for air services in South-East Asia.[169] Meanwhile, Britain drew only limited comfort from the ill-feeling created in Bangkok by Japan's restrictions on the import of Siamese rice.[170]

Japanese economic strength was most alarming to Western diplomats where it spilled over into Siamese political life. While the wealthiest Siamese were still dispatched to Europe for their education, this was beyond the means of many of middle rank, brought into prominence by the Revolution of 1932. Moreover, when Crosby raised this issue with Prince Wan, himself educated at Marlborough and Balliol College, Oxford, he replied that the austerity programmes of British advisers had reduced the available funds for the sponsorship of students. Oxford and Cambridge, he continued, were now beyond the reach of Government scholarships and 'it was now to be Japan or at best the London School of Economics'.[171] Ironically, Baxter himself lamented in December 1934 that 'promising young Siamese who formerly would have been sent at Government expense to Europe to be educated are now being sent to Japan'.[172] In February 1935 Crosby decided to 'have it out' with Prince Wan over the Japanese training of Siamese naval officers. The reply was the same: Royal Navy training was preferable, but beyond Siam's present means.[173] Consequently, many of Siam's younger officers looked increasingly towards Japan as a bastion of Asiatic nationalism and anti-Western sentiment.[174] Meanwhile, the coups and counter-coups of 1933 had served to bring more of these younger officers into prominence. Nor was Japan without senior advocates, for in December 1933, the British Legation had identified Prince Wan himself as the key to promoting anti-foreign feeling and 'the new tendency to "play up to Japan"'.[175]

At the political level, both Dormer and his successor, Crosby, agreed that the main Japanese threat was actually an indirect one, arising out of the repeated strategic embarrassments inflicted upon the West by Japan in China and Manchuria between 1931 and 1933. Moreover, these crises had been marked by a distinct lack of Anglo-American co-operation. As a consequence of this, by the mid-1930s, the Siamese had begun to recognize that the nature of the strategic matrix in South-East Asia was increasingly unstable and characterized by Anglo-Japanese rather than Anglo-French antagonism. Therefore, after 1934, the contest for prestige

in Bangkok increasingly turned around an interminable and inconclusive debate over Britain's strategic position east of Suez. In this sense, rather than facing a 'Japanese problem', Dormer, and then Crosby, faced a 'British problem' that lay beyond their control, the erosion of British strategic credibility.

Most Japanese overtures to Siam during the 1930s remained opaque to Western officials. Therefore during 1933 and 1934, Dormer and other Western diplomats mistakenly presumed that Japan's priority was to pursue a forward political policy, posing as 'Siam's champion against foreign aggression', restrained only by her preoccupation with events in China.[176] In reality Japan's objectives in South-East Asia during the early 1930s were primarily economic and as such served to disappoint Siam's leading Promoters. Indeed after the coup by Pridi's supporters on 22 June 1933, Phahol summoned the Japanese Minister, Yatabe, to a secret and lengthy meeting. The record of this meeting indicates that the cautious Yatabe had previously refused to assist Pridi's faction in the June 1933 coup, rejecting requests for arms. Phahol made it clear that they desired Japanese help because they feared foreign, especially British, intervention. But instead Yatabe sought to press economic proposals, counselling economic development as the key to self-strengthening against the West and offering only Japanese technical assistance and capital. The primacy of Japanese economic objectives was underlined by Yatabe's request that Japanese, rather than British, advisers be attached to the new Government. Meanwhile, Tokyo paid little attention to the coup.[177]

British perceptions of political relations between Japan and Siam during 1933 were further distorted by the aftermath of the 'Far Eastern Crisis', as Japan's incursion into Manchuria received examination by the League of Nations.[178] At a plenary session of the League on 22 February 1933, Siam alone abstained, while all other members voted to condemn Japanese behaviour. At this point, the Japanese representative rushed over to the Siamese delegate and vowed that, if needed, Japan would fight with Siam to the end to cast off the European yoke. This undertaking may well have prompted Phahol to approach Yatabe for assistance in Bangkok after the coup of June 1933. Siam's intention in abstaining had only been to underline her neutrality, but in Tokyo and London, Siam's position was widely interpreted as pro-Japanese.[179] American officials read the situation more accurately, noting that Siam's behaviour was merely a recognition of growing Japanese power and that the real result of events in Manchuria

was to raise questions in Bangkok regarding Japan's ambitions in Asia.[180]

British officials, like the Siamese Cabinet, were slow to give detailed consideration to the wider strategic implications of events in China for South-East Asia.[181] Until 1934, the attentions of the Far Eastern Department remained focused upon crises in East Asia, while in Bangkok, diplomats were preoccupied with dramatic domestic events.[182] Only during September 1934, as the impact of the Manchurian Crisis upon Siamese sensibilities became clear, did Crosby recognize his inability to counter doubts in Bangkok regarding Britain's strength east of Suez. Conversely, he concluded 'that if our general prestige in the Far East is clearly maintained, the danger of our influence in Siam being destroyed will be obviated'.[183] Such glib prescriptions indicated that Crosby did not begin to understand Britain's accelerating strategic problems in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Meanwhile, there was no consensus within the Far Eastern Department as to the reality of the wider balance of power in Asia.[184]

The strategic debate within the Siamese Government, developing after 1934, mirrored the lack of consensus in London. In January 1934 Prince Purachatra had spoken of a brief Siamese infatuation with Japan, which confirmed Dormer's own findings.[185] But by May 1934, rumours began to circulate regarding an impending Franco-Japanese alliance, which sat uneasily with Tokyo's Pan-Asiatic ideas, while bringing Japan closer to Siam's borders.[186] By September 1934 Crosby noted that enthusiasm for Japan within the Siamese Cabinet was cooling with increasing awareness 'of the threat . . . if the Japanese should ever succeed in obtaining for themselves an absolutely free hand in Asia'.[187] This disturbing debate offered Baxter a further rationale for his co-operation with Phibul, whom he perceived as wary of Japan. In February 1935 Baxter bowed to Cabinet pressure for increased military spending, explaining to the Bank of England that 'there is an anti-Japanese scare on'.[188] Phibul himself alleged that 'the country was being placed in grave danger through the aggressive attitude of Japan'. Both Crosby and Baxter concluded that this Cabinet 'scare' was genuine, rather than mere budgetary politics. The Cabinet was 'rattled' as the result of a number of recent sensational Japanese espionage cases, involving the arrest of a Japanese colonel and firing in the Gulf of Siam.[189] Nevertheless, outside Cabinet, especially among the younger officers, pro-Japanese sentiments

abounded. One British official, passing through Bangkok in December 1934, reported that such officers believed

> ... the creation of an eastern bloc against the West would be a good policy.... Singapore is much talked of and plans are said to exist for an attack on this important base in the event of war between Japan and Great Britain. The more irresponsible elements in Siam believe that it could be taken quite easily.[190]

By 1935, to the irritation of the British, the shifting balance of power in South-East Asia formed the basis of constant but unresolved debate in Bangkok, in Cabinet, in military circles, and in the press.

At the strategic level the concerns of British defence staffs in Singapore and London were crucially different from those of the British diplomats in Bangkok. British diplomats were concerned for British prestige and political influence on a work-a-day basis in Bangkok. In contrast the military were preoccupied by the realities of the strategic balance in Asia. The concerns of military officials at Singapore were also more significant for, contrary to orthodox interpretations of imperial defence policy, public and private speculation concerning a Japanese strategy involving the use of Siam appears to have been instrumental in provoking the first substantial review of the northward defence of Malaya and Singapore since 1925.[191] Notwithstanding the weight of recent historical research relating to Britain's Singapore strategy, these studies have failed to recognize the importance of Siam in the development of British strategic thinking after 1933.[192] While these studies have provided a detailed account of scales of defence provision, they have neglected important and influential thinking at Singapore itself. In particular, it has been suggested that British concern over the northward defence of Malaya and Singapore began to accelerate only in March 1936, associating this concern in London with new Japanese armament programmes, with improved communications in Malaya, and with the newly appointed General Officer Commanding (GOC) Malaya, Major-General Dobbie, who secured increased troop provisions during 1936.[193]

Yet neglected evidence suggests that prescient concerns regarding the northward defence of Malaya were not initiated by thinking in London during late 1935 and early 1936 concerning expanded Japanese capabilities or Malayan communications. Instead, they had their origins earlier in the near panic amongst

officers in Singapore over Siam and Japan, which developed in the Spring of 1934. Siam, therefore, lay at the root of a prescient, but ultimately fruitless, debate amongst British military officials over the landward defence of Singapore, that stretched from early 1934 to December 1941. Most disturbing for military officials in Singapore were reports regarding the possibility of Japan reviving the Kra Canal project, first considered by the French during the late nineteenth century. The idea of a canal across the Kra Isthmus of southern Siam had been prohibited in Anglo-Siamese treaties, but during the Spring of 1934 their impending expiry prompted press speculation about a possible Siamese–Japanese canal project, designed to undermine Singapore.[194] Pridi, never slow to associate himself with a scheme that involved capital expenditure, publicly expressed an interest in a Japanese-sponsored canal project.[195] The impact on Singapore was clearly intense for in 1934 Captain Cunningham-Reid returned from Malaya and informed the House of Commons that

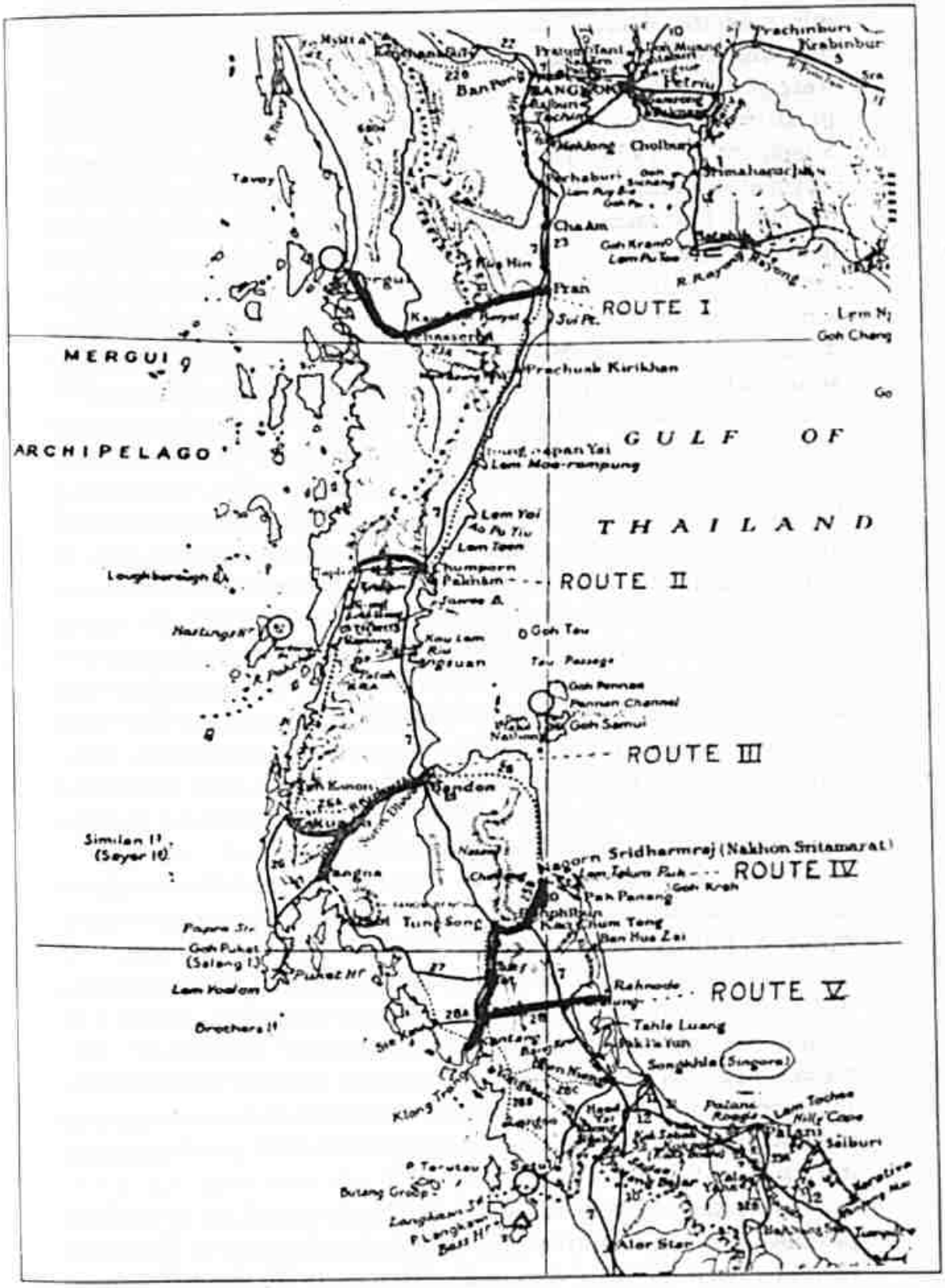
> the project for building a canal at this point [the Kra Isthmus], often mooted, is . . . about to be introduced again . . . and there is a suggestion of financial assistance from the Japanese. Such a back door enabling any battle fleet to sidetrack Singapore to prove, so to speak, a by pass by a much shorter route could not but have a profound effect on the local strategical situation. . . . The Siamese have much in common with the Japanese. Siam, as we all know from recent events, is very discontented today.[196]

Consequently, Dormer, passing through Singapore in April 1934, encountered a 'total war scare'. Questions were put to the Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, in the Commons during March and November 1934. Thereafter consuls were dispatched to search the Isthmus in vain for canal workings (Map 3.1).[197]

The Kra Canal scare, however, served only as a focus for wider concerns over Siam. During February 1935, the Siamese Ministry of Defence confided that, through recent Japanese espionage cases in Bangkok, they had come

> into the possession of a Japanese plan for attacking the Naval Base at Singapore in the event of war. According to this plan Bangkok and Singora [on the border with Malaya] were to be seized as bases of operation and suitable sites for aerodromes had already been selected at other spots, whilst the Japanese counted upon an uprising in India to help them in the attainment of their objective.

MAP 3.1
British Map of Possible Kra Canal Sites




*Source*: Public Record Office, WO 193/294.

Phibul and the Chief of the Naval Staff, Luang Sindhu Songkramchai, were apparently 'wrought up over this'. Crosby informed the British military, suggesting that Siam had indeed 'got wind of the main lines of Japan's plan of attack'. These views were paralleled by alarmist stories in the Siamese and Singapore press.[198] It seems that, during a visit by Siamese officers to Singapore in 1934, British commanders had been sufficiently alarmed to offer military assistance as a stopgap while Siam increased her own capabilities.[199] By February 1935 Singapore had also identified the Japanese Legation in Bangkok as Japan's espionage centre in South-East Asia. All this was reinforced the same year by the appearance of an influential study by Ishimaru Tota entitled *Japan Must Fight Britain*, which emphasized the strategic importance of Siam, and specifically the Kra Isthmus.[200]

The response of the military at Singapore was alarmist and oscillated wildly: fearing Siamese capabilities in 1932 and 1933, fearing a Siamese–Japanese alliance briefly in 1934, and fearing Japanese hegemony over Siam by early 1935.[201] The War Office in London spoke of Japanese activities in Siam giving rise to 'serious apprehensions . . . particularly amongst British naval and military circles in Siam', and often remarked upon the 'more alarmist views in Malaya of the Siam–Japan rapprochement'.[202] The concerns expressed by Singapore over Siam found their way into staff studies conducted in London during 1935. One such study considered the possibility of attacks on Singapore from advanced bases near the Siam–Malaya border and concluded that, for a variety of reasons, 'Siam is in a position to exercise considerable pressure on the British'.[203]

Consequently, as early as the Autumn of 1934, the minds of defence staffs in Singapore and London were beginning to focus upon a hitherto unconsidered and ill-defined problem, the defence of Malaya's northern border. The depth of this concern was reflected in an urgent request from the GOC Malaya to double the strength of the existing Malaya garrison.[204] The request was approved by Cabinet on 30 January 1935.[205] The Defence Requirements Committee in London echoed misgivings in Singapore and consequently approved further reinforcements during July 1935.[206]

The strategic questions raised by Siam served as a catalyst, prompting reconsideration of a British position east of Suez that had long been recognized as weak. Even in 1915, almost contemporaneous with the high-water mark of British informal influence

in Siam, Japanese, rather than British, battleships had escorted ANZAC troopships on their way to the Mediterranean.[207] As early as 1919 the Foreign Office had repeatedly urged the Admiralty to dispatch a substantial squadron to Singapore in order to reinforce Britain's diplomatic position *vis-à-vis* Japan. During the same year Viscount Jellicoe, former First Sea Lord, identified Japan as a long-term strategic threat. In 1921 Singapore played host to a staff conference designed to consider strategy in the event of war against Japan, and the Singapore naval base, begun in 1921, in part constituted a statement of unease at British weakness in Asia.[208] But in 1934, officers at Singapore were alarmed, less by British weakness, but more by foreign recognition of British weakness, increasing Britain's strategic requirements at a time when she was least able to meet them.[209] Unwittingly, Siam's recognition of the Singapore problem had changed the nature of the problem itself.[210]

Singapore officials would have been further disconcerted had they been privy to the views of the British Admiralty in London. In a global context, the Admiralty were increasingly aware of the contradiction between their European and Far Eastern commitments. In April 1931 the First Sea Lord informed the Admiralty that Britain's deficiency in capital ships was such that if a fleet was sent to Singapore, then home waters could not be defended.[211] By 1933, subsequent to the prolonged Far Eastern crisis, Britain found that economic stringency prevented her from rebuilding a fleet, already rendered obsolete by the 'Ten Year Rule'. Events in Germany and Italy underlined the difficulty of sending a fleet further east than the Mediterranean.[212] This coincided with a frantic naval building campaign in Japan during the early 1930s. Therefore, throughout the mid-1930s, the Admiralty operated in a climate of perpetual crisis.[213] Given the scale of Britain's naval problems, it is surprising that Britain's Singapore strategy was only rarely confronted by robust challenges.[214]

Consequently, at the strategic level, Siam illustrated the related benefits and liabilities of informal influence. Before 1931 Siam's co-operative neutrality offered a cheap outwork of imperial defence, obviating the need to provide protection for northern Malaya. But at the same time this function depended upon Siamese confidence in the regional stability offered by the Singapore base concept. Accordingly, Siamese faith was likely to falter at moments when the strategic challenge to imperial defence was at its strongest. In 1934 and 1935, Siamese suspicions of British

debility served to undermine an already weak British position, requiring Singapore to consider new threats at a time when resources were insufficient to address old problems. Siam, therefore, was more than a mere anxious observer of Western policy during the mid-1930s, for her increased attention to Japan was itself central to the beginning of an important process of strategic reassessment at Singapore.

## *Conclusion*

In the early Summer of 1935, many aspects of the British position in Siam appeared at least as resilient as they had done in 1931. This was particularly apparent at the financial level. During the last years of the old regime, Baxter's predecessor, Hall-Patch, enjoyed only a poor personal reputation, and had complained that some of the princes had displayed a growing reluctance to accept foreign advice, or had sought Danish help in attempting to undermine his position.[215] But now the 'brilliant Baxter' seemed firmly entrenched and enjoyed wide powers, partly by virtue of his technical expertise, but also as a result of his co-operation with a powerful faction within Cabinet which included Phibul.[216]

At the political level, even the most sceptical of observers, the colonial officials in the neighbouring British territories of India and Malaya, were forced to admit that Siamese co-operation against Asian 'agitators' and communists remained excellent. In early 1935 Crosby reported the arrival in Bangkok of an Indian 'subversive', Makendra Patrap, on a forged Afghan passport. Britain arranged for his surveillance and deportation. Siam also demonstrated a welcome intolerance of undercover Japanese activities during 1934 and 1935. The Phahol Government, enthused Crosby, 'betrayed no inclination whatever to tolerate the mischievous activities of undesirables such as these'.[217] After June 1933, security co-operation intensified as a result of the visit of Dickinson, Head of the Singapore Special Branch. Dickinson addressed the full Cabinet on the 'inter-related ramifications of communism' in Asia, and as a result the Prime Minister approved Dickinson's plan to establish 'direct connections between the Intelligence Services of the countries concerned'.[218] Therefore, at both the financial and political levels, significant areas of British influence not only remained intact, but had been reinforced.

At the same time, fundamental changes had occurred in both the internal and external contexts within which British influence

was now required to operate. As yet these developments had offered no substantial challenges but Baxter was aware of the potential domestic dangers and viewed nationalist outbursts in the vernacular press and the Assembly with alarm:

> Siam has got the nationalist fever. . . . It feels enslaved because its tical is linked to sterling, because its reserves are in sterling and held in London. . . . When I sold the gold in the currency reserve some months ago I was accused in the public press of working to turn Siam into a British dependency.[219]

Equal disquiet was expressed in the context of external threats. Japanese activities in Bangkok could hardly be described as dramatic or forceful, and yet the increasing Siamese awareness of Japanese power pointed to future trouble. Mere Siamese uncertainty regarding British strategic capabilities, albeit publicly expressed, had a profound impact upon British defence planning in Singapore and Malaya.

However, the absence of a concerted challenge to Western interests in Siam before 1936 demanded few major policy decisions from Western officials, and certainly only limited discussion at a high level in London or Washington. This absence of pressure permitted the easy coexistence of different sorts of officials with different views on Siam and divergent policy prescriptions. Therefore, Baxter could favour Phibul unreservedly, while Crosby could entertain his doubts about militarism and voice his corresponding sympathies for Pridi. Meanwhile, both could reject the calls of the Colonial Office and the Western business community to 'wave the big stick' in pursuit of commodity restriction agreements and preferential commercial arrangements.[220] Yet once significant challenges were offered to the British position, then the diversity of perspectives promised intense disagreement over what form the response should take. Dormer and Crosby had already drawn their initial conclusions on this question and were of one mind in advocating a diplomatic philosophy of generous concession. Dormer outlined this strategy in 1933, noting that while nationalism as yet presented few problems, nevertheless 'one is conscious of a note of defiance, as if someone were threatening their independence'. In this matter, he continued, 'it pays to make concessions to their pride'.[221] However, it was one thing to espouse this open-handed philosophy in the climate of 1933, and quite another to defend it under the pressure of the exigencies that developed during the late 1930s and early 1940s.

1. This constituted a major Vickers sales exercise and had been in preparation since November 1931. General Sir Noel Birch (Managing Director) to Jenkinson, 27 November 1931, fol. 39, reel K635 (correspondence of Sir Noel Birch), MSS microfilm copies, Records of Vickers-Armstrong Limited, Cambridge University Library (hereafter Vickers Papers, CUL).

2. On the previous day the Vickers personnel, led by Ryan, had shown a well-received film on armoured vehicles and conducted a dramatic live firing exercise, with heavy machine-guns, on the palace lawns. Ryan to Birch, 29 June 1932, fol. 48, reel K635, Vickers Papers, CUL.

3. Ryan noted that Prince Purachatra had recently remarked to Prajadhipok 'that some attempt was going to be made', but not for some weeks. Ryan to Birch, 29 June 1932, fol. 48, reel K635, Vickers Papers, CUL. Stowe's interpretation of these events emphasizes a degree of guile on the part the Promoters, particularly in spreading rumours of an insurrection by the Chinese minority; in contrast, Brailey tends to stress the element of chance, J. Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue*, London: Hurst, 1991, pp. 13–19; N. Brailey, *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore: A Frustrated Asian Revolution*, Boulder: Westview, 1986, pp. 25–9.

4. Ryan to Birch, 29 June 1932, fol. 48, reel K635, Vickers Papers, CUL. An armoured column was employed to capture a number of senior police officers. See Thawee Bunyaket in J. K. Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics*, New Delhi: Oriental Longman, 1972, p. 46; Brailey, *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore*, pp. 25–6.

5. B. Batson, *The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam*, Singapore: Oxford University Press/Asian Studies Association of Australia, 1984, pp. 204, 229, nn. 69–70. British officials at the India Office in London considered this to be a 'defeatist speech', Crombie minute, 7 April 1932 (Coll. 33/1), L/P&S/12/4048, IOLR.

6. The revolution was prefigured early in 1932 by an explosive 'Cabinet crisis'. This had arisen over the refusal of Hall-Patch and the Finance Minister to fund promotions sanctioned by the Minister of War, Prince Bovaradet. The dispute had been 'freely ventilated in the press' and had resulted in the resignation of Bovaradet. Nevertheless, the revolution still took most people by surprise. Dormer to FO No. 7 enclosing Annual Report for 1931, 5 January 1932, F1078/1078/40, FO 371/16260, PRO.

7. For a detailed discussion of the pressures of modernization and development in the twentieth century, see Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, pp. 236–83; Thawatt Mokarapong, *A History of the Thai Revolution: A Study in Political Behaviour*, Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1972, *passim*.

8. Chula Chakrabongse, *The Twain Have Met*, London: G. T. Foulis, 1956, p. 135.

9. Dormer to FO No. 21, 25 January 1933, enclosing Annual Report for 1932, F1558/1558/40, FO 371/17178, PRO; Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 4.

10. Johns to Simon No. 137, 29 June 1932, F5918/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO.

11. On local representation in India, see S. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858–1905*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, pp. 160–91.

12. Craig, 'Memorandum on Municipality', n.d., K Kh 0301.1.19/5, TNA. Cf. Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, pp. 139–40.

13. Sir Edward Cook, 'The Building of Modern Siam', *Asiatic Review*, 27, 88 (1930): 786–8. After the revolution, a new Siamese word for 'constitution' was required and the Pali-derived word *Ratatamnoon* was employed. But when told of rule by constitution, peasants in outlying districts asked 'Ratatamnoon pen look

kong kra?' or 'Whose child is Ratatamnoon?', W. D. Reeve, *Public Administration in Siam*, London: Oxford University Press, 1951, pp. 8–9.

14. Kingdom of Siam Temporary Constitution Act, enclosed in Johns to FO No. 15, 19 July 1932, F6321/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO. See also, F. W. Riggs, *Thailand: The Modernisation of a Bureaucratic Polity*, Honolulu: East–West Center, 1966, pp. 152–7.

15. Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 13; Dormer to FO No. 21, 25 January 1933, enclosing Annual Report for 1932, F1558/1558/40, FO 371/17178, PRO. The majority of the Promoters' forces on the day of the revolution were supplied by the navy. Meanwhile much of the army remained loyal of the King but found that the revolutionaries had taken the precaution of withdrawing their ammunition.

16. Somers minute, 29 June 1932, F5180/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO. Similarly, the India Office described it as 'another party dictatorship', R. C. minute, 28 July 1932 (Coll. 33/12), L/P&S/12/4056, IOLR.

17. Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 237.

18. Wright minute, 27 June 1932, F5110/4260/40, FO 371/16262, PRO; Orde minute, 29 June 1932, F5180/4260/40, FO 371/16262, PRO.

19. Dormer to Simon No. 160, 3 August 1932, F6564/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO.

20. Ibid. Sayre to Stevens, 25 October 1932, Siam File 2 (1930–9), Sayre Papers, Library of Congress (hereafter LC).

21. Dormer to FO No. 21, 25 January 1933, enclosing Annual Report for 1932, F1558/1558/40, FO 371/17178, PRO.

22. Johns to FO No. 16R, 25 June 1932, F5090/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO.

23. Ibid.

24. Dormer to FO No. 185, 8 September 1932, F7290/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO; Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 32.

25. Mallet minute, 20 January 1933, F451/42/40, FO 371/17174, PRO.

26. Nunn also emphasized the importance of pre-empting the French who were already in a state of excitement in the wake of recent rebellions in northern Indo-China. Nunn to Orde, 7 July 1932, F5413/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO; Eden to Nunn, 27 October 1932, F7668/4260/40, FO 371/16262, PRO. Nunn's views can be followed at length in his correspondence with Butterfield and Swire Limited during 1933 and 1934. See London Director's Political Correspondence, 3/10, JSSI, Swire Papers, School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

27. Dormer to Orde, 29 September 1932 (150/60/32), F7732/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO; Potter to Simon, 25 October 1932, 892.00/84, RG 59, NARA.

28. Dormer to Simon No. 160, 3 August 1932, F6564/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO. Although Mano was conservative and had been educated in Britain, at the same time he was discontented by his lack of advancement under Prajadhipok, Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, pp. 27–8.

29. Dormer to FO No. 158, 28 July 1932, and minutes 1–3 August 1932, F6563/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO.

30. Ibid.

31. Attaché's report summarized in Greg to FO, 21 December 1923, not foliated, AIR 5/396, PRO.

32. Chief of the Air Staff minute, 11 February 1924, not foliated, AIR 5/396, PRO. On the Air Force see, W. M. Leary, 'A Short History of the Thai Air Force', *Aerospace History*, 29, 2 (1982): 93–7.

33. For suggestions that Siamese military strength served no obvious function,

see Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 35.

34. London readily accepted the argument that the Promoters' radical declaration of June 1932 did not reflect the considered sentiments of the revolutionaries, but instead had simply been copied in haste from the declaration of the Young Turks. The parallel between the promoters in Siam and the Young Turks was first drawn by the *Whitehall Gazette*, December 1932; Dormer to Orde, 24 June 1933, F5324/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO.

35. Dormer to FO No. 21, 25 January 1933, enclosing Annual Report for 1932, F1558/1558/40, FO 371/17178, PRO.

36. Baxter to Siepmann (BE), 1 November 1932, enclosing memorandum entitled 'Form of Government', fol. 221, OV25/2 (669/1), BE. Hall-Patch continued, 'At the moment they have not reached that stage, and they are still hoping for miracles which will enable them to escape the inevitable consequences of living beyond their means.' Hall-Patch to Hopkins quoted in Hopkins to Williamson, 12 April 1932, (12605/01), T 160/435, PRO.

37. Baxter memorandum to State Counsellor for Finance, 24 April 1933, fol. 6, K Kh 0301.1.23/48, TNA; Manager, Siam Commercial Bank to Minister of Finance, 26 April 1933, fol. 121, K Kh 0301.1.23/48, TNA; Minister of Finance to Banque d'Indochine, 26 April 1933, fol. 12, K Kh 0301.1.23/48, TNA.

38. Dormer to FO No. 4, 29 March 1933, F2068/42/40, FO 371/17174, PRO. Pridi held qualifications in law and political economy from the Sorbonne. On Pridi's background, see Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, pp. 9–13; Brailey, *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore*, pp. 39–40; Pridi Phanomyong, 'Some Stories Concerning the Formation of the People's Party and Democracy', in Thak Chaloemtiarana (ed.), *Thai Politics: Extracts and Documents, 1932–1957*, Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1978, I, pp. 62–7. The other leading radical Siamese economist at this time was Dr Joti Kumbandh who gained a Ph.D. in Economics at the University of Berlin after the First World War, Bailey to Simon No. 127, 2 August 1933, F6035/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO.

39. Dormer to FO No. 59, 3 April 1933, F3109/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO. A translation of a later version of Pridi's economic scheme for Siam can be found enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 182, 1 September 1934, F6016/123/40, FO 371/18208, PRO. A translated copy of Pridi's 1932 'Plan for Siam' is available at FO 628/78, PRO. See also Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 36.

40. Dormer to FO No. 5, 13 September 1932, F7009/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO; Roberts minute, 27 September 1932, F7009/4260/40, FO 371/16261, PRO; Dormer to FO No. 59, 3 April 1933, F3109/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO.

41. Dormer to FO No. 59, 3 April 1933, F3109/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO. The India Office was especially delighted by the 'bluntly worded' legislation, Mawby minute, 2 June 1933 (Coll. 33/12), L/P&S/12/4056, IOLR.

42. Potter to SoS No. 278, 22 June 1933, 892.00/98, RG 59, NARA.

43. Dormer to FO No. 60, 4 April 1933, F3313/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO; Dormer to FO No. 67, 20 April 1933, F3467/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO. See E. T. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand, 1928–1941', Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1967, p. 114.

44. Dormer to Simon No. 31, 5 February 1934, enclosing Annual Report for 1933, F1991/1991/40, FO 371/18210, PRO. Pridi's principal supporters were Colonel Phya Phahol and Luang Phibul.

45. Ryan to Birch, 23 June 1933, fol. 100, reel K635, Vickers Papers, CUL.

46. Ibid. Vickers in London responded by dispatching sales material describing their latest 'police tank'. Ryan replied advancing a familiar stereotype, emphasizing that he was taking things gently because 'like all orientals the Siamese are very suspicious by nature and have to be very carefully handled', Birch to Ryan, 18 July 1933, fol. 118, reel K635, Vickers Papers, CUL; Ryan to Birch, 16 August 1933, fol. 114, reel K635, Vickers Papers, CUL.

47. Dormer to FO No. 16, 23 July 1933, F4194/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO.

48. Dormer to FO No. 101, 4 July 1933, F4439/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO. On the fear of foreign intervention, see Thawatt, *History of the Thai Revolution*, p. 109.

49. Dormer to Simon No. 114, 10 July 1933, F5573/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO.

50. Harrison minute, 24 June 1933, F4170/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO.

51. Potter to Hull, 24 June 1933, 892.00/99, RG 59, NARA; Dewavongse to Sayre, 23 February 1934, Siam File (1930–9), Sayre Papers, LC.

52. Prajadhipok to Baxter, 4 August 1933, F7281/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO.

53. Lynch to SoS No. 283, 6 July 1933, 892.00/100, RG 59, NARA; see also Potter to SoS No. 286, 19 July 1933, 892.00/PR51, RG 59, NARA.

54. Prajadhipok is reported to have declared, 'I do not know whether Stalin copied Luang Pradit [Pridi] or whether Pradit copied Stalin', Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 37.

55. Bailey to FO No. 165, 10 October 1933, F7281/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO. Bailey attributed this initiative not to Prajadhipok but to his immediate circle. He noted that 'the atmosphere about the King, surrounded as he is by disgruntled reactionaries, who ... delight in making his flesh creep, must be thoroughly unhealthy', Bailey to FO No. 145, 7 September 1933 (Coll. 33/12), L/P&S/12/4056, IOLR.

56. Harrison minute, 18 October 1933. Bailey noted, 'I doubt very much whether "the only politically conscious class is inclined to communism": I think it is inclined to nothing but the acquisition of private pelf and the paying off of old scores', Bailey to FO No. 165, 10 October 1933 (Coll. 33/12), L/P&S/12/4056, IOLR.

57. The Danish East Asiatic Company had been active in spreading rumours of British intervention, Gurney to Oliphant No. 16, 15 July 1933, F4780/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO.

58. Bailey to Simon No. 166, 15 October 1933, F7213/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO.

59. The Government initially felt confident in possession of ten 6-ton tanks, but later rumours circulated that Bovaradet had managed to field six similar machines. Ryan's patience in remaining in Bangkok was not rewarded. The Chief of the Aeronautical Department defected to the royalists before he had signed a long-promised order for new anti-aircraft batteries. Ryan to Birch, 14 October 1933, fol. 134, reel K635, Vickers Papers, CUL.

60. Whittington memorandum, 22 March 1934, F3037/21/40, FO 371/18206, PRO; Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, pp. 11, 65.

61. Dormer to FO No. 195, 10 November 1933, F7921/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO; intercepted Purachatra letter, n.d., enclosed in Dickinson to Bailey 777/E/2/16 (21/255/33) FO 628/49 Pt. II, PRO.

62. Bailey to FO No. 158, 2 October 1933, F7015/42/40, FO 371/17176,

PRO; Bailey to FO No. 182, 31 October 1933, F7534/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO.

63. Harrison memorandum, 'Sketch of Recent Developments in Siam', 31 December 1933, F7350/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO. On Songkhla as a centre of possible rebellion see, Chula Chakrabongse, *Brought Up in England*, London: Foulis, 1943, p. 187. The Singapore press and the Bangkok business community, including a Japanese entrepreneur, were pro-royalist, Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 66; M. Sivaram, *The New Siam in the Making: A Survey of the Political Transition in Siam, 1932–1936*, Bangkok: Stationer's Press, 1936, Chapter 16, *passim*.

64. Potter to SoS No. 325, 27 October 1933, 892.00/109, RG 59, NARA; Potter to SoS No. 327, 7 November 1933, 892.00/15, RG 59, NARA; Dormer to Simon No. 31, 5 February 1934, enclosing Annual Report for 1933, F1991/1991/40, FO 371/18210, PRO. Dormer was fascinated by the extent to which modern techniques were deployed by both sides. The Government forces made most effective use of radio in broadcasting Prajadhipok's own, rather mild, condemnation of Prince Bovaradet. Aircraft were widely deployed but to less effect. Dormer reported that aircraft appeared over Bangkok 'and were fired upon, but whose side they were on it was difficult to say. No damage was done, although twelve machines crashed owing to engine failure.'

65. Bailey to FO No. 165, 10 October 1933, F7281/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO.

66. A degree of panic and confusion appears to have developed in the British Legation in the absence of the steady Dormer. Bailey raised the possibility that if the King abdicated and crossed into Malaya, the military might run amok in Bangkok and attack British interests. In this case, he insisted, a British gunboat should certainly be dispatched from the China Station at Hong Kong. Bailey to FO No. 46, 2 November 1933, F6907/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO. Bailey had already informed the Naval Intelligence Centre at Singapore that a gunboat might eventually be required, and the message was relayed to Hong Kong. But in the process a 'misunderstanding' developed and Bailey's letter was translated into an urgent radio request for immediate naval assistance. Singapore had marked their telegram 'urgent' this 'being necessary to ensure prompt handling at the Admiralty during weekend'. This created the impression of a request for immediate action, 'contrary to the actual text of the message . . . and not a warning that a ship might have to be sent eventually'. Subsequently, Singapore outlined, *en passant* their views on gunboat diplomacy: 'During times of unrest . . . ultimate decision to ask for a British warship to be sent to protect such interests rests I think, and I expect you will agree, with H.B.M.'s representative in the Foreign country concerned . . . (whether H.M. Government are chary or not, nowadays, of sending warships for this purpose I do not know).' Naval Intelligence Centre to Bailey, 6 November 1933, enclosing SO (I) Singapore to C-in-C, China, 1323 hrs, 28 October 1933, 21/273/33, FO 628/49 Pt. II, PRO.

67. Dormer to FO No. 195, 10 November 1933, F7921/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO.

68. However some of the princes had become markedly less pliant during the late 1920s.

69. Orde minute, 16 October 1934, F6130/115/40, FO 371/18208, PRO.

70. Ibid.; Simon minute, 18 October 1934, F6130/115/40, FO 371/18208, PRO.

71. Hoare (HO) to Harrison No. 575.727/7, 24 October 1934, enclosing

Special Branch Report No. 345/RLT/16(SB), 24 October 1934, F6349/115/40, FO 371/18208, PRO. Prajadhipok's fears had been exacerbated by the recent assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia.

72. Police briefing material, probably provided by Singapore, offered what had become the standard colonial police description of Pridi as 'an extreme type of communist, who calls himself a socialist . . . regarded as a fanatic'. Thamrong was identified to be 'at present in control of the Siamese secret service'. Hoare (HO) to Harrison No. 575.727/7, 24 October 1934, enclosing Special Branch Report No. 320/AST/316(SB), 22 October 1934, F6349/115/40, FO 371/18208, PRO.

73. There was insufficient evidence to refuse visas to the delegates and the Home Office settled for 'strict surveillance'. Harrison minute, 25 October 1934, F6349/115/40, FO 371/18208, PRO; Randell to Hoare (HO), 30 October 1934, F6390/115/40, FO 371/18208, PRO. Prajadhipok's attitudes are discussed in detail in N. Tarling, 'King Prajadhipok and the Apple Cart: British Attitudes towards the 1932 Revolution', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 64, 2 (1976): 23.

74. On this matter, see Chapter 5 and Tarling, 'King Prajadhipok', pp. 36–9.

75. They added that 'Prince Varnvaidya [Wan] knows more about the game . . . than anyone else' and that he was doing his best to induce everyone 'to play according to the rules', Bailey to Simon No. 127, 2 August 1933, F6035/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO.

76. Siam's first elections had proceeded smoothly despite the Bovaradet rebellion.

77. Cook (Egypt) to FO, 25 May 1934, enclosing Baxter to Cook, 17 April 1934, F3240/21/40, FO 371/18207, PRO; Baxter memorandum, 'Suggested Procedure for the Conduct of Financial Business in the Assembly of the People's Representatives', 28 September 1933, fol. 6, K Kh 0301.1.298/31, TNA.

78. Dormer to FO No. 108, 10 May 1934, F3068/21/40, FO 371/18207, PRO.

79. Crosby to FO No. 192, 12 September 1934, F6274/21/40, FO 371/18208, PRO.

80. Cook (Egypt) to FO, 25 May 1934, enclosing Baxter to Cook, 17 April 1934, F3240/21/40, FO 371/18207, PRO. On Sarasat's radicalism see Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 124.

81. Baxter to Governor (BE), 11 October 1933, fol. 83a, OV25/3 (669/2), BE.

82. Cook (Egypt) to FO, 25 May 1934, enclosing Baxter to Cook, 17 April 1934, F3240/21/40, FO 371/18207, PRO.

83. Baxter to Cook, 8 October 1933, fol. 846, OV25/3 (669/2), BE.

84. Cook (Egypt) to FO, 25 May 1934, enclosing Baxter to Cook, 17 April 1934, F3240/21/40, FO 371/18207, PRO.

85. Baxter to Siepmann (BE), 26 December 1933, fol. 111c, OV25/3 (669/2), BE.

86. Dormer to FO No. 56, 7 March 1934, F2259/123/40, FO 371/18207, PRO; Baxter consistently employed the Egyptian budget as his model of presentation, Baxter to Watson (Financial Adviser, Cairo), 1 November 1932, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.29B/32, TNA

87. Cook (Egypt) to FO, 25 May 1934, enclosing Baxter to Cook, 17 April 1934, F3240/21/40, FO 371/18207, PRO.

88. The Minister of Economics, Sarasat, effectively constituted a shadow appointment to his own Minister of Finance, Baxter to Siepmann (BE), 17 May 1934, fol. 132a, OV25/3 (669/2), BE.

89. Baxter to Cook (Egypt), 8 October 1933, fol. 846, OV25/3 (669/2), BE.

90. Baxter quoted in Crosby to FO No. 61, 25 March 1935, F1936/296/40, FO 371/19377, PRO.

91. Baxter to Siepmann (BE), 14 February 1935, fol. 20, OV25/4 (669/3), BE.

92. Crosby to FO No. 349, 21 October 1935, F6815/296/40, FO 371/19377, PRO.

93. Phibul reportedly faced an assassination attempt the following day at the hands of one of Pridi's supporters, Baxter memorandum on conversations with Minister of Finance, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 12, 24 February 1935, F1270/296/40, FO 371/19377, PRO.

94. Crosby to FO No. 256, 28 January 1935, F598/296/40, FO 371/19377, PRO.

95. Crosby to FO No. 61, 25 March 1935, F1936/296/40, FO 371/19377, PRO.

96. Baxter had experienced this pressure for lavish military procurement within days of his arrival, Baxter to BE enclosing memorandum of 17 November 1932, fol. 2, OV25/4 (669/3), BE. With Siam's rice exports recovering, Baxter conceded 'I dare say Siam can stand a gunboat or two', Baxter to Siepmann (BE), 18 July 1934, fol. 141a, OV25/4 (669/3), BE.

97. Baxter to Phibul (MoD), 6 June 1935, fol. 6, K Kh 0301.1.37/96, TNA; Phibul (MoD) to Baxter, 1 July 1935, fol. 7, K Kh 0301.1.37/96, TNA. See also Baxter to State Committee enclosing 'The Furtherance of Naval Forces Act', 30 April 1935, fol. 2, K Kh 0301.1.37/96, TNA.

98. Crosby to FO No. 61, 25 March 1935, F1936/296/40, FO 371/19377, PRO.

99. Randall minute, 25 February 1935, F1270/296/40, FO 371/19377, PRO. On Pridi's contacts with Japanese groups during his visit to Singapore, see Haynes (Singapore) to Dormer, 19 July 1933 (165/33), FO 628/49 Pt. II, PRO.

100. Baxter to Siepmann, 15 May 1933, fol. 37, K Kh 0301.1.23/48, TNA. Baxter to Cook, 15 May 1933, fol. 44, K Kh 0301.1.23/48, TNA; Cobbold (BE) to Baxter, 30 May 1933, fol. 63, K Kh 0301.1.23/48, TNA; Cook to Baxter, n.d., fol. 66, K Kh 0301.1.23/48, TNA; Baxter to Cobbold (BE), 21 September 1933, fol. 88, K Kh 0301.1.23/48, TNA.

101. Some of these officials had received military training in Germany. Crosby to FO No. 233, 9 July 1935, F5247/296/40, FO 371/19377, PRO.

102. Crosby believed that such a coup would result in the closing of the new University of Moral and Political Sciences founded by Pridi, which was increasingly 'the stronghold whence Luang Pradit [Pridi] is able to retain and strengthen his influences with the younger generation', Crosby to FO No. 61, 25 March 1935, F1936/296/40, ibid. During January 1935 Crosby had remarked, 'Of this notorious personage it may be safely said—in spite of all his enemies have alleged to the contrary—that he is not to be numbered among the Communists. He is, rather, a politician of the advanced left wing type, such as may be met within the bosom of the Socialist League in England . . . his wings have been clipped.' Annual Report for 1934, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 39, 30 January 1935, F1931/1931/40, FO 371/19379, PRO.

103. Crosby to FO No. 61, 25 March 1935, F1936/296/40, FO 371/19377, PRO.

104. Baxter and Dormer seem to have marked a high-point in otherwise troubled relations between the British Minister and the Financial Adviser before 1942.

Baxter regretted Dormer's departure to his new post in Oslo during May 1934, noting that he was 'a very sound level-headed fellow', Baxter to Siepmann (BE), 8 March 1934, fol. 119A, OV25/3 (669/2), BE.

105. Baxter to Cook, 8 October 1933, fol. 846, OV25/4 (669/3), BE.

106. Overseas and Foreign Department memorandum 'Pradist' [Pridi], 24 September 1935, fol. 80, OV25/4 (669/3), BE; Prajadhipok to Baxter, 19 September 1935, fol. 63b, OV25/4 (669/3), BE.

107. Dormer to FO No. 59, 3 April 1933, F3109/42/40, FO 371/17175, PRO. A later version of Pridi's economic scheme for Siam, can be found enclosed with, Crosby to FO No. 182, 1 September 1934, F6016/123/40, FO 371/18208, PRO. For intellectual influences upon Pridi, see P. Fistie, *Sous-development et utopie au Siam: Le programme de réformes présenté pen 1933 par Pridi Phanomyong*, Paris: Mouton, 1969, pp. 63, 90, 110–14.

108. Dormer to FO No. 31, 5 February 1934, enclosing Annual Report for 1933, F1991/1991/40, FO 371/18210, PRO.

109. Potter to SoS No. 278, 22 June 1933, 892.00/98, RG 59, NARA.

110. The many Colonial Office files dealing with Siam created by the Eastern Department (series CO 825) have been 'destroyed under statute' by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office during a review process conducted during the 1950s. Any attempt to reconstruct the thinking of colonial officials in Singapore or London is fraught with problems.

111. Dormer to FO No. 31, 5 February 1934, enclosing Annual Report for 1933, F1991/1991/40, FO 371/18210, PRO.

112. Ibid. Dickinson's report was filled with speculation about visits to Moscow and 'Moscow pay'. It spoke of Pridi's 'organisation of cells on the Soviet model', report by Dickinson, 24 June 1933, Special Branch Report 777/E/1/97/7, FO 628/49 Pt. I, PRO.

113. Ibid. Bailey to Dickinson, 10 July 1933, 176/2/33, FO 628/49 Pt. I, PRO. For a picture of the Special Branch, see R. Onraet, *Singapore: A Police Background*, London: Crisp, 1946.

114. Later Pridi and Dickinson met for lunch during the latter's visit to Singapore in late September 1933 during which he enjoyed police protection. Dickinson had to 'confess' that Pridi was after all 'probably an idealist'. Nevertheless, Dickinson went on to warn that Pridi remained 'dangerous', suggesting that the French hoped to employ Pridi to de-stabilize Siam in the hope of facilitating further French territorial gains on Siam's eastern border. He suggested that Pridi was therefore to the French: 'what Lenin was to Ludendorf' adding 'Perfide Albion is watching him', Dickinson to Bailey, 27 September 1933 (777/E/1/259), 21/141/33, FO 628/49 Pt. I, PRO.

115. The reaction of officials in Malaya is difficult to gauge. However, the Governor of Singapore enjoyed a closer relationship with senior police chiefs after Sir Hugh Clifford's police reorganization of 1926–7; on this, see Onraet, *Police Background*, pp. 30–5, 70–2, 96–7. On Ho Chi Minh in Thailand, see Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, pp. 45–7; Huynh Kim Kahn, *Vietnamese Communism, 1923–1945*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982, pp. 60–4.

116. H. Williamson, *India and Communism*, Delhi: Government of India, 1935, pp. 83–5. This confidential reference work for officials was reprinted by Editions India, Calcutta, in 1976 with an introduction by Madaheraprasad Saha. The India Office in London remarked 'no doubt Communism, of which we have heard something in Siam lately, is nearer the mark than "nationalism" (i.e. socialism) and

there is possibly a widespread plot in support of Pridi', Mawby minute, 3 April 1933 (Coll. 33/12), L/P&S/12/4056, IOLR.

117. Coultas to Cowgill (Intelligence Bureau), 31 December 1934, enclosing memorandum 'Communism in Siam', 304/2/34, FO 628/50, PRO. Crosby had discussed this subject at length with Sir David Petrie of the Intelligence Bureau earlier that year, Lownei (Intelligence Bureau) to Crosby, 7 December 1934 (70/BI/34), 304/1/34, FO 628/50, PRO.

118. Many of the more alarmist reports were the result of hasty investigative tours which tended to concentrate on Pridi's ill-considered tract of April 1933, rather than his contemporary views or policies. Visiting in December 1934, F. F. Powell, a Bank of England official, consulted Pridi's 'famous yellow book' and pronounced it to be 'pure communism' and a 'copy of the Russian regime'. Powell was more accurate on the neglected police activities of the Promoters which resembled the Soviet practice of internal exile. He noted: 'Already there is an "Ogpu" in existence and . . . persons holding views against the government may, at the decision of three members of this secret police force, be sent without any means of livelihood for periods of up to ten years, to obscure and malaria stricken districts', Powell memorandum 'Report on Siam', 12 December 1934, fol. 3, OV25/4 (669/3), BE.

119. Eastwood (CO) to Orde, 8 January 1935, F220/220/40, FO 371/19376, PRO.

120. The Governor of Singapore usually served as High Commissioner for the Federated Malay States during this period. Sir Shenton Thomas succeeded Sir Goerge Clementi in 1933, *Who's Who, 1934*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1934, p. 2730.

121. Siamese rice was consumed primarily by the Chinese community in Malaya and, accordingly, they would perceive an increase in tariffs as discrimination by the Malayan Government, Thomas to Colonial Secretary, 14 January 1935, F554/220/40, FO 371/19376, PRO.

122. Chaplin minute, 28 January 1935, F554/220/40, FO 371/19376, PRO.

123. Ibid. On the complex issue of rice tarrifs, see also Director-General, Siamese Customs Department to USS Finance, 4 September 1930, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.8/43, TNA; Hall-Patch to Finance Minister, 6 December 1930, fol. 3, K Kh 0301.1.8/43.

124. Colonial Secretary to Thomas (Singapore), 24 January 1935, F554/220/40, FO 371/19376, PRO; Chaplin minute, 28 January 1935, F554/220/40, FO 371/19376, PRO; Eastwood (CO) to FO, 25 March 1935 (15202/6/35), F1984/220/40, FO 371/19376, PRO. *Who's Who, 1959*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1959, p. 902. For a general survey of rubber restriction during this period, see A. MacFaydean, *A History of Rubber Regulation, 1934–1943*, London: Macmillan, 1944.

125. Phahol had wished to retire from political life for some considerable time, however, the Assembly put him under pressure to remain in office, Crosby to FO No. 39, 30 January 1935, enclosing Annual Report for 1934, F1931/1931/40, FO 371/19379, PRO. The full text of the agreement (28 April 1934) is at fol. 8, K Kh 0301.1.37/88, TNA.

126. Baxter to USS Ministry of Economic Affairs, fol. 159, K Kh 0301.1.37/38, TNA; minutes of a discussion on Siam at IRRC, 25 September 1934, FO 628/50, PRO.

127. Chairman (IRRC) to Crosby, 8 October 1934, FO 628/50, PRO.

128. Annual Report for 1935, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 82, 24 February 1936, F1909/1909/40, FO 371/20302, PRO.

129. The Chairman of the IRRC informed Crosby that: 'The present price of rubber is entirely divorced from reality, and is, in fact, a practical expression of the public's confident belief that the [Rubber Restriction] scheme will eventually accomplish its purpose. If through Siam's defection, the scheme should fail . . . the price of rubber must inevitably fall again to the low levels that prevailed in the pre-restriction period.' Chairman (IRRC) to Crosby, 8 October 1934, FO 628/50 PRO.

130. CO to Thomas (Singapore), 29 April 1935, CO 852/4/6/15020/B8, PRO. On this matter, see also CO 852/72/14/15020/B, PRO, *passim*.

131. On the subject of tin restriction see J. Hillman, 'The Freerider and the Cartel: Siam and the International Tin Restriction Agreements, 1931–1941', *Modern Asian Studies*, 24, 2 (1990): 297–321; also 'Malaya and the International Tin Cartel', *Modern Asian Studies*, 22, 2 (1988): 237–61. Hillman argues persuasively that cartelization was partly the result of overproduction by Patino Limited and Anglo-Oriental Limited (pp. 237–40).

132. On tin production in Malaya, see Yip Yat Hoong, *The Development of the Tin Mining Industry in Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1969; E. May, 'The International Tin Cartel', in W. Y. Elliot, *International Control in Non-ferrous Metals*, New York: Macmillan, 1937. The International Tin Restriction Scheme was inaugurated in 1931 to meet the related problems of a depression in commodity prices brought on by the world depression and over-production. See Records of the Tin Restriction Committee, TRC(31) 1st mtg. 13 February 1931, CAB 27/447, PRO; International Tin Conference, minutes of meeting, 6 February 1931, CO 323/1154/81298/111, PRO.

133. Potter to SoS No. 277, 21 June 1933, 892.6354/29, RG 59, NARA. Cunliffe-Lister had previously been associated with tin restriction as President of the Board of Trade.

134. CO to Thomas (Singapore), 29 April 1935, CO 852/4/6/15020/B8, PRO. Anglo-Siamese relations on the tin question had been good prior to 1933, partly because Siam perceived Campbell, Secretary of the ITC as 'particularly sympathetic to Siam's position', Craig memorandum, 7 March 1935, fol. 3, K Kh 0301.1.11/6, TNA.

135. The concerns of British and Australian tin companies in Siam were quite different from those in Malaya and centred on escalating duties. See Richardson, President, Siamese Chamber of Mines to Crosby, 30 October 1934 (R/1841/34), 106/20/34, FO 628/50, PRO; Australian Tin Mining Limited to Crosby, 3 September 1934 (R/1531), 106/17/34, FO 628/50, PRO.

136. Baxter to Governor (BE), 11 October 1933, fol. 83a, OV25/3 (669/2), BE. Financial policy sheds only limited light upon this question for Baxter, the Bank of England and many Siamese conservatives would doubtless have maintained that the cautious policies prescribed by the Bank of England were in any case favoured by some of the Siamese Cabinet and benefited all parties. But, in contrast, Baxter's interventions in the field of commercial policy, particularly over tin, wore his cover dangerously thin.

137. I. Brown, *The Élite and the Economy in Siam, c.1890–1920*, Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 102–3; J. W. Cushman, 'The Kaw Group: Chinese Business in Early Twentieth Century Penang', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 17, 1 (1986): 67–72; G. W. Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An*

*Analytical History*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967, pp. 214–17. On the role of Malaya and support for sterling, see M. J. Hogan, *Informal Entente: The Private Structure of Co-operation in Anglo-American Economic Diplomacy, 1920–1930*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977, pp. 190–217.

138. It was typical of the ignorance of Hall-Patch that he should have had no inkling of Horner's real intention and, indeed, had even written him a supporting letter, Hall-Patch to Baxter, 12 March 1933, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.37/77, TNA.

139. For further examples of 'false-flag' companies see, D. Dimbleby and D. Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988, pp. 96–105; R. P. T. Davenport Hines, *The Life and Times of Dudley Docker*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

140. Potter to SoS No. 277, 21 June 1933, 892.6354/29, RG 59, NARA, Horner, British-American Mines Limited to USS, Ministry of Economic Affairs, 26 May 1933, fol. 2, K Kh 0301.1.37/77, TNA.

141. Ibid. Baxter memorandum, 'Notes on Tin Mining', 6 June 1933, fol. 27, K Kh 0301.1.37/77, TNA.

142. O'Connell had been marked down by the British Legation as a renegade and an enemy of British influence because of his unreservedly pro-Siamese loyalties. During 1936 Crosby complained to London that O'Connell was 'working against us', that he was 'warning the Siamese off' and declared him to be a 'nigger in the woodpile' in relation to British tin policy, Crosby to Eden, 30 July 1936 (7929/332/50), CO 852/33/6/15020/B8, PRO. For further examples of O'Connell's pro-Siamese attitude, see Connell memorandum, 'Restriction of Tin and Tin Ore', 17 May 1933, fol. 23, K Kh 0301.1.11/6, TNA.

143. Potter to SoS No. 277, 21 June 1933, 892.6354/29, RG 59, NARA.

144. This was permanent body chaired by Mano; see Vamvaditya, Minister of Commerce and Communications to Pramonda, 30 May 1933, fol. 8, K Kh 0301.1.37/77, TNA.

145. Potter to SoS No. 277, 21 June 1933, 892.6354/29, RG 59, NARA. L'Evesque concluded that 'the proposed contract is certainly dangerous' and that Malaya might be legally entitled to compensation, L'Evesque, 'Note on the Application of Anglo-American Mines Ltd.', 8 June 1933, fol. 15, K Kh 0301.1.37/77, TNA. See also Subcommittee report to the Chairman of the Economic Council, n.d., fol. 30, K Kh 0301.1.37/77, TNA.

146. Potter to SoS No. 277, 21 June 1933, 892.6354/29, RG 59, NARA; minutes of a conference between Stevens and three State Department officials, Hornbeck, Hawkins, and Perkins, 31 October 1933, 711.922/451/2, RG 59, NARA; minutes of a meeting between Siamese Ministers of Economic Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Finance, 2 May 1934, fol. 7, K Kh 0301.1.4/5, TNA.

147. During 1934 Mr Preston of the British Borneo Company Limited was asked privately by the Siamese Government to advise on the feasibility of a plan for an independent Siamese smelter. At the same time he was urged not to speak of this to the British community, especially not James Baxter. However, the information was circulated freely within the British community in Bangkok, exacerbating fears of impending nationalization, especially on the part of Asiatic Petroleum Limited, Coultas to FO, No. 164 (Coll. 33/12), L/P&S/12/4056, IOLR.

148. ICI memorandum, December 1931, fol. 9, K Kh 0301.1.32/10, TNA; Hall-Patch to Purachatra, 12 April 1932, fol. 14, K Kh 0301.1.32/10, TNA.

149. Cf. pp. 116–17. This was indicated by Horner's report that he had been shown a letter from the British Colonial Secretary, Cunliffe-Lister, to the Siamese Government, requiring a reduction in Siam's tin quota, within the International Tin Restriction Scheme, from 10,000 to 7,000 tons. The letter added that, if Siam did not comply, pressure would be brought to bear. The Siamese Cabinet were reportedly 'intimidated and extremely nervous' and accordingly, Prince Vamvaditya, a leading exponent of the smelter scheme, was removed from his post as Director of Mines. Potter to SoS No. 277, 21 June 1933, 892.6354/29, RG 59, NARA.

150. Baxter memorandum, 'Commentary on State Controlled Industry', 5 May 1934, fol. 10, K Kh 0301.1.4/5, TNA.

151. Baxter memorandum, 'Siam Currency Policy', 30 May 1935, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.23/52, TNA; Baxter to Prince Wan, n.d., fol. 11, K Kh 0301.1.23/52, TNA.

152. Such Anglo-American oil co-operation was commonplace elsewhere. The critical learning experience was the battle between Anglo-American oil interests and Spanish economic nationalism in the period 1927–31. In Spain, initial divisions between British and American companies permitted the Spanish Government company, CAMPSA, to establish a foothold. In 1928, in the face of Spanish actions, the Anglo-Dutch combine Royal Dutch-Shell signed a global cartel agreement with Standard Oil New Jersey and Anglo-Persian Oil. Five other American multinationals joined in 1932. R. H. Whealey, 'Anglo-American Oil Confronts Spanish Economic Nationalsm: A Study in Economic Imperialism', *Diplomatic History*, 12, 2 (1988): 113, 117–18. The literature on oil diplomacy is very extensive; for a comprehensive overview, see D. S. Painter, *Oil and the American Century*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

153. In August 1934, Baker, the American Minister in Bangkok was brought 'secret information' on oil nationalization by Henry J. Post, the local manager of Socony Vacuum Oil Limited, Baker to SoS No. 111, 3 August 1934, 892.6363/36, RG 59, NARA. Crosby to FO No. 272E, 29 December 1934, F920/920/40, FO 371/19378, PRO.

154. Royal Dutch-Shell was a multinational with strong British holdings rather than a British company. But because so few Shell transactions were conducted in dollars it was often spoken of in the same breath as British Petroleum (BP), since 'the development of Shell and BP was manifestly favourable to the balance of payments', Sir Richard Clarke, *Anglo-American Economic Co-operation in War and Peace, 1942–1949*, ed. Sir Alec Cairncross, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, p. 75.

155. Negotiations between the United States and Siam on the subject of treaty revision had been proceeding slowly since late 1933, memorandum of a conversation between the Siamese Minister, Stevens, and Hornbeck, 28 September 1933, 711.922.451/2, RG 59, NARA; Hull to Bangkok, 29 March 1935, 892.6363/39A, RG 59, NARA; memorandum of a conversation between Hornbeck and Gallagher (Standard Vacuum Oil), 27 March 1935, 892.6363/43, RG 59, NARA.

156. Co-operation between non-American and American oil companies seems to have been developing in Siam by early 1935 when the London Managing Director of Shell was informed by the Socony Vacuum Oil Company Limited of a secret approach by Vanich Pananond, Head of the Petroleum Department within the Siamese Ministry of Defence. During August 1934 Socony had been asked for assistance in setting up a government oil company. Shell concluded that Siam would probably follow Japan and Italy in setting up a government monopoly. Crosby expected the Siamese Government to create a *de facto* monopoly by

imposing impossible conditions upon foreign firms, despite contrary private assurances from Phahol. Memorandum by May (Shell) enclosed in Starling (PT) to FO (666/4), 18 March 1935, F1814/920/40, FO 371/19378, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 116, 2 April 1935, F2989/920/40, FO 371/19378, PRO; Phahol to Crosby (A55/3141), 22 May 1935, enclosed in Bailey to FO No. 175, 23 May 1935, F4222/920/40, FO 371/19378, PRO.

157. *New York Times*, 29 March 1935; Grew to SoS No. 77–7, 10 April 1935, 893.6363/Manhattan 164, RG 59, NARA.

158. See Greg to MacDonald No. 85, 18 April 1924 (Coll. 33/16), L/P&S/12/4068, IOLR.

159. Typically, W. A. Graham, who served as Library Curator in Bangkok. Most historians focus only upon the declining numbers of advisers, e.g. Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 50.

160. On Sir Robert Holland, see (Coll. 33/19), L/P&S/12/4050, IOLR, *passim*.

161. Typically, Baxter took little interest in Siam's plans for the nationalization of rice-milling. Baxter to Governor (BE), 11 October 1933, fol. 83a, OV25/3 (669/2), BE. See also Baxter to Cook (Egypt), 8 October 1933, fol. 84b, OV25/3 (669/2), BE.

162. There was limited contact before 1914; nevertheless, with the other powers, Japan had secured an unequal treaty in 1898; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 9.

163. More specifically, Japan had made an impression upon King Vajiravudh (1910–25), who had urged the Siamese to look to Japan as an example and praised the Japanese for having retained their own cultural values, W. F. Vella, *The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955, p. 353. For comparative comments on the divergent patterns of Siamese and Japanese development, see Brown, *The Elite and the Economy*, pp. 178–9. Hornbrook to SoS, 26 July 1915, M731, reel 1, 792.94, RG 59, NARA.

164. Dormer noted that 'in the days of the old regime' Prince Dhamrong's family had told him that the Japanese 'were always urging them to throw in their lot with the yellow races', Dormer to Booth-Gravely, Chief Secretary to the Governor of Burma, 2 December 1933, F7866/7866/40, FO 371/17178, PRO. E. B. Reynolds offers fascinating remarks upon Japanese racial stereotypes of the Siamese in his superb study, 'Ambivalent Allies: Japan and Thailand, 1941–1945', Ph.D. thesis, University of Hawaii, 1988, pp. 25, 65–74.

165. In July 1933 the Japanese Foreign Minister, Uchida Yasuya, stated, 'Since Japan withdrew from the League of Nations, economic issues have come to occupy the central place in our imperial diplomacy'; Ishii Osamu, *Cotton-Textile Diplomacy: Japan, Great Britain and the United States, 1930–6*, New York: Arno Press, 1981, pp. 6–7. Japanese naval interest in the South Seas began to accelerate in the 1920s and, in parallel, the Japanese press began to take a significant interest in Siam, Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 14, 19.

166. In 1931 the figures for the importation of cotton goods into Siam in millions of square yards were, Great Britain: 8.4, Japan: 5.9. In 1932 these figures had reversed dramatically to become Great Britain: 9.5, Japan: 24.5, memorandum No. 4 attached to ORC 20, 'The Far Eastern Situation', 24 February 1934, CAB 16/109, PRO.

167. Crosby to Orde, 18 August 1934, F5730/21/40, FO 371/18207, PRO. On 6 June 1933 the Indian Government placed a 75 per cent tariff on Japanese cotton goods, compared with a 25 per cent tariff on British cotton goods; Ishii, *Cotton-Textile Diplomacy*, pp. 108, 164–82.

168. During the financial year 1933–4 Japan's import tonnage for Siam was almost 50 per cent higher than that of the British Empire, at 17,885,241 tons and 12,388,537 tons respectively. British exports to Siam had dropped by 1,401,972 tons in the space of a single year. Britain still enjoyed a larger volume of trade when calculated in sterling or ticals. Figures for exports to the British Empire from Siam were difficult to calculate owing to the high proportion of entrepôt trade. Crosby to FO No. 39, 30 January 1935, enclosing Annual Report for 1934, F1931/1931/40, FO 371/19379, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 311E, 4 August 1936, F5439/506/40, FO 371/20300, PRO. On the problems of calculating Singapore entrepôt see, Cook to Niemeyer (BE), 17 September 1929, fol. 23, OV25/1 (668/3), BE.

169. Dormer to Booth-Gravely, Chief Secretary to the Governor of Burma, 2 December 1933, F7866/7866/40, FO 371/17178, PRO. One of Dormer's arguments for treating Siam carefully was the air route via Burma to Malaya and Australia which passed over southern Thailand, Dormer to FO No. 21, 25 January 1933, enclosing Annual Report for 1932, F1558/1558/40, FO 371/17178, PRO.

170. Japan's imports from Siam amounted to only 5 per cent of her exports to that country, Annual Report for 1935, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 82, 24 February 1936, F1909/1909/40, FO 371/20302, PRO. Flood argues that Yatabe, the Japanese Minister, had directed his energies towards the economic sphere since his arrival in 1928 and aimed at replacing Western and 'particularly British influence', Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 26.

171. Crosby to FO No. 64, 16 February 1935, F1938/22/40, FO 371/19374, PRO; see also Clive (Tokyo) to FO No. 35, 20 January 1936, not foliated, WO 106/5627, PRO.

172. Baxter to Siepmann (BE), 27 July 1935, fol. 37, OV25/4 (669/3), BE.

173. Crosby to FO No. 64, 16 February 1935, F1938/22/40, FO 371/19374, PRO. Upon his arrival, Crosby had asserted arrogantly that the Siamese were 'at once too astute and proud to derive from Nippon—at second hand—their instruction in the knowledge and sciences of the West', Crosby to Orde, 18 August 1934, F5730/21/40, FO 371/18207, PRO.

174. Indeed, as early as 1933 some Siamese nationalists claimed that Britain's failure to intervene in favour of the royalists during the revolution, was due to her fear of Japan's reaction, Dormer to FO No. 196, 10 November 1933, F7922/42/40, FO 371/17177, PRO.

175. Dormer to FO No. 232, 22 December 1933, F565/21/40, FO 371/18206, PRO.

176. Dormer to FO No. 196, 10 November 1933, F7922/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO.

177. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 59–70; Reynolds, 'Ambivalent Allies', pp. 40–2; Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 53.

178. C. Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League, and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1931–1933*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972, pp. 328–67.

179. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 53–4; Lampson to Dwyer No. 189, 6 April 1933, *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, London: HMSO, 1970 (hereafter *DBFP*), 2nd Series, XI, 472–3. Reynolds, 'Ambivalent Allies', pp. 35–56.

180. Ibid. Potter to Stimson, 27 February 1933, 892.00 PR/47, RG 59, NARA.

181. There were exceptions. In February 1932 Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office had presciently noted that Japan was now likely to

challenge Britain's position in India and South-East Asia as well as on the coast of China. He added that ultimately Japan would only be stopped by the United States. Vansittart minute, *DBFP*, 2nd Series, Vol. 9, No. 238, cited in P. Lowe, *Britain in the Far East: A Survey from 1819 to the Present*, London: Longman, 1981, p. 141.

182. The issue of British strategic power in South-East Asia was only sporadically addressed by officials in London before 1934, Lowe, *Britain in the Far East*. Crosby to FO No. 200, 25 September 1934, F6575/3035/40, FO 371/18210, PRO.

183. Crosby to FO No. 200, 25 September 1934, F6575/3035/40, FO 371/18210, PRO.

184. The Head of the Far Eastern Department, Charles Orde, held Siam up as an example of what would happen to British influence if they tolerated Japanese 'pretentions'. However, Orde was contradicted by Victor Wellesley, the Deputy Under-Secretary, who insisted bluntly that Japan had the 'trump cards . . . and will become the dominant power in the Far East', minutes, of 1–3 October 1934, upon F6575/3035/40, FO 371/18210, PRO. Senior Foreign Office personnel often attended the meetings of the various Cabinet defence committees and therefore enjoyed a clearer understanding of Britain's strategic debility than some of their subordinates. See, for example, DRC 3rd mtg., 4 December 1933, CAB 16/109, PRO. Both Vansittart and Sir Warren Fischer seemed to place more emphasis upon Singapore as an exercise designed to bolster British prestige—'to shew a determined front'—than upon the strategic aspects of the Singapore base policy.

185. Dormer to FO No. 13, 11 January 1934, F1185/21/40, FO 371/18206, PRO; Dormer to FO No. 59, 9 March 1934, F2261/21/40, FO 371/18206, PRO. At the height of pro-Japanese feeling in the Spring of 1934 the Far Eastern Department suggested that 'the idea that Great Britain might be involved in a war with Japan had increased Siamese self-confidence almost to the point of arrogance and the difficulty which both we and the French had experienced with them lately in dealing with the Siamese undoubtedly came from the conviction on the part of the latter that they had Japan at their backs', Randall minute, 9 May 1934, F2731/2202/40, FO 371/18210, PRO; cf. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 90–1.

186. Grew (Tokyo) to SoS, 4 May 1934, 751.94/52, RG 59, NARA. See also J. F. Laffey, 'French Far Eastern Policy in the 1930s', *Modern Asian Studies*, 23, 1 (1989): 117–49.

187. Crosby to FO No. 200, 25 September 1934, F6575/3035/40, FO 371/18210, PRO.

188. Baxter to Siepmann (BE), 2 January 1935, fol. 14, OV25/4 (669/3), BE; Baxter to Siepmann (BE), 14 February 1935, fol. 20, OV25/4 (669/3), BE.

189. The Japanese had also been taking soundings in the Gulf of Siam, conversation with Baxter in Crosby to FO No. 46, 4 February 1935, 49/10/35, fol. 18, WO 106/5627, PRO.

190. Powell (BE) memorandum, 'Report on a Visit to Siam', 12 December 1934, fol. 3, OV25/4 (669/3), BE.

191. Ong Chit Chung, 'British Defence Planning in Malaya, 1935–8: From the Defence of Singapore to the Defence of the Malayan Mainland', *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, 70, 1 (1988): 161–97. Despite its title, the emphasis of this article is more upon thinking in London than Malaya, being

based on files generated in London. The working papers of GHQ Malaya do not appear to have escaped destruction in 1942.

192. The recent literature on the Singapore strategy is vast. Prominent examples include: N. H. Gibbs, *Grand Strategy*, London: HMSO, 1976, Vol. 1; P. Haggie, *Britannia at Bay: The Defence of the British Empire Against Japan, 1931–1941*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981; I. Hamill, *The Strategic Illusion: The Singapore Strategy and the Defence of Australia and New Zealand, 1919–1942*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981; J. Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain's Eastern Empire, 1919–1941*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

193. Ong Chit Chung, 'British Defence Planning in Malaya', p. 169.

194. See Chapter 1, pp. 10–11 and Chapter 2, pp. 41–2. See also V. G. Kiernan, 'The Kra Canal Projects of 1882–5: Anglo-French Rivalry in Siam and Malaya', *History*, XLI, 1 (1956): 137–57; *The Times*, 27 March 1934; 'Japanese Menace to Singapore Base', *Daily Express*, 22 March 1934. The *Straits Times* of Singapore, *L'Impartial* of Saigon, and the *Courrier d'Haiphong* all carried wild speculation regarding relations between Siam and Japan from March 1934.

195. Dormer to FO No. 13, 11 January 1934, F1185/21/40, FO 371/18206, PRO; Dormer to FO No. 59, 9 March 1934, F2261/21/40, FO 371/18206, PRO. This was triggered by an irresponsible junior Japanese diplomat in Bangkok, who was reprimanded for his remarks. Yatabe continued to stress economics, insisting that political and military links would flow naturally from economic co-operation; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 90–1, 100.

196. Parliamentary Debates, Official Report, Series 5, Vol. 293, pp. 511–12.

197. Conversation recorded in Randall minute, 9 May 1934, F2731/2202/40, FO 371/18210, PRO; Parliamentary Debates, Official Report, Series 5, Vol. 287, p. 1616. The Foreign Office also received a denial of activity on the Kra Peninsula from the Japanese Ambassador in London, Japanese Embassy to FO, 28 March 1934, F1858/1765/40, FO 371/18210, PRO.

198. Crosby to FO No. 46, 4 February 1935 (49/10/35), fol. 1B, WO 106/5627, PRO. On 29 January 1935 the *Bangkok Daily Herald* reported that 'Japan is making a bid for an airbase in Siam well within striking distance of Britain's Singapore base'. On British views of Japanese espionage in South-East Asia, see E. Robertson, *The Japanese File: Pre-War Japanese Penetration in World War Two*, Hong Kong: Heinemann Asia, 1979.

199. Crosby had no knowledge of this offer, supposedly made during a liaison visit to Singapore by high-ranking Siamese officers in 1934, and therefore asked London and Singapore for information, Crosby to FO No. 46, 4 February 1935 (49/10/35), fol. 1B, WO 106/5627, PRO.

200. Malaya Command considered that the huge Japanese Legation staff at Bangkok were inappropriate for the needs of the 400 Japanese living in Siam and suspected 'the maintenance of an easily accessible intelligence centre', Malaya Command Intelligence Summary No. 2, February 1935, Japan Pol. III Ib(a), not foliated, WO 106/5267, PRO. Ishimaru Tota, *Japan Must Fight Britain*, New York: Telpress, 1936, pp. 255–8. (The Japanese edition appeared in 1935.)

201. On Singapore's concern at the Siam's Air Force see, Report by General Oldfield, GOC Malaya, 'Tour in Siam and Indochina', April 1932, and Fort Canning memorandum, 'Report on Siam', 26 December 1932, FO 628/46, PRO. Dormer dismissed these alarms, minute, n.d., FO 628/46, PRO.

202. Officers from the Singapore intelligence centre at Fort Canning regularly passed through Siam as visiting defence attachés to Bangkok, Grimsdale (MI2c) minute to MI2 Colonel, 6 December 1934, not foliated, WO 106/5267, PRO. MI2 was the subsection of the Directorate of Military Intelligence dealing with the Middle East and Asia.

203. During December 1934 and January 1935, staff officers in London prepared an appreciation of an attack on Singapore from the Japanese point of view. This report is interesting for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it showed evidence of mounting concern at the problems of a land attack on Singapore employing bases more than 200 miles to the north of the base. Secondly it noted that the danger of land attack was greater if relief was slow. Thirdly, the report noted Siam's importance in respect of food supplies and the possibility of Siam being drawn into an alliance with Japan on the basis of promises to restore Siam's 'lost provinces' in north Malaya. Memorandum 'An Appreciation of an Attack on Singapore from the Japanese Point of View', December 1934/January 1935, not foliated, WO 106/5698, PRO; Grimsdale (MI2c) minute, 15 January 1935, and Hutton (MO2) minute, 21 January 1935, WO 106/5698, PRO.

204. DRC 9, 12, 19, CAB 16/109, PRO. On DRC, see Hamill, *Strategic Illusion*, pp. 220–2.

205. CP 21 (35), 'The Infantry Garrison at Singapore', 26 January 1935, CAB 24/253, PRO; Cabinet minutes 6 (35) 4, 30 January 1935, CAB 23/81, PRO.

206. Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base*, p. 132; Hamill, *Strategic Illusion*, pp. 239–46.

207. Hamill, *Strategic Illusion*, pp. 14–15; subsequently, Singapore found itself so weak as to be dependent upon Japanese marines to put down a serious mutiny among Indian naval ratings; R. W. E. Harper and H. Miller, *Singapore Mutiny*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 150–78.

208. 121-C, 'Anglo-Japanese Alliance', 5 March 1920, CAB 5/3, PRO; Hamill, *Strategic Illusion*, pp. 17, 19, 31.

209. Although the problem of naval attack upon Singapore was considered at regular intervals before 1934, only limited consideration was given to Japanese amphibious landings on the coast of Malaya. In 1921 the initial debates concerning the Singapore base concept gave some attention to the possibility of a landward attack upon Singapore from Malaya, but the War Office had judged the jungle of northern Malaya to be 'impenetrable'. Nevertheless, this dismissal was carefully qualified. It was presumed adequate warning of any attack, that Japanese strength would not increase, that communications in northern Malaya would remain bad. Singapore Subcommittee 1st Interim Report, 27 February 1925, CAB 16/63, PRO.

210. In 1925 the problem of Japanese amphibious landings in Malaya was reviewed again. General Malcolm, GOC Malaya, did express concern about the extension of rubber plantation through which troops could move quickly and easily, but General Malcolm was the sole concerned voice amongst all three Services. 2nd mtg. Singapore Subcommittee, 15 February 1925, CAB 16/53, PRO. See also 3rd mtg. Singapore Subcommittee, 17 February 1925, CAB 16/53, PRO; Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base*, p. 157.

211. CP 100 (31), 'The Disarmament Conference', 14 April 1931, CAB 24/220, PRO.

212. On German rearmament proposals see DRG 3rd mtg., 4 December 1933, CAB 16/109, PRO.

213. Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base*, pp. 125–48; A. Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 2–23.

214. In 1934 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain, attempted to persuade the Cabinet to abandon the Singapore strategy, in favour of concentration upon the air defence of the British Isles. Such radicalism provoked predictable outbursts from the Service Ministries about the collapse of Empire and the loss of the Indian Ocean and South Africa. 'It was' the First Sea Lord declared 'a policy which was not even advocated by the Communists in this country.' Chamberlain's radical statement of overextension was defeated. See Hamill, *Strategic Illusion*, pp. 239–46 and Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base*, pp. 125–48.

215. Dormer to FO No. 21, 25 January 1933, enclosing Annual Report for 1932, F1558/1558/40, FO 371/17178, PRO.

216. Despite Yatabe's emphasis on economic penetration and his specific request for the attachment of Japanese advisers, Japan had only secured four such posts by 1935, two of these being in the Department of Fine Arts; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 110.

217. Annual Report for 1934, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 39, 30 January 1935, F1931/1931/40, FO 371/19379. Raja Kumar Makendra Patrap had been involved in German attempts at subversion during the First World War. He had toyed with Moscow during the 1920s and now appeared to be working under the auspices of Japan. On deportation, he chose Tokyo as his destination. See M. Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981, pp. 21–2, 57, 103, 243.

218. Dickinson to Bailey, Special Branch Report 777/E/1/97/7, 24 June 1933, FO 628/49, PRO.

219. Baxter to Siepmann (BE), 17 November 1933, fol. 88, OV25/3 (669/2), BE.

220. Dormer to FO No. 21, 25 January 1933, enclosing Annual Report for 1932, F1558/1558/40, FO 371/17178, PRO. Both the British and French business communities appeared to have despaired of intervention by their own countries during October 1933. Dormer noted that 'some of the British community here console themselves with the reflection that the French will never permit a communist state on their borders, while the local Frenchmen whisper that "two words from the British Minister will put a stop to anything; you need no gunboats or redcoats"', Dormer to FO No. 158, 2 October 1933, F7021/42/40, FO 371/17176, PRO.

221. Dormer to FO No. 21, 25 January 1933, enclosing Annual Report for 1932, F1558/1558/40, FO 371/17178, PRO.

# 4
# 'To Swim with the Current': The Evolution of Western Policies towards Siamese Nationalism, 1935–1938

In the early 1930s, the Far Eastern Department of the British Foreign Office and the American State Department were largely preoccupied with Japan's aggression in China and Manchuria. These distractions, combined with what many presumed to be a stable strategic matrix prevailing in South-East Asia prior to 1935, ensured that the substantial military and political benefits to British imperial defence that flowed from a neutral and co-operative Siam were all but forgotten. Within Siam, American diplomats noted that despite the Revolution of 1932, British influence remained strong, particularly in key Government ministries; therefore the British Minister was rarely called upon to deploy anything more forceful than a confidential chat. In this respect, British policies resembled aspects of the *laissez-faire* system of indirect dominance in some of the Princely States in India. In these Princely States, free from external threats to British power, the function of the British representative was 'to interfere as little as possible, but to be able to give sensible advice'.[1]

Equally, in Siam during the early 1930s, Britain could afford to advance a minimalist definition of her objectives, emphasizing administrative and financial stability. Superficially, British officials appeared to have grounds for some self-congratulation for French and American observers alike concluded that in Siam, Britain remained 'in first place'. James Baker, the American Minister, reported:

> It should be admitted . . . that the British exert considerable influence nowadays. . . . The Siamese have outwardly shown no pan-Asiatic ambitions and, while perhaps chafing under their restrictions, have done very little toward freeing themselves from the influences of the Powers in control of adjacent territory.

By contrast the volume of American exports to Thailand, while increasing, remained less than 5 per cent of volume of British exports and American diplomats regularly returned 'nil' under the section of their monthly reports reserved for political relations. Yet despite the limits of rival American activity during the mid-1930s, it is possible to detect an undercurrent of British alarm, for a few prescient officials had begun to recognize the implications of international change for South-East Asia. Foremost among these were the military at Singapore and Sir Josiah Crosby, the new British Minister in Bangkok, arriving in August 1934.[2]

Crosby's appointment represented an attempt by London to build good relations with the new Siam. Accordingly, he represented an unusual departure in Foreign Office procedure, being the first member of the Consular Service to be appointed as Minister. Hitherto ministers had been drawn, like Dormer, from the Diplomatic Service. Crosby had first arrived in Siam in 1904 and had spent fifteen years there before departing to serve in Saigon, as Consul-General in Batavia and briefly as Minister in Panama (1931–4). Crosby could therefore claim to be a Siam expert, albeit his knowledge was a little dated. Like all his staff, and in contrast to most other diplomats in Bangkok, he spoke fluent Siamese. With owl-like spectacles emphasizing his bald, rotund figure, he was a temperamental and emotional bachelor who tended to immerse himself in the local situation. His close relationships with members of both the old and new élite left him self-confessedly inclined to favour the local perspective, the infamous 'diplomats' disease'. Indeed, at regional conferences hosted at Singapore, he would refer paternalistically to 'my Siamese'. Nevertheless, few were better suited to the brief of developing improved relations.[3]

Crosby's interpretation of recent international developments was radical and sometimes sophisticated, seeking to evaluate the nature of new threats to Britain's position in Siam and to reorder priorities accordingly. He sought to direct the concerns of senior officials in London away from the defence of the imperial economy and towards what he held to be more pressing political and strategic concerns. Crosby identified two separate but related threats that both drew much of their force from international events. Firstly, he recognized that Siamese nationalism, in contrast to nationalism in neighbouring colonial states, lacked a formal imperial structure on which to focus its attention. Instead, it drew upon an eclectic range of nationalist ideas, particularly those of

Germany, Italy, and Japan. Crosby was thus the first to identify the dangers that lay in a latent political affinity between figures such as Phibul, much favoured by some London departments, and militarism in the Axis states. Interestingly, the model of German National Socialism proved more attractive to Siamese nationalists than Japanese militarism or Pan-Asian ideas. Germany's concept of creating a 'Gross Deutchland' by incorporating German-speaking areas from neighbouring states echoed the radical ethnic 'Thai' ambitions held by some Siamese of recovering territories lost to Britain and France in order to create a 'Greater Thailand'.

Secondly, in a less alarmist manner than the military at Singapore, Crosby emphasized the long-term Japanese threat, recognizing the strategic significance of Siam as a neutral, but potentially pro-Japanese, state, contiguous to Burma and Malaya. Therefore, Crosby argued, the West should revise its priorities, expressing a willingness to make concessions to Siamese economic nationalism, in an attempt to retain a close relationship of considerable political and strategic value. Underlying Crosby's prescription was the conviction that, in any case, Siamese nationalism represented an irresistible force: 'Admittedly the new Siam is not quite as agreeable a place for the foreigner to live in and work in as the old one. But there can be no turning back of the clock and national aspirations . . . are going to be satisfied. Let us meet the situation betimes and let us make the best, rather than the worst, of it.' Moreover, he argued, if the West did not meet the expectations of Siamese nationalism, Japan almost certainly would.[4]

At the conceptual, if not the practical level, the Far Eastern Department, including the conservative Charles Orde, was swept along by Crosby's persuasive if sometimes esoteric analysis.[5] However, some of those in military or colonial departments were temperamentally opposed to the concept of concession and instead prescribed firmness. Meanwhile, economic officials within the Colonial Office, the Bank of England, the Board of Trade, and the Ministry of Fuel and Power, along with business interests, detested Crosby for relegating economic priorities. This animosity was reciprocated. A senior Bank of England official complained that Crosby was 'disgruntled' and, 'amongst his other idiosyncrasies he appears to cherish a grudge against the Bank of England. He has made one or two undiplomatic statements about Baxter's subservience to the Bank of England. One made to Stevens, the American Adviser to the Siamese Foreign Office, particularly offended Baxter.'[6] Crosby also met opposition from

the American State Department which had begun to take more notice of Siam, developing a rather abrasive policy in defence of oil marketing interests. Relations between British diplomatic and financial officials in Bangkok had rarely been good.[7] However, in the early 1930s the further deterioration of this relationship was marked by the development of two separate systems for secure communications with London. Hitherto, Financial Advisers had sometimes used the British Legation's diplomatic bag for private communication with the Bank of England. This evaded the Siamese Government's postal censorship service, but at the same time left their correspondence open to the diplomats. Consequently, in 1933 the Bank of England had issued James Baxter with a private code and cypher system. 'Baxter', they noted, 'must be careful not to be too close to our Diplomatic people in Bangkok.'[8]

Crosby's ideas were eclectic and eccentric, embracing both an acute perception of the power of nationalism, and also a rather romanticized idea of indirect British influence.[9] The unorthodox nature of his ideas can be illustrated by his warning to various London departments regarding those extreme Siamese nationalists who had begun to covet areas of European colonial territory. Many Siamese, he noted, wished to recover parts of Cambodia and Laos, but extreme advocates of 'Greater Thailand' also expressed an interest in the Shan States of north-east Burma, and the four Unfederated Malay States. Provocatively, Crosby suggested that the Shan States of Burma were vulnerable to Siam because of British misrule.[10] Crosby began by explaining that extreme Siamese nationalists sought to unite all ethnic Thai peoples, including the Shans.

> The Siamese and the Shans [in Burma] are of homogeneous stock; racially, religiously and culturally they are akin to one another. They both of them belong to the Thai people. . . . The Shans are today the northern Thai, whilst the Siamese are the Thai of the south, the Laos (who inhabit the north of Siam) forming yet another branch of the same race with its habitat situated between the two . . . already among the Siamese are a few who toy with the idea of a 'Greater Thai' state, which would include not only the 'lost provinces' [ceded to Britain and France] but, in addition, all those neighbouring areas inhabited principally by people of Thai extraction and speech.

Crosby warned the Foreign Office that the 'expansion of these irredentist ideas to the Shan States is no very far step'.[11]

Crosby accused the India Office of a backward policy in Burma and of restricting its objectives to the exclusion of foreign influence. Local rulers were maintained in positions of 'despotic power' with no hope of advancement for the local peoples.[12] Consequently, argued Crosby, the 'more favourable conditions of life prevailing in Siam' would inevitably attract the Shans. Numerous immigrants from the Shan States were already enjoying life in 'democratic' and 'progressive Siam'. Crosby then drew a contrast between the 'medieval form of despotism' in Burma and a very different form of British indirect rule in the Unfederated Malay State of Kelantan, where the Sultan governed under the eye of a British 'Adviser', James Baker. Here in Kelantan, Crosby insisted, British administration was at its best and was even 'immeasurably superior to that of the Siamese provinces'. Therefore, Crosby urged the newly formed Burma Office to model its administration in Burma upon Kelantan in Malaya. 'Siamese influence', continued Crosby, 'has much less chance of penetrating into British territory when we ourselves consent to take a more direct interest in our protégés.'[13] All this, he accepted, made 'somewhat uncomfortable reading for those who are whole-hearted admirers of the British Raj'.[14]

The significance of Crosby's dispatch was twofold. Firstly, its self-confident rejection of the pattern of British rule in parts of Burma as 'an anachronism' and 'a dangerous one at that' revealed Crosby's delight in challenging orthodox thinking. Secondly, it indicated that Crosby was no opponent of British colonial rule *per se*, for in Kelantan, Crosby identified an ideal model of British influence, an indigenous system achieving 'progress' under the careful and friendly supervision of a British adviser. In some respects, Crosby envisaged himself fulfilling this role in Siam.[15] Thus Crosby sought to reconcile informal British influence with what he quaintly described as 'the rising tide of colour', rooting his prescription in a somewhat romanticized belief in the confluence of British and Siamese interests. To this end, throughout the mid-1930s, Crosby urged other British officials to make graceful concessions to Siamese nationalism and thereby 'to swim with the current'.

How do these developments compare with American policy towards Siam during the mid-1930s? Historians of Siamese–American relations have uniformly dismissed this as a 'doldrums' period of no significance during which the United States was all but eclipsed by British and subsequently competing Japanese

influence. Superficially, there appears much to confirm this picture, with the last remaining outpost of American influence, the American Foreign Affairs Adviser, Frederic Dolbeare, being edged towards marginality. However, the importance of American policy towards Siam during this period is far from being well understood. Certainly, without the panoply of adjacent colonies and high profile commercial interests that influenced British policy, it would be unrealistic to expect Siam to register the same degree of attention in Washington as in London, or indeed for the American Legation in Bangkok to command the degree of authority and resources enjoyed by their British counterparts. Yet a careful re-examination of the evidence suggests that American policy during this period, albeit limited in scope, was of the first importance.

Highly acrimonious confrontations between American oil companies and nationalists in the Siamese Government, developing as early as 1934 and persisting to the outbreak of the Pacific War, marked a critical turning-point in Siamese–American relations. Set against the background of Japan's anti-American oil nationalization programmes elsewhere in Asia, this episode ensured that Washington viewed Siam as falling under Japanese influence as early as 1935. This was a full five years before Siam associated herself more publicly with Japan during the dismemberment of French Indo-China. Indeed, during the 1930s, the oil issue was the only context in which Siam came to the concerted notice of Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, and his reaction was uniformly hostile. American circumspection towards the new Siam at the highest level was accelerated in 1935 with the arrival of the pro-royalist Francis B. Sayre as Assistant Secretary of State in the State Department. Meanwhile, in Bangkok, goodwill towards the United States built up during the 1920s was eroded by American truculence over treaty questions between 1936 and 1938, again inspired by oil issues.

Like Crosby, local American diplomats in Bangkok during the mid-1930s, particularly Edward Neville, recognized that Siamese nationalism was an irresistible force and that nothing could be achieved through stubborn resistance to the new regime. Like Crosby, they counselled accommodation. However, there remained a crucial difference. While Crosby's policies were often driven by personal sympathy, contiguous British territories offered him arguments of substance. Die-hard views emanating from London or from British commercial interests could be resisted on political and strategic grounds, namely that Siam was an outwork of imperial

defence at Singapore and should not be pushed towards Japan. No such arguments were available to Neville to blunt Washington's hostility to Siam in a region largely devoid of American military commitments or interests.

Thus in the mid-1930s an important divergence in British and American policy over Siam could be detected. Given that Washington was increasingly the crucial absentee-arbiter of Britain's transparently weak strategic position at Singapore, and indeed of the general *status quo* in South-East Asia, this Anglo-American dissonance over Siam was of the first significance. From 1935 until the advent of Pearl Harbor, both British and French policy would be made in the shadow of Washington's concerted hostility towards Siam.[16]

## *The West and Siamese Economic Nationalism*

The duality of senior British personalities in Bangkok presented a paradox. On the one hand, the dissonance between Crosby and Baxter was accelerating. Their divergent priorities and perspectives were underlined by their disagreement over which Siamese political faction best suited British interests. However, on the other hand the British financial and diplomatic mechanisms in Siam were fundamentally interdependent. The Financial Adviser often provided the Minister with the most privileged information and could apply firm economic pressure at Cabinet level. Equally, the heated environment in which the Financial Adviser operated, characterized by increasing nationalist resentment of his power and general political turbulence, sometimes required diplomatic intervention to preserve the office of the Financial Adviser itself. Paradoxically, therefore, the Foreign Office, the Bank of England, and their respective representatives in Bangkok gave the highest priority to mutual support notwithstanding their growing antipathy.

This paradox was neatly underlined in the Summer of 1935 by the 'Great Kentung Opium Scandal' which, to the dismay of Crosby, resulted in the abrupt resignation of Baxter, who departed in complete disgust.[17] At the centre of this episode was Luang Naribes, the Director-General of the Siamese Department of Excise and a Cabinet member who, along with other ministers, was implicated in the smuggling, at vast profit, of a large quantity of opium between Kentung (in Burma) and Siam.[18] Pridi, the Interior Minister and friend of Naribes, had stopped the court proceedings and had censored the press. 'Every coolie in the streets of

Bangkok knows the facts', exploded Baxter, 'the Government does not care. "Promoters" are sacrosanct ... it is the greatest scandal in the history of opium.'[19]

The Far Eastern Department were aghast at Baxter's resignation, for they now feared that Baxter's successor would come from Japan. Chaplin, the desk officer with responsibility for Siamese affairs, suspected that even with a British successor, 'the post of Financial Adviser will be abolished and that Mr Baxter's successor will be merely an adviser in technical matters to the Minister of Finance without any voice in the determination of financial policy'.[20] Nevertheless, Baxter could not be dissuaded from immediate resignation. British embarrassment was increased by the knowledge that Burma made 'no effort whatsoever' to control the flow of opium from the Shan States into Siam. Even as Crosby attempted to repair the damage inflicted by Baxter's 'very nasty' letters of resignation, Baxter caused further embarrassment. Subsequent to his departure, he published an open letter in the *Straits Times* on 5 October 1935 amounting, in Crosby's opinion, to nothing less than 'an incitement to the staging of a coup d'etat against the present government'. The contents were unambiguous:

> My prayer is that the respectable elements in the (Siamese) Government under the leadership of that Minister on whom hopes are centred will, at no distant date, succeed in replacing the existing chaos and corruption by an orderly and reputable administration ... the Government at present is morally bankrupt.

Crosby commented that the unnamed 'Minister on whom hopes are centred' could only be Phibul with whom Baxter had worked closely. All copies of the offending edition of the *Straits Times* were impounded in Siam. This behaviour further undermined hopes of a British successor to Baxter.[21]

It was fortunate for British interests that Pridi, the Interior Minister, had already been dispatched to Europe in search of a replacement for Baxter and was not directly confronted with Baxter's open letter. Meanwhile, in London the matter was viewed as of such importance that Charles Orde, Head of the Far Eastern Department, requested the intervention of Sir Samuel Hoare, the Foreign Secretary. On 25 November 1935, Pridi held a long conversation with Hoare and was persuaded to recommend a British replacement for Baxter to the Siamese Government.[22] Siam's ready acceptance of a new British Financial Adviser can be explained in terms of credit. In common with other states where British influence

remained strong, such as Iraq, the Siamese Government continued to be dependent upon the City of London for loans.[23] This was illustrated by a further conversation on 3 December 1935 between Sri Sena, the Foreign Minister, and Crosby, concerning a previous request to convert a large British loan made in 1924 from a rate of 6 per cent to 4 per cent.[24] In assenting, Crosby emphasized the linkage between credit from London and the prospect of 'stable' government finance. This enabled Crosby to extract two verbal undertakings, firstly, to continue to employ a British Financial Adviser and, secondly, to avoid inflationary policies.[25] The nature of the relationship between credit and British financial influence was further illustrated by the Siamese Minister in Tokyo who complained that

> the Siamese were somewhat annoyed with the British over the actions of the last few years of the British financial adviser to Siam, who holds his position under the provisions of Great Britain's loan agreements with that country. There is apparently a feeling among Siamese that the British adviser has been negligent towards the welfare of Siam and has abused his position to promote British interests.[26]

Therefore, while credit remained an effective lever of British influence, increasingly it served also as a focus of nationalist resentment.

Although it concerns a different field, it is worth comparing the Baxter episode with the case of Raymond B. Stevens, the American Foreign Affairs Adviser, who also departed Siam in a state of discontent in 1935, albeit with less melodrama. Stevens had found himself increasingly eclipsed by a parallel Siamese Foreign Affairs Adviser, Prince Wan, appointed for that purpose, and thus felt his position had become untenable. On his departure, the American Legation secured a successor but were unable to apply coercive pressure to prevent a reduction in the importance of the post. Stevens's successor, Frederic B. Dolbeare, thus found himself in a post which carried diminished influence.[27]

In contrast, and largely because of the question of credit, the Bank of England alone had remained relatively confident of an influential British successor to Baxter, and therefore selected William Doll, who had recently served in Brazil for both the Board of Trade and for Vickers Armstrong Limited. 'His appointment', noted one official, 'is mainly due to Sir Otto Niemeyer [the Financial Controller of the Bank of England] who thinks well of him.'[28] The interlude between Baxter's abrupt departure and the arrival of William Doll was not wholly unwelcome to Crosby.

When Doll finally arrived in Bangkok in the Summer of 1936, he was somewhat dependent upon Crosby to find his feet. This allowed Crosby more than a year to raise the profile of political, as opposed to financial, criteria within British policy. This process was assisted by both the acceleration of Siamese political nationalism and the deteriorating international situation. It was during this period that Crosby elaborated his 'concession' strategy towards Siamese nationalism.

In common with his predecessor, Doll pursued a conservative financial policy guided by the Bank of England, but without the support of Phibul, Minister of Defence, and the military. By the Summer of 1936 the rate of acceleration in military spending had rendered Baxter's policy of alignment with Phibul untenable. Instead, Doll had to rely upon a strong Minister of Finance who attempted to follow the 'constant application of the principle of equation of expenditure to revenue'.[29] Like Baxter and Hall-Patch before him, Doll quickly discovered that his influence expanded in inverse relation to the health of the economy. Only fear of impending fiscal collapse ensured firm discipline and accordingly, by early 1938, with exports and Government revenues increasing at a healthy rate, Doll hankered after 'a spell of real economic adversity' to curb both the extravagant tastes of the Ministry of Defence and the public works programme.[30] Pridi's appointment as Foreign Minister in 1936, despite his wish to become Finance Minister, further underlined Phibul's ascendancy on financial questions.[31]

Doll also followed Baxter in opposing nationalist plans for a Central Bank insisting that this would be a potential inflationary instrument in the hands of radical ministers. However, Doll was also following a general policy developed by the Governor of the Bank of England, Sir Montagu Norman, to resist at all costs the advent of central banks in underdeveloped states and British colonial territories.[32] Furthermore, in Siam the development of a Central Bank and its associated technical skills could only serve to undermine the position of the Financial Adviser. Consequently, in 1936, Norman rejected a request that two personnel from the Siamese Finance Ministry be sent for training at the Bank of England.[33]

The preservation of the position of senior advisers was also central to British strategy during the revision of the Anglo-Siamese commercial treaty which, in common with Siam's treaties with other powers, was due to expire in 1936. Some provisions of these

unequal treaties had been abandoned during the mid-1920s, but other rights, notably clauses forbidding Siamese Government monopolies and those relating to tariffs, had been guaranteed until 1936. Although the abolition of these treaties had been negotiated in the mid-1920s, most powers insisted that their provisions should continue for ten years. Notwithstanding the monopoly provision, the consensus among British diplomats and advisers in Bangkok was that such provisions were of limited value and served as an irritant to nationalist feeling. Instead, they emphasized conservation of the system of advisers.[34] During 1936, Crosby presented these arguments to his superiors in London prior to the opening of negotiations for a new treaty.[35] He also emphasized that 1937 was a crucial election year in Siam and therefore the Government could not afford to seek anything but complete reciprocity in the new treaties. Furthermore, Pridi had assured Crosby that Siam would approach Britain first, expecting liberal treatment from a close friend, and offering Britain the kudos of an early concession.[36] Crosby added:

> ... we shall have much to gain and nothing very material to lose.... Should we be reluctant to do so, Japan (and doubtless other Powers as well) will be only too glad to step in and rob us of that 'kudos' for being the first to adopt an accommodating attitude towards the Siamese which the latter intend to afford us the opportunity of acquiring.

Partly because Japan had predicted to the Siamese an unyielding British attitude, London accepted Crosby's arguments.[37] Meanwhile, unbeknown to Crosby, Pridi was advancing precisely the same inducement of 'first place' to American diplomats, adding that he wished to use their precedent against 'less disinterested countries' such as Britain and France.[38]

In early 1937, having adopted a strategy of generous concession, British diplomats were aghast to learn that other European states were intent on employing Britain as a focus for a united front to resist treaty revision. No sooner had Orde rejected an approach by senior French diplomats in London, when Crosby learnt that the Italians and the Dutch were also seeking a British-led united front.[39] Subsequently, Orde's French counterpart was refused permission to visit London to discuss joint tactics *en route* to negotiations in Bangkok.[40] Even the Danes and the Norwegians wished to act in concert with the British in an attempt to obstruct the Siamese.[41] At the same time British diplomats recognized that if their strategy of concession became publicly known 'our

merchants and other nationals in Siam will never forgive us'.[42] They also met opposition from other departments in Whitehall.[43] Ormsby Gore at the Colonial Office feared that concessions might interfere with trade between Siam and Malaya.[44] The Admiralty and the Board of Trade were implacable, the former seeking to retain rights to a coaling station at Bangkok, while the latter supported local British interests in Bangkok in their hope of retaining the right to buy land in Siam.[45] Although the Far Eastern Department ridiculed such views as 'wildly optimistic', it was only with difficulty that they won over their own Under-Secretary of State, Anthony Eden.[46]

Orde's Far Eastern Department were not mere acolytes of Crosby's philosophy of concession. In reality, through consultation with the American State Department, which saw the unequal treaties as protecting their oil interests, they developed their own sophisticated strategy. Their approach combined public concession with private resilience.[47] Bitter experience with international commodity restriction agreements had identified popular Siamese nationalism, expressed in the Assembly and the press, as an insuperable obstacle. Therefore, Orde advocated a wholly reciprocal revised Anglo-Siamese treaty for the Siamese Assembly, but supplemented by private understandings supported by informal diplomatic notes, protecting the posts of British advisers. Such understandings would be privy to the Siamese Cabinet only. The State Department adopted the same approach over oil. Therefore, British and American diplomats sought to replace overt unequal treaties, which served as a focus for nationalist discontent, with covert agreements preserving selective but important interests.

Accordingly, a fully reciprocal Anglo-Siamese Treaty of Trade and Navigation was signed in November 1937 and approved without reservation by the Assembly. But, as Orde's strategy also required, secret notes were simultaneously exchanged guaranteeing the position of British advisers. This was not quite the strategy of generosity originally advocated by Crosby and he supported Siamese complaints that, in the light of previous verbal assurances on the subject of advisers, demands for written assurances implied a lack of trust. But Orde's Department noted mischievously: 'We don't trust the Siamese very far and we *are* gratuitously asking for assurances from them.'[48]

The contention underlying Western strategy during the treaty revision of 1937, that it was impotent in the face of popular nationalism, as expressed in the Assembly and the vernacular press,

was confirmed by the question of tin restriction. Siam's restriction agreement with the International Tin Committee (ITC), representing the major tin producing countries, was due to expire on 1 January 1937. Pridi had already outlined Siam's position during 1935 at an informal meeting with Sir John Campbell, a Colonial Office official and Chairman of the ITC.[49] Crosby noted that Siam alone refused to sign the international tin producer agreement, seeking to increase her quota for the production of tin ore from 9,800 tons to 'the exorbitant figure' of 25,000 tons.[50] Therefore, at a meeting of the leading tin producers at The Hague during March 1936, debate centred upon the possibility of coercing Siam into signing the producer agreement without an increased quota. Campbell reported that the Dutch and the Bolivians were willing to try and scare Siam into accepting 'reasonable terms' by the desperate tactic of temporarily breaking the tin restriction scheme and allowing tin prices to plummet. Writing to Shenton Thomas, Governor of Singapore, he explained the inherent dangers of this tactic: 'The price would drop like a stone; and delay in renewing the scheme would mean a heavy loss to all concerned.' He added, 'If we could not renew, without a fresh dog-fight between the four signatory countries, we might never be able to renew at all.'[51] Campbell's clear understanding of the nature of the political obstacles in Siam, albeit pejoratively expressed, reinforced his scepticism:

> The essential difficulty is that there is no 'Government' in Siam; there is no-one powerful enough . . . to pledge the Government to the necessary action; and to see that it passes the Assembly. . . . The crux of the whole thing is the weakness of the Government, and the appalling ignorance—and intensely nationalistic feeling of the People's Assembly. I don't see that we can do anything. . . .

Moreover, unlike other signatories, tin formed only a small proportion of Siam's national income. This matter was a nationalist issue, of limited economic importance to Siam. Therefore, Campbell recommended that if Siam refused to accept a low quota, the restriction scheme should be abandoned, rather than give in to 'blackmail'.[52]

British officials in South-East Asia deliberately attempted to thwart the Colonial Office, Campbell, and the ITC. Both Shenton Thomas at Singapore and Crosby wished to see the ITC grant Siam a greatly inflated quota. Worse still, the Siamese were aware of this division of British opinion. There were four reasons for

such regional dissent. Firstly, Crosby and Shenton Thomas shared Campbell's doubts about the possibility of coercing the Assembly. Thomas, articulating a typically Malayan 'colonialist' view of Siam, warned the advocates of this course that

> you are gambling on the possibility of frightening Siam . . . there is a very definite possibility that you will fail. . . . It has to be remembered that the Assembly has to be persuaded as well as the Government, and the mental capacity of many members of the Assembly is said to be low indeed. . . . [Siam] is neither sensible nor reasonable: she is a young small country, and has the obstinacy of an inferiority complex. One cannot expect from her what one would expect from negotiations with highly organised European nations. . . . We should all be unfairly treated vis-à-vis Siam but half a loaf is better than none.[53]

Secondly, British and Australian tin companies in Siam, which stood to benefit from increased quotas, had gone out of their way to acquaint Siam with the weakness of the ITC position. Thirdly, Crosby, emphasizing political rather than economic criteria, sought to assuage nationalist feeling. Fourthly, the Malayan Government had its own grievances against tin restriction and furthermore recognized that Malaya enjoyed a near monopoly on the smelting and re-export of Siamese tin.[54] Some officials in Malaya were even prepared to grant Siam an unlimited quota.[55]

During July 1936, an ITC deputation was dispatched to Siam in an attempt to reduce Siamese demands by threatening to break the scheme. Campbell rightly suspected both Crosby and Shenton Thomas of favouring regional rather than general British interests, adding that he 'had grave doubts' as to Crosby's 'fitness for his task of negotiating with Siam . . . that being one of the reasons I felt we should have our own deputation there'.[56] The Assembly, as Crosby had predicted, refused to give in to the ITC deputation. This failure provoked an outburst from the Colonial Office which underlined how divergent British diplomatic and colonial policies had become. They insisted that Crosby 'has unquestionably acted—and acted strongly—against British interests'. They continued, 'Sir Josiah Crosby has been doing everything he could to encourage, at Bangkok, Siamese resistance to legitimate measures by the International Tin Committee. . . . Sir Josiah Crosby did us badly.' Subsequently, the Colonial Office attempted unsuccessfully to have Crosby removed from his post.[57] No one had foreseen that by 1938 all previous restriction figures would become meaningless in the wake of rearmament, generating a

huge demand for tin.[58] Nevertheless, the tin issue serves to underline the difference between private influence in the Siamese Cabinet and public impotence when faced with the Assembly. Accordingly, British firms encountered no difficulty in July 1938 when renegotiating teak leases, for this was a matter handled privately by the Siamese Government.[59]

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of British policy during the mid-1930s was the successful co-operation with the American State Department in stalling proposed Siamese oil monopoly legislation. Anglo-American efforts sought to protect their own near monopoly of oil marketing in Siam, operated by two American companies, the Standard Oil Company and the Socony Vacuum Oil Company, in co-operation with the Anglo-Dutch combine, Royal Dutch-Shell Limited, and their local subsidiary, Asiatic Petroleum Limited. In 1933 Standard and Socony Vacuum had joined together to produce, refine, and market their products in Asia through a company known as the Standard-Vacuum Oil Company or 'Stanvac'. Together with Royal Dutch-Shell, they managed the oil output of the Netherlands East Indies and dominated distribution in Siam. Although rumours of a Siamese Government monopoly had been circulating since 1934, action appeared more likely after 1936 because of the expiry of Siam's unequal treaties which forbade such monopolies.[60]

The significance of Anglo-American co-operation over oil and the related question of treaty revision in Siam was threefold. Firstly, although limited American influence had been present in Siam throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, largely in the form of Foreign Affairs Advisers or missionary work, the State Department had hitherto paid limited interest to Siam. But after 1935, due to oil, Siam regularly held the attention of such senior figures as Hull, the Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, the Under-Secretary of State, and Hornbeck, Senior Political Adviser on Far Eastern Affairs. Accordingly, the first coherent high-level American policies towards Siam recalled recent unpleasant confrontations over oil with Spain, Italy, and Japan. Furthermore, Siam's dependence on Tokyo for oil technology led to exaggerated American impressions of Japanese influence in Bangkok. The resulting American policy was not only hostile, it was also ironic. Francis B. Sayre, an ex-American Foreign Affairs Adviser to Siam, fêted for negotiating termination dates for Siam's unequal treaties during the 1920s, was now serving in the State Department. Here, as these same unequal treaties approached their expiry date, his unrivalled technical knowledge was deployed to retard his own

achievements of the previous decade, by attempting to prolong the life of treaty clauses protecting American landownership and oil interests in Siam.[61]

Secondly, in the context of Britain's commercial interests in Siam, Anglo-American co-operation over oil marked a welcome respite, for as late as 1936, the dollar was perceived as the primary threat to Britain's position. Thirdly, and most importantly, at a general level the abrasive nature of American oil policy sat uneasily beside Crosby's hopes of accommodating Siamese nationalism. Increasingly, Britain's diplomats emphasized strategic and political co-operation rather than economic conflict with Siam. Paradoxically, therefore, despite Anglo-American success over oil, the underlying objectives of British and American policies were already diverging, thereby pointing to future trouble.

Although Shell's subsidiary, Asiatic Petroleum, had warned repeatedly of a Siamese monopoly as early as the Summer of 1934, and again in 1935, developments had been painfully slow.[62] Only in April 1936 did the Head of the Fuel Department within the Siamese Ministry of Defence, Vanich [Wanit] Pananond, reveal plans for a small refinery plant outside Bangkok, and there was no reference to monopoly.[63] During a subsequent conversation with Pridi and Prince Wan on 19 October 1936, Crosby extracted an assurance that there would be no government monopoly legislation and no government oil marketing organization.[64] But such promises were contradicted by documents covertly obtained from Vanich's Department by Asiatic Petroleum. These suggested that sooner or later a *de facto* monopoly would be imposed through an obligation for companies to maintain massive stocks in Siam.[65]

The driving force behind Anglo-American oil policies in Siam was paranoia generated by the oil companies, on the basis of correspondence between Vanich and Japanese naval officers, obtained by informants.[66] In April 1937 the oil companies considered that they had obtained a copy of draft monopoly legislation from the Siamese Ministry of Defence, which they circulated to the State Department and the Foreign Office. Asiatic Petroleum went so far as to claim that this legislation had already been passed during a secret session in the Assembly. Standard Oil and Asiatic Petroleum took dramatic precautions, moving confidential records from Bangkok to Singapore in case of 'a raid' by the Siamese Government.[67]

On 20 April 1937, as a result of these alarms, officials from the American Embassy in London requested discussions with the Far

Eastern Department regarding joint action to forestall a Siamese monopoly. However, Whitehall departments were divided, delaying a meeting until mid-May when an anxious Cordell Hull pressed urgently for an answer.[68] Asiatic Petroleum and its advocate in Whitehall, the Petroleum Department of the Ministry of Fuel and Power, pressed for a severe warning followed by an Anglo-American oil boycott of Siam. This was the same robust Anglo-American policy previously employed against Spain, Italy, and Japan. The Far Eastern Department questioned American support, but Starling, Head of the Petroleum Department, insisted that 'the Americans will back us . . . due to the stout work which Asiatic Petroleum had done to keep their American friends in line'.[69] British officials were still divided when they met their American counterparts on 1 June 1937. The Far Eastern Department, like Crosby, insisted that the oil companies held an 'exaggerated idea of what we can do against a sovereign country', since Britain increasingly postured as the champion of the rights of small nations in Europe.[70]

The outcome was an agreement to deliver separate but parallel protests, meanwhile hinting strongly at an Anglo-American boycott of supplies of crude oil to Siam. As in other Anglo-American matters, Hull insisted on a 'concurrent rather than a joint approach'.[71] Crosby also urged restraint in a parallel conversation with Chapman of the American Legation on 17 May 1937. Siam's expanding income from rice exports, he argued, had diminished even the power of the time-honoured British threat to withdraw credit. Given the intensity of nationalist feeling in the Assembly, he continued, only 'a show of force' would halt the oil legislation and this was 'unthinkable'. However, Chapman suspected that Crosby advocated restraint for wider political reasons and noted that Britain could, if she wished, threaten to raise Malayan tariffs on Siamese rice.[72] Subsequently, American diplomats extracted 'categorical denials' of a monopoly from Pridi, but suspected that Pridi knew little of policy within Phibul's Ministry of Defence. During a conversation with Chapman on 22 June 1937, Pridi explained that the oil refinery was being constructed with a view to straightforward competition, adding that 'he knew absolutely nothing about the projected oil control law'. He insisted that such rumours were circulated with 'malicious intent' by the oil companies. Anticipating the future Anglo-American tactics, he argued that a Siamese oil monopoly would be difficult because the 'world's supply is controlled by a consortium', and crude oil would therefore be hard to obtain.[73]

1 A government aircraft is launched against the rebels during the Bovaradet rebellion of 1933. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. 306-NT-1214-1)

2 A Vickers 6-ton tank patrols the streets of Bangkok during the Bovaradet rebellion of 1933. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. 306-NT-1214-3)

3 King Prajadhipok examines American technology during his tour of the United States in 1931. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. 306-NT-1215A-5)

4 King Prajadhipok tours Germany in 1934. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. 306-NT-1215-6)

5 Pridi Banomyong. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. RG 226 P-1965)

6 Luang Phibul Songkram. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. RG 226 P-112570)

7 Prince Aditya Didd-abha. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. RG 226 P-1732)

8 Prince Wan Waityakorn Voravan. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. RG 226 P-96994)

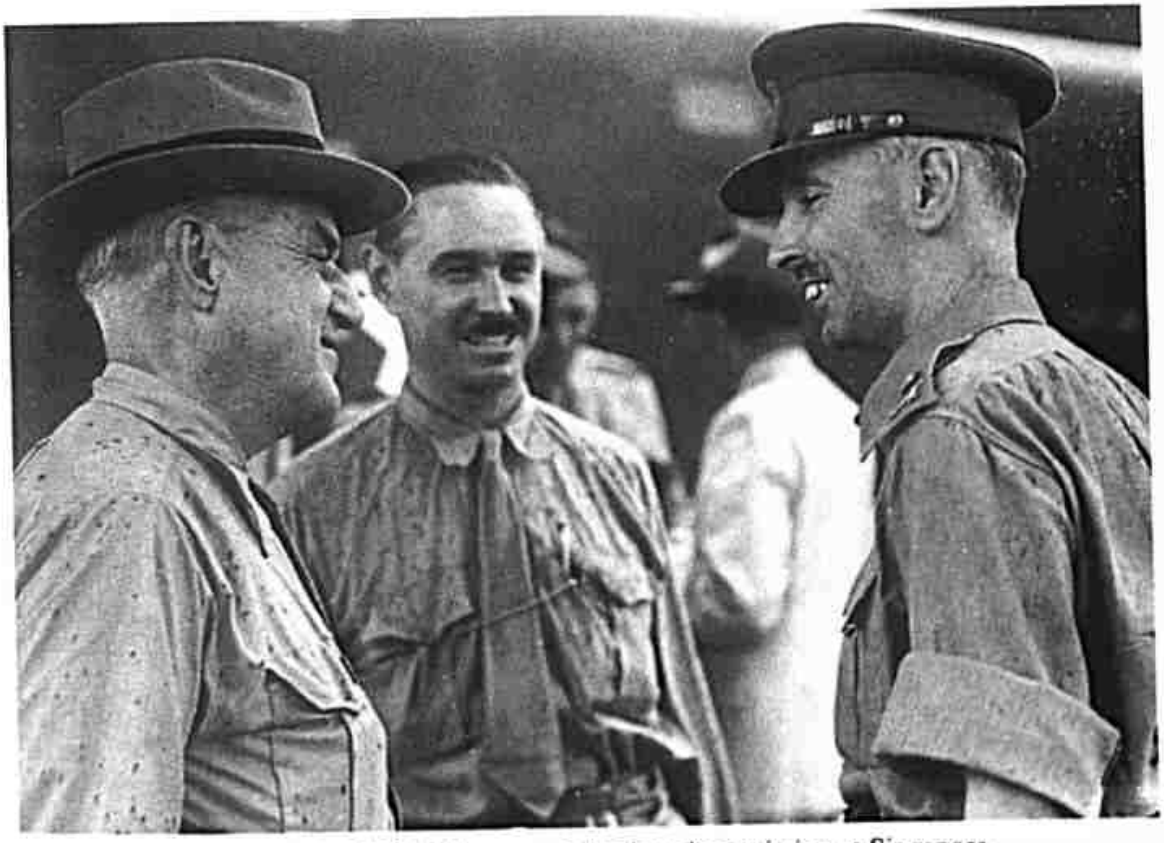
9 Vanich Pananond. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. RG 226 P-8416)

10 Prayoon Pamornmontri. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. RG 226 P-8416)

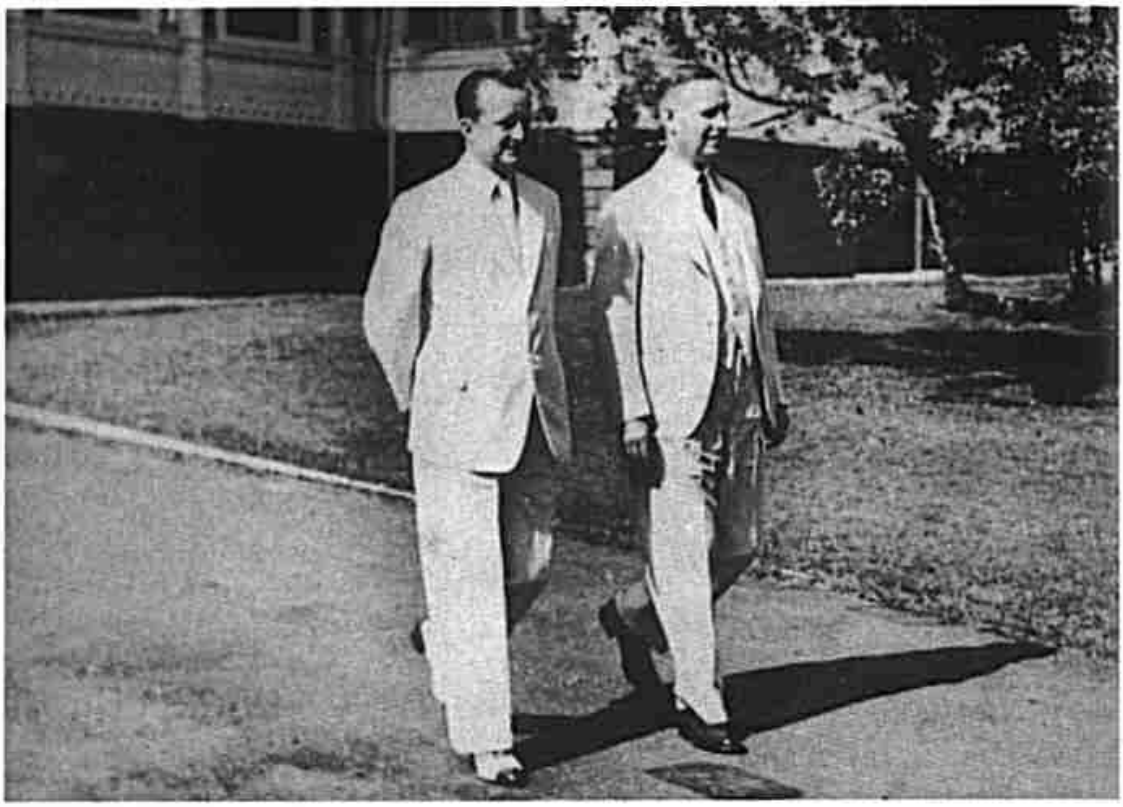
11 Luang Vichit Vadhakarn. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. RG 226 P-112572)

12 Direk Chaiyanam. (Courtesy National Archives, photo no. RG 226 P-10165)

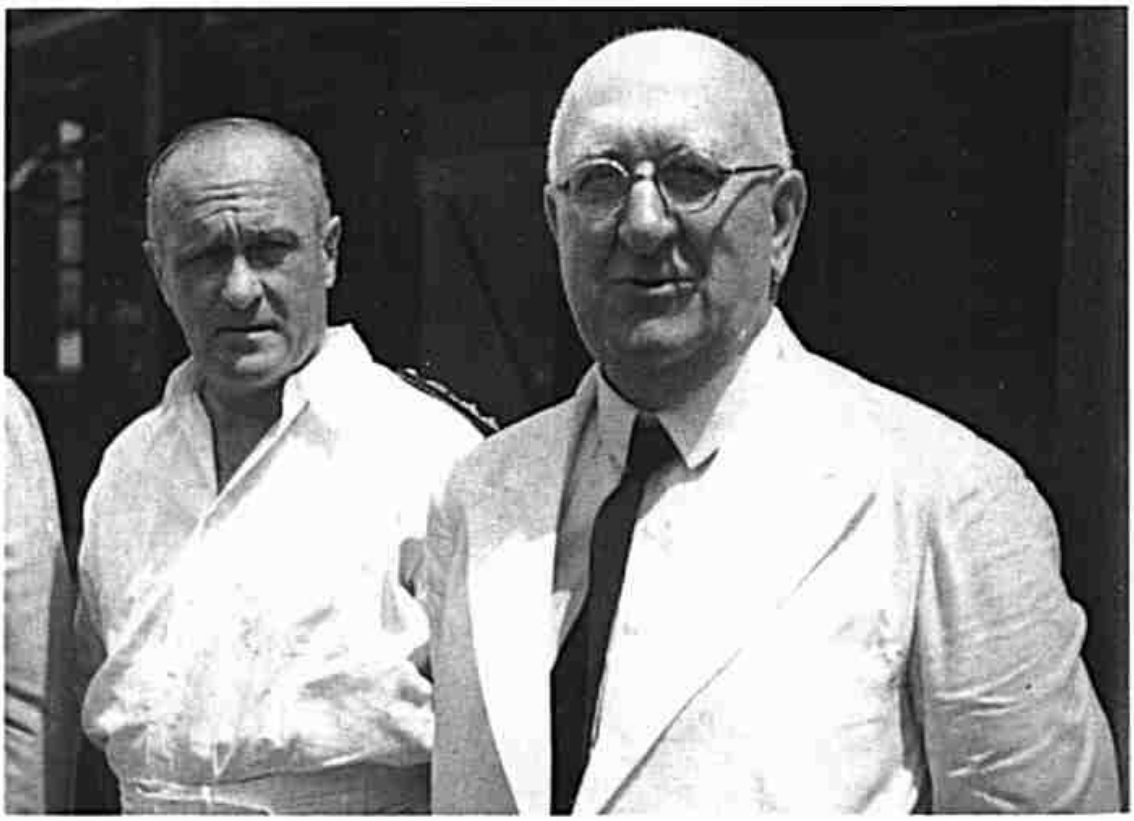
13 An American military mission, ostentatiously displaying the Stars and Stripes, arrives at Singapore in 1941. (The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London)



14 Lt.-Gen. Arthur Percival, GOC Malaya, greets the American mission at Singapore. (The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London)



15 Sir Shenton Thomas, the failed arbitrator (*right*), talks with Duff Cooper in 1941. (The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London)



16 Sir Josiah Crosby attends a conference at Singapore in 1941. To the left is Admiral Layton, C-in-C East Indies Fleet. (The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London)

17 Air Vice-Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham and his staff during a planning session at Singapore in 1941. (The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London)

18 British reinforcements exercise on the Thai–Malaya border in November 1941. (The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London)

19 One of the last photographs to be taken of the HMS *Prince of Wales*, December 1941. (The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London)

20 Vehicles are pushed into Singapore harbour prior to the surrender to Japan in 1942. (The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London)

The pressure from the oil companies grew during early 1938 after Vanich remarked that Japan was to construct a new refinery near Bangkok, and that therefore the Western companies were 'finished' in Siam.[74] This appeared to be confirmed by further examples of Vanich's private correspondence, obtained by what American diplomats described as 'some form of skulduggery unknown'.[75] This concerned supplies of crude from Japan and from small American companies.[76] Nevertheless, during June 1938 the Far Eastern Department continued to oppose demands from the Petroleum Department for strong action.[77] Pridi continued to disavow any knowledge of plans to monopolize oil but Western diplomats dared not refute him with documents 'procured clandestinely' from within the Siamese Ministry of Defence.[78] Meanwhile, Asiatic Petroleum were badly out of touch with the political climate in Siam. During September 1938, Asiatic's General Manager at Singapore, E. N. C. Woolerton, revealed to Crosby their intention to try to buy or lease any future Siamese refinery. Crosby was aghast at such *naïveté*; it was, he said

> inconceivable that the Siamese should entertain such an offer. The tendency here nowadays was all in the direction of economic nationalism, and I could not imagine the Government daring to face an accusation in the People's Assembly that no sooner had they expended a large sum of money upon a refinery than they shewed the white feather and handed the installation over to foreign interests.

Crosby warned Woolerton that the tide of nationalism was irresistible and urged him 'to swim with the current rather than against it'. Accordingly, they should defend their position by co-operating in running a new Siamese refinery, and above all by 'offering advisers at a reasonable rate'. Ironically, almost two decades later, Crosby's solution to the awkward refinery problem would be implemented almost to the letter. However, in 1938, Asiatic Petroleum were unimpressed and clung to the die-hard concept of all or nothing.[79]

By December 1938, Anglo-American oil policies in Siam could claim some success. Nearly five years had passed since the first rumours of oil monopoly legislation. Diplomacy and veiled threats of a boycott, although anticipated by Siam, appeared to have resulted in hesitation. The American Minister, Edward Neville, was still pressing for more details in February 1939.[80] More importantly, British and American oil companies had helped to align American policy in support of British interests in an area of

perceived imperial dominance, while in the minds of policy-makers in Washington, Siam was closely associated with Japan.

Oil interests constituted one of two important factors that triggered a sea change in American policy towards Siam during the mid-1930s. The second factor was the appointment of the pro-monarchist Francis B. Sayre to a high position in the State Department. This contributed to an attitude of increasing suspicion and hostility in Washington. In stark contrast, American diplomats in Bangkok pleaded for a sympathetic approach to the new Siamese regime. Typically, in May 1936, James Baker, the American Minister, praised the achievements of the Phahol Government:

> Siam is progressing in many ways. The new Constitutional Government under the able leadership of Premier Phahol ... has instituted many reforms, established law and order, reduced crime, reorganised the judiciary and increased educational facilities. They are constructing a system of highways, are strengthening their army and navy and have a balanced budget. The internal improvements in Bangkok have increased in the last three years and the people seem happy and content under the new government.

Yet Baker, and his successor, Neville, encountered even greater obstacles than their British colleagues in attempting to persuade Washington to take a sympathetic view of economic nationalism. Instead, as underlined by the case of treaty revision, Washington now took an increasingly hard line.[81]

Siam's attempts at treaty revision with the United States are replete with irony. As early as 1933 Siam had approached Washington with a request to negotiate new commercial agreements to replace those that were shortly due to expire as a result of Sayre's efforts on Siam's behalf in the 1920s. Siam was especially anxious to dispense with the clauses forbidding new Government monopolies and approached the United States with the hope of achieving a model agreement which could be used to apply moral pressure to the other powers. However, internal upheavals in Bangkok repeatedly interrupted the negotiations to Washington's great irritation.

When Siam tried to resume negotiations in March 1935, Siam was told that the recent abdication of the King, combined with perceived Japanese influence on the question of oil, had rendered Washington unenthusiastic.[82] When talks recommenced later that year, Siam found Sayre presiding for the State Department against the background of Hull's alarm over oil. Remarkably, Sayre was

required to pursue the exact reverse of the task he had undertaken for Siam in the 1920s when he had negotiated the end of the unequal treaty system, albeit with an agreed ten-year delay. His role was now to reinforce and prolong those sections of the treaties that prevented damage to American oil interests in Siam. Given the extent of Anglo-American co-operation over oil marketing in Siam and elsewhere during the 1930s it is not surprising that Sayre eventually adopted the same discreet approach taken by London, namely an overtly reciprocal and apparently even-handed treaty accompanied by an exchange of secret notes.[83]

Sayre's defence of aspects of the unequal treaties by means of a British imperial formula was curious in two senses. Firstly, in his own published accounts Sayre pointed to the ending of the unequal treaties as the pinnacle of his work for Siam. It is amusing to note that the autobiographical myth of the benevolent Sayre is so powerful that some historians insist, quite erroneously, that in the 1930s he continued to take Siam's part. Secondly, Sayre's attitude contradicted recent American policy on the tin-smelter question of 1933. In December 1935, Pridi, who was visiting Washington to expedite the negotiations, pointedly recalled the episode in which American diplomats and businessmen had supported a Siamese–American smelting monopoly. They had railed against Britain for deploying the anti-monopoly clauses in the commercial treaties to prevent this. But now, Pridi remarked, the United States appeared to be on the other side of the fence, defending these clauses. Sayre was embarrassed and 'refrained from making any reply on the matter'. Satisfactory treaties were only agreed after a further two years of negotiations whereupon they were accompanied by private letters that assured Washington that if the anti-monopoly clauses were abolished, American interests would not suffer. Thus the 1937 treaty achieved only an outward show of reciprocity.[84]

Throughout the protracted treaty negotiations, Sayre had even attempted to persuade Siam to abandon hopes of an equal treaty altogether and to accept a treaty which would grant landownership rights to Americans in Siam without reciprocity. This was because some individual American states had passed legislation forbidding landownership by Asiatics. Sayre only gave way on this point reluctantly and under pressure from Edward Neville in Bangkok. In December 1937, exactly a month after the conclusion of the new commercial treaty, Sayre offered a clear indication of his attitude towards the new regime. Writing to Prince Damrong, the

brother of King Prajadhipok, who was in exile at Penang, he lamented, 'I too regret the many changes that have come. I can understand how you too have suffered. Both of us loved the old Siam.'[85]

But while those in London and Washington concerned with economic policies welcomed a hard line against Siam, Crosby and Neville were not among them. Superficially, the objections of British and American diplomats in Bangkok to threats were those of practicality. Siam's improved financial position had strengthened its Cabinet, while the Assembly appeared impervious to reason. But fundamentally, as the following sections will show, these diplomats and Crosby in particular were seeking a complete shift in the emphasis of Western policies. Ignoring commercial interest, Crosby set his objectives in the context of Siam's political and strategic value within a deteriorating international situation in Europe and the Far East. Crosby feared that an oil boycott, as well as being ineffective, would inflame nationalist feeling, throwing Siam into the arms of Japan. It was this strategic rationale that spurred Crosby to plead for 'a special degree of circumspection' over oil, arguing the importance of retaining Siam's goodwill 'on broad imperial grounds'.[86]

## *Militarism, Irredentism, and Mass Nationalism*

Although in retrospect Crosby's strategy of conceding to the pressures of Siamese nationalism appears prescient, it must also be emphasized that this policy was largely reactive. Crosby's arrival in Siam coincided with the rapid acceleration of a number of separate but related trends in Siamese nationalism which mirrored the gathering pace of international events. Dismissing his predecessor's suggestion that nationalism was merely a 'phase' through which Siam was passing, Crosby set about identifying separate strands within Siamese nationalism which offered either opportunities for accommodation or threats to the West's position. Crosby's principal concerns were Phibul's increasingly militarist faction and a pro-Japanese or Pan-Asianist clique associated with the Navy. As yet, Crosby paid only limited attention to the strong irredentist sentiment among many junior officers, but feared the transfer of these sentiments to a wider audience. Meanwhile, Crosby was engaged in a search for moderate élite nationalists who might embrace an equal partnership with the West. Phibul's

strident militarism, consciously modelled on Italy and Germany, now operated to Crosby's advantage for he had little difficulty in persuading the Far Eastern Department to transfer its sympathies to Pridi. The latter, serving as Foreign Minister from early 1936, continued his shift towards the centre and found his liberal ideals increasingly fêted by the West.

Although Crosby's primary concern was the growth of Phibul's militarist faction, this did not represent a wholly new theme within Siamese politics. In the 1920s King Vajiravudh had formed the élite 'Wild Tigers Corps' as an expression of nationalist sentiment. Prince Bovaradet, the Minister of Defence under Prajadhipok, had also looked to militarism and the Promoters were themselves mostly military officers, therefore raising the profile of the armed forces in national life. Nevertheless, Phibul sought to accentuate this trend. On 14 November 1934, Phibul announced that the Army would regularly display tanks and machine guns at Siamese schools in order to popularize militarism with the students.[87] This continued during 1936 with the formation of a Yuvachon or Youth Corps to institute military training for boys of school age. After 1937 the Yuvachon was administered by Colonel Prayoon Pamornmontri who had recently returned from Germany. Phibul, one newspaper later observed, 'in his military uniform, with shining leather leggings, which he wears continually . . . epitomises the importance of the Army in the new Siam'.[88]

Phibul's growing emphasis on militarism sought to address both internal and external problems. Internally, Crosby noted that his only rival within the Army, the widely respected Phya Song Suradet, was intimidated because Phibul monopolized favour in the mechanized sections of the Army with 'the tanks and machine guns'.[89] Song opted for semi-retirement, maintaining a mysterious seclusion to the north at Chieng Mai. Reflecting on the year 1936, the British Legation noted:

> From the political point of view the outstanding feature of the last year has been the further rise to power of the military party, which is now so much in the ascendant that it is able to impose its will upon the Cabinet in virtually all matters in which the Ministry of Defence is interested . . . about one quarter of the national revenue is now being allotted to it . . . to say nothing of the special grants . . . to gratify their fanatical desire for the ever fresh acquisition of armaments from abroad.

Notwithstanding the healthy state of the Siamese economy, Bank of England officials gradually joined Crosby in identifying Phibul as the enemy of political and financial stability. Pridi now appeared attractive by comparison and they concluded that 'the greater danger which threatens the new Siam of today comes from the inordinate aspirations of ... the military clique'.[90] American diplomats were equally disturbed.[91] Meanwhile, Phahol, the Prime Minister, hovered ineffectually between the various factions seeking an appropriate moment to resign. As early as March 1935 some expected a *coup d'etat* by Phibul.[92]

Siamese militarism also enjoyed an external rationale, focusing upon the dramatic successes enjoyed by the European dictators in the Rhineland and in Abyssinia during 1936 and 1937.[93] Ba Maw, reflecting on the 1930s, has reminded us of the 'tremendous spell that Hitler and the Axis cast over the East generally. It was almost hypnotic. The Axis leaders were believed irresistible.' These sentiments were amplified in Bangkok by means of the elaborate Italian and German news services, which Britain made little attempt to counter until 1939.[94] On 2 June 1936 Crosby concluded that it was Mussolini's advance into Abyssinia that had prompted Phibul to make a particularly outspoken statement of his own political principles in a vernacular newspaper: 'If our undertakings are to prosper and we are to effect real results in our work, then it is essential that discipline be maintained; to be quite blunt, one must employ methods of dictatorship.'[95] Crosby interpreted this as 'a direct challenge' to the constitution of 1932, adding that this speech was generally viewed as an indication of his real aspirations and 'everybody is excited accordingly'.[96] Nevertheless, the personality of Phibul remained something of an enigma to Western diplomats.[97] In spite of the speeches, they noted repeatedly that Phibul was indecisive and 'does not strike observers as being endowed with the temperament of a successful dictator'.[98]

Phibul's declamation in favour of Mussolini's attack on Abyssinia provided Crosby further evidence to denigrate Phibul in the eyes of the Far Eastern Department in London, insisting it might be the militarists, not Pridi's faction, who were now 'the undesirables'.[99] Throughout 1936 Crosby continually sought to emphasize that 'the spiritual home' of Phibul was 'doubtless with Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini'.[100] Yet Phibul did not seize power and the military were content merely to infiltrate a greater number of senior positions. By 5 November 1936 Crosby reported that although Phahol remained Prime Minister, the military were now

'virtual masters of the country'.[101] The Far Eastern Department were slow to accept Crosby's unfavourable analyses of Phibul until confronted with the 'odious' broadcast made by him on 31 March 1937 in the context of an acrimonious Assembly debate over further military appropriations.[102] Phibul delivered a most uncompromising speech in favour of dictatorship and containing a pro-Axis interpretation of recent international events. Crosby was stunned; Phibul, he exclaimed, had 'overstepped the limits of propriety, of sense, almost of sanity'.[103] Phibul began by praising Hitler and Mussolini and emphasized the advance of national interest by the use of the 'mailed fist'. Pointing out that Japan spent a full 60 per cent of her budget upon armaments, he argued that Siam's expenditure, a mere 20 per cent, was too low. He added, 'If therefore, we do not wish to be like Abyssinia, there is only one course to follow—build up our military strength with great speed.'[104] Phibul continued:

> Once our military service is placed on a proper level, and acknowledged to be powerful by other countries, it will spell national progress, enabling us to advance forward more quickly, because no-one will dare to interfere with our nation in one direction or another, as things are at present. You must look at Germany as an example. . . . That country continued to decline militarily till the arrival of Herr Hitler's period. He it was who put his heart and soul into earnestly promoting military power. . . . At the time both big countries and small countries objected to Germany's action; but she paid no heed to it, and ultimately no country could subdue Germany.

Phibul related this specifically to 'the prohibition' put up against the Government proceeding to deal in oil and also to Siam's difficulties with foreign tariff barriers.[105] Meanwhile, the benefits of Siamese militarism, he claimed, were already visible 'in a small way'.[106]

American observers noted that the pro-Axis tone of Phibul's message was at variance with its content, for while admiring the style of Germany, Italy, and Japan, nevertheless his message remained both neutralist and fundamentally pessimistic.[107] Phibul ended with the prescient warning that

> various nations seem to be on the path to war. . . . Once operations commence in Europe, Japan may seize Hong Kong and Singapore. . . . Japan may seize Siam first and then advance down to the south to attack Singapore from the rear. Such might be accomplished with ease. . . . If England finds Siam to be a weak path, the British may come along to our assistance to preserve our country and to prevent it being seized by

Japan. The above illustrates that if we do not have enough *taharn* [military strength] to preserve our neutrality it would mean that our country may become the proper pathway for other countries to come to war with one another. For our part we shall be crushed by both parties.[108]

Therefore Phibul looked to militarism as an answer to the alarming questions posed by the increasingly volatile international climate.

Phibul's acerbic neutralism irritated the West and Japan equally. Orde found this outburst 'distressing', lamenting 'how "macht politik" has seized the imagination of the military in Siam, and what a free hand they enjoy'. Others believed that Phibul's 'idea is that with a sizeable fleet Siam will be courted by Japan and Great Britain as arbiter'.[109] In Tokyo, the Japanese Foreign Minister denounced Phibul's speech as 'unpardonable', prompting the Far Eastern Department to consider the unusual step of a joint *demarché* with Japan.[110] Yet while Crosby henceforth had very little difficulty in setting his superiors against the idea of a Phibul Government, British opinion was of less political significance than it had been in Siam during the early 1930s and growing revenues increasingly freed Siam from the Bank of England's censure.[111] The newly arrived Doll complained of 'arrivistes ... distended with the superfluity of their conceit and arrogance'.[112] When Phahol, the Prime Minister, announced his intention to resign before the forthcoming elections at the end of 1937, Crosby predicted that Phibul would replace him.[113] This, Crosby argued, would be a change of form rather than of substance, for

it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that there are two governments in Siam at this moment. On the one hand there is the Cabinet, which is nominally the supreme executive authority.... And, on the other hand, there are the military and naval leaders who are all powerful, because they have at their command the means of suppressing by physical force any opposition to their wishes. It is these people who really control the political situation.[114]

Yet against expectation, Pridi's position improved during 1937. In late July the entire Cabinet resigned over a dubious property transaction.[115] Phibul lost much face over this scandal, while Pridi had gained prestige from negotiating new treaties with the powers.[116] In the event, Phahol agreed to continue as Prime Minister while the structure of the Cabinet remained largely unchanged.[117] But despite gains made by Pridi's faction during the elections, the Far

Eastern Department were unimpressed, dismissing the Cabinet as 'an elegantly dressed window'.[118]

Throughout 1938 Western diplomats in both Bangkok and London continued to expect the emergence of a Phibul dictatorship, suspecting that Phibul might turn to Japan in the hope of recovering influence. Cabinet politics in Siam now reacted with rapidity to the international situation. Crosby noted:

> Fresh news from Europe of acts of aggression by Germany going unpunished, the constant flouting in public of the democratic principles by Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini following upon the chaotic state of affairs in France and, finally, the invasion of China by Japan—all these are things which . . . cannot fail to go to the heads of the advanced military party like wine.[119]

But during 1938 Phibul confounded these predictions, visiting the Assembly frequently and appearing a 'much more moderate and prudent statesman than he was before'. By December 1938 Crosby announced that he had 'improved greatly' and that Phibul might even serve to keep extremists in check, particularly Luang Sindhu, the pro-Japanese Chief of the Naval Staff. The Far Eastern Department announced, prematurely, that 'Luang Sindhu, rather than Luang Pibul [Phibul] has now become Britain's enemy No. 1'.[120] However, Phibul remained the natural successor to Phahol.[121] The most visible confirmation of this was the repeated assassination attempts reported to be visited upon him. On 11 November 1938 one of Phibul's butlers attempted to kill him with a pistol while he was dressing for a dinner.[122] On 11 December 1938 Phibul's cook attempted unsuccessfully to poison him, his wife, his children, and five others by lacing their food with strychnine. The Far Eastern Department was amused, noting drily that Phibul 'is having a thin time, and his servants seem thoroughly unreliable'.[123]

In contrast to the militarist faction in Cabinet, Western officials were less alarmed by irredentist ideas prevalent amongst junior officers.[124] Such groups appeared to be preoccupied with lost provinces in French Indo-China, populated with ethnic 'Thai', rather than with Malaya or Burma.[125] Nevertheless, in December 1935, Crosby joined his French colleague, Marcel Ray, in a *demarché* to secure the removal of a wreath from the base of King Chulalongkorn's statue in Bangkok adorned with an elaborate map of Siam's 'lost provinces' in Indo-China and Malaya.[126]

Crosby reassured his superiors by noting that even before the Revolution Prince Bovaradet had played with the idea of the old Siamese 'Empire'.[127] Moreover, he added, French Indo-China was its real target:

> As for France, the Siamese have never forgiven her for acquiring at various times so much of her former territory, consisting for the most part of regions inhabited by people of similar race, religion and language to their own. (There is less indignation felt over the cession to ourselves in 1909 of Kedah, Kelantan and Tringanu [Trengganu], for these were Malay States which had never been under more than the nominal suzerainty of the Siamese crown, and in which the Buddhist faith was not professed and the Siamese tongue was not spoken; they were in fact, virtually foreign countries).[128]

London agreed that frontier problems were largely a French preserve and contrasted the nature of British and French interests in Siam:

> We have, it is true, a common frontier with Siam, as have the French; but the Siamo-French frontier places under French sovereignty a considerable number of Thai, whereas the people of the Burmo-Siamese and Siamo-Malayan frontier regions are not themselves of Siamese race. The French have therefore to fear Siamese irredentism where we have not. On the other hand we have great commercial interests in Siam.[129]

Consequently, in the late 1930s, officials in Bangkok and London perceived irredentism as a problem for the French alone.

However, Western diplomats could not but be disquietened by the extent to which irredentists looked to Germany. Firstly, irredentists were acutely conscious of the parallels between their 'lost provinces' in French Indo-China inhabited by ethnic 'Thai' peoples, and German ambitions towards German areas of Europe, describing the 'lost provinces' as their 'Alsace-Lorraine'.[130] Secondly, Siamese and German nationalists emphasized race. This was underlined by a surge of irredentist propaganda during 1938, directed by Luang Vichit Vadhakarn [Wichit Wathakan], Director-General of the Department of Fine Arts.[131] During May 1938, Vichit, whom Crosby styled the 'Siamese Dr Goebbels', published articles describing the Anchluss in glowing terms and insisting that the road to peace was not through the League of Nations but through the unity of race, language, and culture.[132] In August Vichit gave a vitriolic speech at Chulalongkorn University comparing Siam's Chinese mercantile community to the Jews of Germany.[133]

Therefore, like Phibul, these irredentists looked partly to

Germany as a model and were stirred by opportunities they perceived in an increasingly volatile international situation. But although Phibul and some of the militarists in the Cabinet appeared to have shared many of their sentiments, there was a difference of emphasis. Phibul was preoccupied with the more pessimistic thought that Siam might be caught in a war between Britain and Japan. Conversely it was 'no secret' that the 'more aggressive sections' of the Army looked forward hopefully to France becoming embroiled in a European conflict and finding her hands in South-East Asia 'effectively tied'.[134]

British and American officials, unlike the French, were less concerned with irredentism *per se*, and more with the long-term transfer of these sentiments to the Thai masses, inside or outside Siam. Crosby noted:

> The French and ourselves may impart to the intelligentsia among our Thai *protégés* a training along occidental lines, but we cannot do the same for the great mass of them, to whom our civilisation is and must remain an alien one. These folk can, however, be reached by the Siamese, many of whom are growing race-conscious and are beginning to conceive that they have a mission to discharge towards their fellow Thai in other countries. In Europe the problem of racial and cultural *blocs* is a familiar one and is causing no end of trouble to the Great Powers. We shall do well to take note of another such *bloc*—the Thai *bloc*—in South-Eastern Asia, the members of which are either our close neighbours, or actually our *protégés*, and form ethnologically, religiously and linguistically a homogeneous whole.

Therefore, it was the dangers of *mass nationalism*, especially in 'Thai' areas beyond Siam that alarmed Western officials as much as the Hitlerian antics of the élite in Bangkok. They now feared that the increasing quantity of nationalist propaganda would serve as a transmission belt, inflaming popular feeling both inside and outside Siam.[135]

Conversely, while nationalism remained largely the preserve of the élite, Western officials could continue to look hopefully to 'sane and moderate' nationalists, such as Nai Sarit Charoenrath, a leading deputy in the Assembly. In late 1936, Sarit had written an article attacking Japan's New Order and its slogan, 'Asia for the Asiatics'. It was only a coincidence, he insisted, that Siam had undergone her national awakening 'at a moment when the storms of nationalism are everywhere raging'. 'Asia for the Asiatics', he continued, 'does not mean a closed door . . . [nor] Asia for Asiatics

alone.' His call for co-operation with the West on the basis of 'equality' and 'friendship' mirrored Crosby's strategy of concession and thus Sarit's article shone 'like a good deed in a naughty world'.[136] Therefore Crosby continued to press his liberal strategy of concession upon London, insisting that the Siamese could only be a threat as tools of 'another and more forceful people' who might impose their will.[137]

Crosby's long experience of South-East Asia allowed him to view the rise of Siamese nationalism in historical perspective. British policy, he suggested, was now witnessing the delayed impact of the Revolution of 1932. The majority of the new élite had 'either not been educated abroad at all or only for a short period' and therefore regarded the West 'with suspicion, even aversion'. Thus, the attitudes of some of the new Siamese élite had more in common with nationalism in colonial states, and in Crosby's view did 'not present us with a problem peculiar to itself, but . . . is to be accounted for by that "rising tide of colour" which is sweeping over the whole of Asia'. As such, Siam was 'no more than a piece in the Asiatic jigsaw puzzle'.[138] Nevertheless, while élite nationalism might seek to emulate Japan in rejecting Western dominance, Crosby insisted that this did not always imply Pro-Japanese sentiments. 'It is a common mistake', he continued, 'to identify anti-Western feeling in Siam with sympathy for Japan . . . although the two tendencies are connected.'[139]

## *'An Uneasy Equilibrium': Siam, Japan, and the West*

Two forms of Japanese influence upon Western policies in Siam can be observed during the mid-1930s. Firstly, at the economic level, Japan's accelerated export programme not only threatened to undermine aspects of the West's economic position but, through arms sales, also continued to strengthen political contacts between the Siamese and Japanese services. Secondly, at the strategic level, there were overt signs of Japanese strategic interest in mainland South-East Asia in 1936. Japanese ideas concerning expansion into the South Seas were still only vague aspirations, even in 1936, when they were first mentioned in Japanese contingency planning. The Japanese Army still favoured a war against the Soviet Union, while the Japanese Navy focused upon the United States and Britain. Nevertheless, all areas of defence planning began to accelerate in early 1936 with the triumph of the 'total mobilisation' faction within the Japanese Army.[140] This was underlined by the

Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1936, reflecting the growing importance of military–strategic questions in Japan's policy towards Siam, and the gradual eclipse of the Foreign Office.[141] All this prompted both British and Siamese contingency planning for a future Anglo-Japanese war. It also triggered the first Anglo-American naval consultations on Pacific strategy, albeit Washington was noncommittal. These trends were reinforced by events in Europe where, by late 1938, conflict seemed certain. This promised consequential shifts in the strategic balance in South-East Asia. Matters were complicated by the growing paranoia of the French in Indo-China, trapped between an expansionist Japan and a potentially irredentist Siam.[142]

During 1936 Western officials were alarmed by the increase in Japanese economic activity. Matsushima, the Japanese Ambassador at Large, visited Bangkok and offered Japanese advisers on cotton to the Siamese Ministry of Agriculture and a Japanese Professor for Pridi's new University of Political and Moral Sciences. In Pattani, in southern Siam, a senior politician, Phya Bibidh Senamatya, called together leading Malays and advised them to be very friendly to visiting Japanese as they promised rapid development.[143] Japan was quick to appreciate Siam's importance in the developing civil aviation market and proposed a service between Bangkok and Taihoku in Formosa, calling at Hanoi and Hong Kong.[144] Crosby contrasted this with the low reputation of Britain's Imperial Airways of which 'the less that is said the better'.[145] Japan also sought unsuccessfully to raise the status of their legation in Bangkok to that of an embassy. A Japanese Ambassador, by virtue of rank, would then have replaced Crosby as dean of the diplomatic community in Bangkok.[146] The general state of Western alarm was underlined by their attention to even the most insignificant Japanese overtures.[147]

British officials drew only limited comfort from the conviction that the growth of Japanese interests formed a source of irritation in Siam. The Siamese press attacked the quality of Japanese goods and questioned Siam's trade deficit with Japan. In November 1936 the *Siam Chronicle* warned that 'an unpleasant day of reckoning must be expected' and that 'they will soon be saying to us: "By the way, you have borrowed all that money from us, we shall now be obliged to send some of our people to see that our interests are protected. Banzai!"'. Britain found such sentiments 'charming', but this did not halt the growth of Japanese exports.[148] Japanese export success was of political importance in the field of

defence equipment and training.[149] Such contacts increased Japanese influence with Siamese officers and gave an exaggerated impression of political co-operation between Siam and Japan to the American and French Legations.[150] British products were now 'regarded as unattainable luxury articles'.[151] Bailey, the Consul-General, complained that Japanese consultants were never out of the office of the Siamese Naval Staff.[152] Accordingly, the Navy became a stronghold of pro-Japanese sentiment and during July 1935, Sindhu, Chief of the Naval Staff, and senior officers departed for a long visit to Japan.[153]

In early June 1936 Italy's invasion of Abyssinia and Phibul's statement on the merits of dictatorship coincided with the dispatch of more officers for training in Japan and Italy. The presence of Phibul's own son amongst them provoked an outburst from Crosby.[154] During a meeting with Prince Wan, the powerful adviser at the Foreign Ministry, he asked bluntly, 'Was there . . . any particular reason for our being left out?', adding his suspicion that the order of the day was 'No more British influence in the army, the navy or the air force'. Wan rehearsed the familiar argument that Siam had 'to buy in the cheapest market'.[155] Crosby clearly considered this serious enough to justify veiled threats. Remarking that 'preferential tariffs and quotas were the fashion nowadays', he confided

> that the Government of India would be only too glad to see a special duty clapped upon Malayan importations from Siam in the interests of the Burma rice trade. Suppose, I suggested to him, we were to apply the system of imperial preference to Siam's detriment with respect to her exports to the various British possessions. Or suppose we were to follow the recent example of Cuba and to insist that, if we went on buying from Siam, she must reciprocate by purchasing from ourselves goods to at least a proportion of what we were taking from her. Not that I was making any threat. . . .[156]

Somewhat later Phibul's son undertook naval training in England, but ironically by 1938, Britain found herself refusing orders for arms placed by Siam owing to her own rearmament programme.[157] Nevertheless, this episode underlined new British priorities. Unlike his predecessors, Crosby resisted applying economic pressure over oil or tin agreements, preferring to reserve these threats for political and strategic matters.

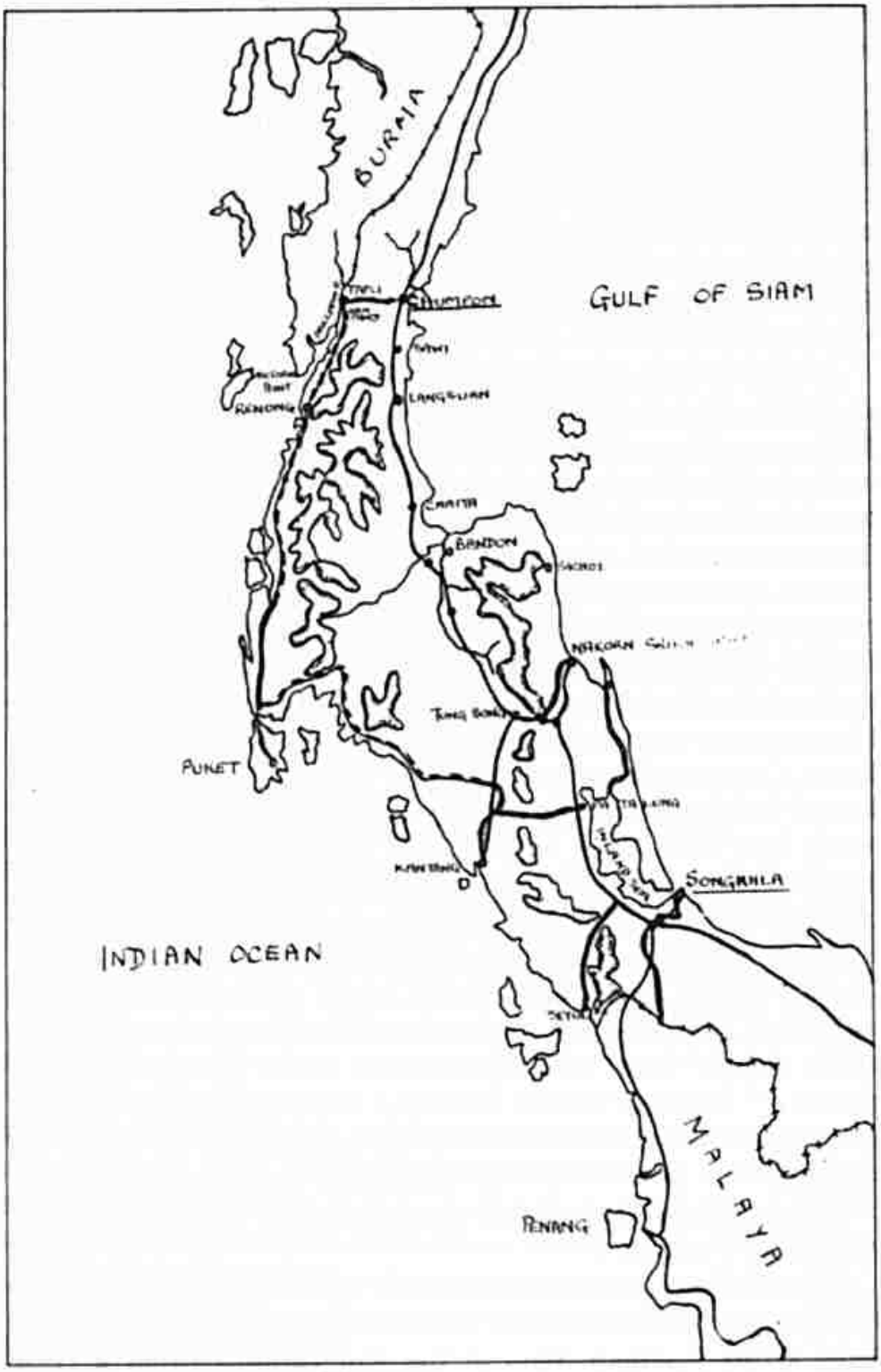
At the strategic level, the catalyst for changes in Western policies was the actions of French rather than Japanese officials. It has

already been suggested in the previous section that by 1935 senior Siamese officials were increasingly aware of French vulnerability in Indo-China. While the pessimistic Phibul focused upon Siam's problems in a future Anglo-Japanese war, irredentists salivated at the opportunities offered by a France preoccupied in Europe. Paradoxically, this French weakness appeared to increase the influence of agitated French military officials who feared simultaneous attack by Japan and Siam, and now sought to alarm Britain and the United States. Attempts to refute French false alarms over an alliance between Siam and Japan eventually rendered British diplomats temperamentally disinclined to believe such reports.

As early as 8 November 1935, Colonel Roux, the French military attaché in Bangkok, voiced his suspicions of a secret Siamese–Japanese military convention regarding a future Japanese attack on Indo-China. Japan, he asserted, would attack the eastern seaboard, while the Siamese advanced from the west to recover the 'lost provinces' in Laos and Cambodia. This agreement, Roux insisted, was reached during a visit by the Japanese Rear-Admiral Nakamura in March 1935, and had been signed by Phahol, Phibul, and Pridi.[158] British and American officials combined to suppress the French line of interpretation. Despite American and Japanese press speculation concerning an alliance between Siam and Japan, Crosby's American colleague, James Baker, was sceptical. Indeed in May, Baker privately arranged for a Siamese statement in the *New York Times*, insisting that 'there would be no entangling alliances with other nations'.[159] He also noted that Chinese control of the internal structure of Siamese commerce constituted a major obstacle to Japanese penetration of the Chinese economy. Crosby calmly denounced French views as nonsense and was pleased to note the arrival of a new French Minister in March 1936, Marcel Ray, who reprimanded Roux for his 'alarmist' reports.[160] Privately Crosby conceded that Nakamura's visit had probably involved noncommittal discussions on a variety of contingencies. But he was convinced that Phibul remained wary of Japan and was in any case preoccupied by budgetary battles with Pridi.[161]

Colonel Roux continued to make trouble during 1936 and 1937 by reviving the rumour concerning Japanese finance for a canal across southern Siam at the Kra Isthmus (Map 4.1).[162] Crosby and his staff undertook tiresome on-site investigations but complained that they failed to find 'even a single coolie engaged

MAP 4.1
Isthmus of Kra, Sketch Map by Consul Whittington, 1936




*Source*: Public Record Office, FO 628/52.

upon the mythical work of excavation'.[163] This did not deter Roux from reviving his theory of a Siamese–Japanese military agreement during 1936, which Crosby now denounced as 'an obsession'.[164] The 'Kra Canal fable' appeared again in March 1937 in an article in the Paris journal *Lu*, entitled 'Le Canal de Kra menace la puissance de Singapore' and which claimed the Siamese Prime Minister as its source. With ill-disguised delight, it asserted that this construction 'marqua le debut du déclin de l'amité anglo-simoise' and for good measure speculated upon 'Le Siam et le pacte germano-nippon'.[165] The article was received with extreme distaste in Bangkok.[166] But while Britain dismissed the article as a 'farrago of nonsense', nevertheless, it underlined both Siam's growing strategic importance and the extent of French paranoia.[167]

During October 1937 French concern was increased by the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War and a subsequent confrontation with Japan over the transfer of supplies from north Indo-China to China.[168] As a result the French Cabinet was reportedly preoccupied by the prospect of strategic co-operation between Siam and Japan.[169] Further Franco-Japanese confrontation followed over the Paracel Islands during July 1938.[170] Also during July, anxious French officials, spurred by the deteriorating situation in Europe and Asia, sought to bypass the sceptical Crosby by seeking discussions in London with the Far Eastern Department on relations between Japan and Siam.[171] In London Orde was no less anxious than Crosby to avoid association with France's 'policy of nagging and continual accusation'.[172] Unbeknown to Orde, the French were moving towards an uncharacteristically constructive proposal, suggesting in September 1938 a series of bilateral non-aggression pacts between Siam and the Western Powers. Ingrained British hostility to all French ideas was underscored by Crosby's subsequent warning that at best this would alarm Japan and at worst involve Britain in open-ended commitments.[173] But although premature, this idea prefigured the non-aggression treaties that Britain, France, and Japan would all sign with Siam following the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939.

While refuting French accusations of a pro-Japanese Siam, Western officials nevertheless harboured growing concerns about Japanese aims. On 25 November 1935, Crosby discussed the peculiarly large staff of the Japanese Legation with Prince Aditya Didd-abha, President of the Council of Regency. Both concluded that it could only be employed in espionage.[174] These mutual fears were confirmed by a 'goodwill flight' between Tokyo and

Bangkok, organized by the Japan–Siam Association in December 1936 and financed by a major Japanese newspaper. Events took an unexpected turn:

> The way in which the machine lingered over the military aerodrome at Don Muang on its arrival at Bangkok aroused suspicion; it was then found on examination (in the absence of the Japanese crew) that a mapping camera had been cleverly concealed in the fuselage, and that the aeroplane, instead of being a civilian machine, was really a disguised bomber.[175]

The Siamese Cabinet was 'especially incensed'.[176] The Cabinet was no less embarrassed when it discovered that Siamese officers sent to Japan for training were often attached to the separate Manchukuo Army, rather than the Imperial Japanese Army.[177] In conversation Aditya emphasized that while some younger politicians were taken with Japan, most Siamese were struck by the insincerity of the Japanese. This, he continued, should not be confused with a fundamental sea change in Siamese foreign policy, the recognition that the pivotal powers in Siam's universe were no longer Britain and France but Britain and Japan. Therefore, Japan was an increasingly important factor in Siamese foreign policy, although Siam was not 'in the pocket of the Japanese'. While Aditya, one of Crosby's most valuable informants among the inner circle of Siamese Government, was not impartial, being regarded even by Crosby as pro-British 'to the verge of indiscretion', nevertheless his analysis was accurate and was confirmed by the newly arrived American Foreign Affairs Adviser, Frederic Dolbeare.[178]

The same line was taken during June 1936 when Crosby questioned Prince Wan on Siam's defence programme. 'Why', Crosby asked, 'was the army so intent on piling up armaments? As for the air force, everybody knew that it was much superior to anything we had ourselves organised as yet at Singapore.' Wan replied that they were to preserve the country's neutrality in an Anglo-Japanese war adding that 'Japan . . . might attempt to strike at the Singapore naval base by landing a force at Senggora [Songkhla in southern Siam]'.[179] If Japan was a prospective enemy, asked Crosby, was Siam's dependence on Japanese officer training not 'dangerous'? Wan explained:

> We send them to Japan because it is so cheap. But I do not mind telling you in confidence that of late there has been a notable swing away from pro-Japanese sentiment in Siam. Neither our military nor our civilian

students in Tokyo get on well with the Japanese. There is an absence of sympathy between them. Were it otherwise, were there a danger of our officers becoming deeply imbued with Japanese sympathies, we should have to change our policy.

Crosby combined scepticism with a personal dislike for Prince Wan, but he admitted that all this squared with his own interpretation of events.[180]

Crosby now offered an analysis of relations between Siam and Japan. Since 1934, he argued, there had been 'a discernible cooling off'. This was partly because of the clumsy propaganda methods of the Japanese, but this also marked the recognition that 'if Japan obtains the hegemony over the continent of Asia there is every prospect of little Siam being absorbed in one form or another into the Empire of the Rising Sun'. Therefore much of Siam's fraternization with Japan could be explained by 'the important element of fear'. If Britain was embroiled in a European war, the Siamese military 'believe that Japan will beat us and will wrest Singapore from our possession'. Moreover, Abyssinia had so aggravated the situation in Europe that Siam believed the impending Anglo-Japanese struggle would soon be upon them. Siamese military logic was remorseless:

if we are, in the opinion of the Siamese, going sooner or later (and probably sooner than later) to be vanquished by Japan and shorn of our prestige and power in this part of the world . . . it will be to their interest to limit, and finally to eliminate British influence in so far as their fighting forces are concerned. They are thus persuaded not so much from hostility towards ourselves as from anxiety not to offend Japan, the conqueror of the immediate future.[181]

Here Crosby was several steps ahead of officials in London in his acceptance that Singapore lacked credibility. In contrast the Far Eastern Department remained hopelessly overconfident. On 25 May 1936, reviewing the possibility of simultaneous war in Europe and Asia, Thynne Henderson asserted that Siam would not side with Japan since it 'would only mean exchanging two "protectors" [Britain and France], whose yoke is easy, for one who does not tolerate independence from her "allies"'.[182] But Crosby's point was that Siam recognized that she would be offered little choice.

The West remained confident on the question of Siam during 1937 and 1938. In October 1938 in the wake of the renewed crisis in Europe and the fall of Canton, American officials chose to

emphasize Phibul's restatement that if Japan violated Siam's neutrality *en route* to Singapore, Siam would side with Britain and France.[183] Events in China, Phibul had insisted, indicated that if Japan reached Singapore, Siam would become a 'second Manchukuo' with 'a puppet government at Bangkok, the strings of which would be pulled from Tokyo'. But Phibul also recognized that Siam might, in the last resort, be required to accommodate Japan. Crosby insisted that 'the ruling factor with the Siamese is, and always is likely to be, that of fear. Their instinct is to remain neutral as long as they can; meanwhile, they will be careful not to arouse the resentment of Japan in any way.' Perceptively he added, 'In the actual case of a Japanese attempt to violate their neutrality, it is my opinion that we could not be sure of them unless we were able to support them . . . strongly.'[184] Therefore, while British officials attempted to subdue public French paranoia, Crosby privately accepted 'the theory of Colonel Roux' that in a future Anglo-Japanese war 'the Siamese might not be unwilling to allow them [Japan] the use of their territory for an attack on Singapore, demanding as a *quid pro quo* . . . portions of Indo-China'. Thus, while irredentism was seen as a French problem, it was inextricably linked to the wider matrix of Anglo-Japanese rivalry.[185] In the short term, British diplomats continued to take comfort in the 'incredibly stupid methods' of the Japanese diplomats and press.[186] However, this did little to alter long-term strategic developments as perceived by Siam. Thus Orde in London observed that while 'Japanese propaganda seems quite likely to produce the wrong result rather than the right one', nevertheless 'rearmament will be the best answer'.[187]

British military officials in Burma and Malaya were deeply disturbed by events in Bangkok. Until 1935, defence planners in Burma had simply maintained that their jungle frontier was impassable to a large body of troops.[188] This view had changed by May 1938 when an Inter-Services Conference was held to review the defence of Rangoon. They concluded that plans should be drawn up for defence against Japan or Japan and Siam in alliance, noting the proximity of airfields in western Siam. Crosby confessed that he had given little consideration to the Siamese threat to Burma.[189] Meanwhile, in Singapore and London the strategic significance of southern Siam and northern Malaya was receiving renewed emphasis. Anxiety was triggered by new Japanese capabilities displayed during the early stages of the Sino-Japanese War. This was exacerbated by the development of better

road communications as the Malayan economy improved during the late 1930s (Map 4.2).[190] Concern for the northward defence of Malaya was not new, for paranoia over a possible alliance between Siam and Japan had gripped Singapore during 1934 and 1935. Nevertheless, during 1937 and 1938, General Officer Commanding (GOC) Malaya, General Dobbie, advanced this scenario with originality and drive, employing detailed staff studies to indicate that the defence of Singapore was now synonymous with the defence of the whole of Malaya. Not only would Japanese landings to the north facilitate a landward advance on Singapore, they would also cut off vital food supplies coming from Siam. Moreover, the perceptive Dobbie now expected that the period before the relief of Singapore by a fleet was not seventy days but 'indefinite'. London attempted to refute this accurate independent calculation.[191]

The attitude of Siam constituted an increasingly important component in the debate over Malayan defence. In March 1937 a subcommittee of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) completed a study of the possibility of a shore-based attack on Singapore by Japan. They placed little emphasis upon Siamese air and naval bases, accepting the view of the Far Eastern Department that French reports of closer relations between Siam and Japan were exaggerated and they emphasized that any Japanese move into Siam would deny Japan the element of surprise. But Dobbie rejected the idea that Siam would remain neutral and voiced suspicions of Japanese influence in southern Siam. Moreover, with little prospect of relief by a fleet the element of surprise now appeared less important. Consequently, the military in Malaya were increasingly out of step with the CID in London over Siam.[192]

Dobbie attempted to overturn strategic thinking in London by ordering his Chief of Staff, Colonel Percival, to undertake a study of an attack on Singapore from the Japanese point of view. This study underlined the feasibility of a slow and deliberate Japanese advance from northern bases, most likely in Siam, British Borneo, or northern Malaya. It emphasized that air bases at Bandon and Songkhla on the Kra Isthmus were only 600 miles from Singapore, permitting direct attack by shore-based aircraft.[193] In pressing these points on the War Office during July 1938, Dobbie emphasized that he was 'already aware that the Japanese are thinking along these lines'.[194] There were several possible sources for such intelligence; the strongest was undoubtedly Bangkok

MAP 4.2
Improved Communications in Malaya during the 1930s


*Source*: Public Record Office, AIR 20/3946.

where Crosby was inundated with French and even Siamese reports of Japanese plans for the use of southern Siam. It was perhaps no coincidence that Dobbie had only recently visited Bangkok.[195] By November 1938, Dobbie had convinced the CID of his case and was allocated an additional battalion of troops. A month later the COS accepted his formulation of the most likely type of Japanese attack on Singapore, a slow deliberate advance from bases to the north.[196] But this concession did not arise solely out of Dobbie's remorselessly logical appreciation of local defence problems. They also reflected a radical shift in Britain's imperial defence planning in London.

London's preoccupations were understandably different to those of General Dobbie. Moreover, formal recognition by London of the nature and extent of Singapore's problems did not amount to their resolution. Indeed, the reverse was true, for between 1937 and 1939 the situation in Europe and the Middle East, particularly after Italy's alignment with Germany, ensured that the relief period planned for Singapore would become ever more elastic.[197] The COS outlined their predicament in February 1937: 'The chief danger which Imperial defence has to face at the moment is that we are in a position of having to face threats at both ends of the Empire from strong military powers, i.e. Germany and Japan, while in the centre we have lost our traditional military security in the Mediterranean.'[198] This presumption that the Mediterranean might well be closed was central to a major review of the defence of Singapore conducted by the CID in April 1937. Not only did they raise the relief period from forty to seventy days, they also noted ominously that events in Europe might so alarm the 'general public' that the dispatch of a fleet would be politically impossible. Implicitly, Singapore might be asked to hold out with no prospect of relief.[199] While the COS still referred to Singapore as 'indispensable', it was increasingly clear that their first priority was Germany.[200]

Appreciations of Japanese intentions during 1937 and 1938 reinforced the low priority accorded to Malaya. While the COS expressed the belief in April 1937, that Japan aimed at eventual hegemony in South-East Asia, they also agreed with the Foreign Office that Japan's immediate ambitions were limited to access to markets.[201] In any case, many, including the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, hoped for an agreement with Japan.[202] After the outbreak of Sino-Japanese hostilities on 7 July 1937, Japan was considered to be too preoccupied to interest herself in South-East

Asia.[203] In consequence, despite the continued absence of Anglo-American strategic co-operation in Asia, Britain perceived a diminished Japanese threat during late 1937 and early 1938, permitting increased emphasis upon Europe.[204]

Consequently, during 1938, British diplomats in Asia were acutely conscious of London's increasingly Eurocentric priorities. In November 1938, in the wake of the Munich Crisis, Crosby, along with his colleagues Clark Kerr in Peking and Craigie in Tokyo, made parallel appeals for a display of naval force in the Far East, to restore British prestige.[205] The Navy, only now contemplating the prospect of a global war with any rigour, rejected this in the bluntest terms, provoking an acrimonious exchange with Crosby.[206] These arguments were symptomatic of what some historians have termed a 'palace revolution' within the Admiralty during late 1938. Sir Roger Backhouse, the new Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), led a school of thought which, disregarding Britain's formal undertakings to the Pacific Dominions, insisted that the Navy was simply too weak to venture east of Suez. Therefore, COS acceptance of Dobbie's emphasis upon the landward defence of Malaya was not simply the result of his cogent arguments, it also reflected new strategic priorities in London. In March 1939, as Dobbie had long suspected, the absolute commitment to relieve Singapore was effectively abandoned by the London planners.[207]

If Britain could no longer carry her strategic burden alone, how realistic were hopes in 1938 of American naval support for Britain's deteriorating strategic position? Despite the accelerating tensions in Asia marked by the outbreak of Sino-Japanese hostilities, Washington remained reluctant to underwrite Britain as world policeman. However, in December 1937 the Japanese attack on the USS *Panay* on the Yangtze River made an impression upon Roosevelt. Accordingly he now approved discreet Anglo-American naval talks for early 1938. The Ingersoll–Phillips conversations followed and developed into joint war plans to destroy Japanese sea communications, employing the Royal Navy in South-East Asia and the American Navy in the Pacific. As a result the new American joint Army–Navy 'War Plan Orange' envisaged a new forward strategy in the Pacific and a further series of American plans in 1939 codenamed 'Rainbow' emphasized South-East Asia. Anglo-American talks were also reflected in accelerated rearmament.

Therefore as early as the first months of 1938 Britain was

attempting to acquaint American planners with the strategic significance of South-East Asia. For the time being this was expressed in terms of resources for a European War, especially imperial manpower, food, tin, rubber, bauxite, and oil. Yet as both British and American naval staff appreciated, their joint planning was predicated upon a situation in which they would find themselves fighting together against the Axis. Consequently, while joint planning offered some comfort, it brought Britain no closer to concrete American support for the defence of Singapore or Hong Kong.[208]

Meanwhile, Siamese strategic appreciations were far ahead of those of Anglo-American planners or even the perceptive General Dobbie. In 1936 the Siamese Ministry of Defence freely admitted that garrisons in southern Siam were being strengthened to prevent Siam 'suffering the fate of Belgium' during 1914 and serving as a corridor to Singapore in a future war.[209] Much later, on 10 November 1938, Luang Sindhu, Chief of the Naval Staff, remarked in conversation with Crosby that in the circumstances of a Japanese attack via Siam, 'he was not so sure that we ourselves might not be ready to violate Siamese neutrality in order to forestall the Japanese'.[210] Meanwhile, in early 1938, in the context of increased Anglo-Japanese hostility over the war in China, Japan drew up her first detailed plans for an assault on Singapore. These plans called for a landing at Songkhla in southern Siam, followed by an advance across the Malay Peninsula and south to Singapore.[211]

By May 1938 even the press had begun to speculate openly on British reactions to such a contingency. The journalist Williard Price noted that

> [Siam's] value as neutral ground between Britain and France is less now that these two powers are committed to partnership. On the contrary, neutral ground is an open invitation to Japan. There is no immediate danger of Japanese aggression in Siam—but, if such a danger should arise, Britain and France might feel that they were compelled to safeguard Siam by absorbing her, using the Menam as a dividing line.[212]

By 1940 British planners had formulated just such a pre-emptive operation to seize the strategically significant area of southern Siam against Japan, prior to the outbreak of war. But there is little indication of when or where this British idea was first conceived. However, it is clear that ideas within Percival's 1937 staff study of a Japanese attack, discussed above, were already pointing towards

this sort of pre-emptive operation.[213] Thus while Crosby in Bangkok sought to develop a generous Western diplomatic policy towards Siam, the thoughts of British defence planners in Malaya already seem to have been moving in a less sympathetic direction.

## *Conclusion*

During the mid-1930s, both Western policies towards Siam and Siamese politics were increasingly effected by the gathering pace of international events. Two of the most experienced diplomatic observers of international affairs in South-East Asia, Crosby and the Japanese Minister, Yatabe, offered remarkably similar analyses of Siam's position. Crosby emphasized that in Bangkok, despite active pro-Japanese elements, 'the respect for Japan is chiefly the respect which is born of fear'.[214] This was only amplified by Japan's invasion of China during the Summer of 1937. However, Crosby also understood that if Siam feared Japan, she also disliked British informal influence and doubted Britain's ability to provide a strategic counterweight to Japanese power. The last factor, visible British weakness, was central in a contest that was increasingly strategic, rather than economic in its nature. Thus, Crosby warned repeatedly: 'We are brought back to the unavoidable conclusion that the measure of our security in South Eastern Asia is in the last resort the degree of armed strength . . . for the purpose of opposing, if and when necessary, the designs of the Japanese.'[215] Remarkably, Crosby's views on the determinants of Siam's position in Asia were closely paralleled by his Japanese counterpart, Yatabe, who sounded a similar warning note to Tokyo:

> In Japan's future policy towards Siam she must bear in mind that Siam wishes to be rid of the white man's oppression, but she has no desire to replace it with Japanese influence in Siam. She realises there are things she must study and learn from Japan on behalf of her own economic development. . . . But there are many aspects of future Siamese–Japanese relations which give Siam pause for reflection. In short, if there is anyone who believes that Siam can be easily gathered under the umbrella of the pan-Asian movement recently being advocated by some of our own countrymen, that person is badly mistaken.[216]

Thus, while the international situation in Europe and Asia deteriorated during the mid-1930s, and while the military planners in more than one state turned their attention to Siam's strategically

significant Kra Isthmus in the south, politicians in Bangkok were determined to hedge their bets. As early as 1936, many Siamese had concluded that an Anglo-Japanese war was 'inevitable' but, to their great consternation, as yet there was no indication of the likely victor. Pessimists feared that Siam would simply become a battleground, while more optimistic elements, particularly irredentists, expected international turbulence to offer Siam an unparalleled opportunity to recover her lost territories. After all, it was Siam's timely decision to join the victorious powers in 1917 that had facilitated negotiations leading to the end of the unequal treaty system.

Siamese uncertainty was therefore in no sense superficial. Instead it indicated a profound understanding of her predicament. As if to underline this, during a conversation with Crosby in February 1936, Prince Wan pointed unhesitatingly to the most significant unknown in the Far Eastern equation, namely, 'the political withdrawal from Asia of the United States'.[217] Hitherto, Siam might not have commanded the same attention in Washington as in London, but that is not to suggest that in the late 1930s American policy towards South-East Asia was insignificant. Her deliberate decision to avoid extending strategic commitments to this region determined the strategic matrix in which all other powers would conduct their calculations prior to Pearl Harbor. Between 1939 and 1942, Britain, Japan, and Thailand would focus increasing attention on the United States as the absentee-arbiter of the European empires in Asia. Meanwhile, without American material support, and increasingly preoccupied by tensions in Europe and the Mediterranean, British officials conceded that at best there could only be 'an uneasy equilibrium' in South-East Asia.[218]

1. B. J. Gould, *The Jewel and the Lotus*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1957, p. 173, quoted in R. Jeffrey, 'The Politics of "Indirect Rule": Types of Relationship among Rulers, Ministers and Residents in a "Native State"', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, XIII, 3 (1975): 275.

2. The American Minister, conceded that 'the British . . . predominate in the advisory positions in the Government, in the occidental population of Siam, and in trade relations. The possession of adjacent colonies and control of nearby entrepots, Singapore, Hong Kong, besides control of shipping facilities, accounts for the status of British trade in Siam and the presence of British agencies here. The powerful position of Great Britain in this part of the world has also contributed to British influence on Siamese culture and intellectual thought. . . .

France holds a secondary position. . . . British influence in government policy and trade render French influence insignificant in comparison, however.' Baker to SoS No. 59, 1 May 1934, 892.00/123 F/G, RG 59, NARA, discussing Baron Lapomarede (French Military Attaché, Bangkok, 1929–32), 'Siam and the Western Powers', *Bangkok Times*, 24 April 1934; see also his article, 'The Settling of the Siamese Revolution', *Pacific Affairs*, 7, 1 (1934): 251–9. On American exports, see R. R. Sogn, 'Successful Journey: A History of US–Thai Relations, 1932–1945', Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1990, p. 115.

3. *Who's Who, 1954*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1954; J. Crosby, *Siam at the Crossroads*, London: Hollis Carter, 1943; Derek Bryan, letter to the author, October 1989; Andrew Gilchirst interview, 12 January 1986; E. B. Reynolds, 'Ambivalent Allies: Japan and Thailand, 1941–1945', Ph.D. thesis, University of Hawaii, 1988, pp. 50–1.

4. Crosby to Orde, 14 July 1936, F6054/4387/40, FO 371/20303, PRO. See also Crosby to FO No. 220, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO.

5. Charles Orde, Head of the Department, minuted 'quite right' upon the above dispatch, Orde minute, 16 October 1936, F6054/4387/40, FO 371/20303, PRO.

6. Powell, 'Report on Siam', 12 December 1934, fol. 3, OV25/4 (669/6) BE.

7. It should be noted that relations between Baxter and Dormer seem to have been better than most. On Dormer's departure to take an appointment as Minister in Stockholm, Baxter wrote privately of his sadness at the departure of 'a sound, level-headed fellow', Baxter to Siepmann, 8 March 1934, fol. 119A, OV25/3 (669/2), BE.

8. The main purpose of this code was to disguise the degree of direction received by Baxter from the Bank of England. The Siamese, noted Siepmann, 'apparently have a habit of opening letters in the post'. However, the use of codes and cyphers was an extremely tiresome business and therefore the use of the diplomatic bag would have been, in some ways, preferable. Baxter's successor, Doll, later complained of the additional burden that this system imposed upon a hard-pressed Financial Adviser, Siepmann minute to Skinner, 15 September 1932, fol. 204, OV25/2 (669/1), BE; see also Skinner minute, n.d., OV25/2 (669/1), BE. It should be noted that when Hall-Patch resigned, he wrote to Dormer: 'In view of the fact that this letter will almost certainly be opened by the Siamese, I have said the minimum', Hall-Patch to Dormer, 19 March 1932, T 160/435, PRO.

9. Siepmann minute to Skinner, 15 September 1932, fol. 204, OV25/2 (669/1), BE.

10. Crosby to FO No. 108, 12 March 1936, F2194/2194/40, FO 371/20302, PRO.

11. Crosby gave the example of the Sawhra, the ruler in Kentung, Crosby to FO No. 108, 12 March 1936, F2194/2194/40, FO 371/20302, PRO.

12. Ibid. Two Malay officers from Kelantan had recently visited Bangkok where they had been surprised by the frequency of attacks against ministers and officials. The two Malay officers 'came back with a modified enthusiasm for progressive Bangkok. I was pleased when they noted that in Kelantan a British or Malay officer can go anywhere escorted by one orderly carrying two coconuts and a packet of sandwiches, whilst in Bangkok certain senior Siamese officers appeared to require more stalwart escorts.'

13. The India Office were not impressed by democracy in 'progressive' Siam. Observing the 1937 elections, they noted: 'It is to be hoped that Burma will be

spared this blessing for a little while', Harris minute, 9 January 1937, (Coll. 33/13), L/P&S/12/4065, IOLR.

14. Ibid.

15. Crosby to Halifax No. 411, 27 June 1938, F1544/142/40, FO 371/22208 PRO.

16. F. Darling, *Thailand and the United States*, Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1965, pp. 32–3; Sogn, 'Successful Journey', pp. 6–9, 113–57.

17. Baxter to Phahol, 23 June 1935, enclosed in Bailey to FO No. 211, 21 June 1935, F4239/25/40, FO 371/19375, PRO. In fact Baxter had written to Phahol in February to explain that he would not be renewing his contract, adding that the increasingly radical policies of some ministers 'fill me with alarm'. However, at this point Baxter had intended 'to slip unobtrusively away'. Baxter to Phahol, 7 February 1935, fol. 16, K Kh 0301.1.35/45, TNA.

18. Orde to Bank of England, 27 June 1935, F4128/25/40, FO 371/19375, PRO.

19. Baxter to Cook, 21 March 1935, fol. 32, OV25/4 (669/3), BE.

20. Chaplin minute, 10 August 1935, F5121/25/40, FO 371/19375, PRO. This was partly the case for Doll was appointed as adviser to the Ministry of Finance, not the Siamese Government, V. Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam*, New York: Macmillan, 1941, p. 578; E. T. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand: 1928–1941', Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1967, p. 134.

21. Crosby to FO No. 378, 7 November 1935, F7200/25/40, FO 371/19375, PRO. Memorandum by Reeve, Excise Adviser, 7 May 1934, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.6/47, TNA; Baxter memorandum to Finance Minister, 2 June 1934, fol. 12, K Kh 0301.1.6/47, TNA.

22. Orde to Hoare's Private Secretary, 23 October 1935, F7425/28/40, FO 371/19375, PRO; Hoare minutes, 23 and 25 November 1935, F7425/28/40, FO 371/19375, PRO.

23. On Iraq, see D. Silverfarb, *Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East: A Case Study of Iraq, 1929–1941*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 87–94; J. Sassoon, *Economic Policy in Iraq, 1932–1950*, London: Cass, 1987, pp. 22–5.

24. Although Sri Sena was Minister of Foreign Affairs he was, at the same time, quite overshadowed by the position of Prince Wan, a powerful Adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. See Crosby to FO No. 359, 28 October 1934, F7690/296/40, FO 371/19378, PRO.

25. Furthermore, Sri Sena assured Crosby that Pridi would also respect these binding assurances. Crosby to FO No. 420, 3 December 1935, F7804/296/40, FO 371/19378, PRO.

26. Record of a conversation with Phra Mitrakarn Rasha in Grew (Tokyo) to SoS No. 1281, 4 May 1935, *FRUS*, 1935, III, pp. 155–6. Mitrakarn seems to have misunderstood the nature of these agreements over advisers which appear to have been verbal rather than written.

27. J. Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue*, London: Hurst, 1991, p. 141.

28. The Bank of England noted that 'although we have no absolute title to the post, we do possess a claim', Overseas and Foreign Department memorandum, 31 July 1935, fol. 50, OV25/4 (669/3), BE; C. F. C. minute (presumed August 1935), fol. 88, OV25/4 (669/3), BE. Niemeyer was an Executive Director of the Bank of England.

29. During 1937 the Siamese rice harvest had been especially good. Her rice exports were assisted by poor crops in neighbouring Burma and Indo-China.

Crosby to FO No. 447E, 4 December 1937, F372/371/40, FO 371/22211, PRO.

30. Annual Economic Report (A) for 1937, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 207E, 1 June 1937, F5937/373/40, FO 371/22211, PRO. Doll denounced a scheme to expand the port at Bangkok as, 'a white elephant that will trample the present Government perhaps fatally in the political mire'; Doll memorandum, 'Port Development Scheme', 18 February 1938, fol. 16, OV25/5 (669/4), BE.

31. Pridi had been in Japan and Phibul exploited his absence to obtain control of further posts. Japan had expected Pridi to become Finance Minister on his return and to employ Pridi against British influence; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 126–42.

32. Consequently, Ceylon, Burma, India, and Pakistan only acquired these institutions after independence, memorandum, 'Recent Central Banking Developments in South East Asia', December 1952, fol. 231, K Kh 0301.1.37/88, TNA. Central banking in Egypt was also resisted, R. S. Sayers, *Bank of England*, Vol. II, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 164–5.

33. On the question of training, see Doll to Niemeyer, 16 June 1936, fol. 99, OV25/4 (669/3), BE; Niemeyer to Doll, 26 June 1936, fol. 100, OV25/4 (669/3), BE.

34. Crosby to Orde, 27 November 1936, F7529/4877/40, FO 371/20203, PRO.

35. Crosby to Orde, 14 July 1936, F6054/4387/40, FO 371/20303, PRO; Orde minute, 16 October 1936, F6054/4387/40, FO 371/20303, PRO. Hornbeck memorandum, 5 November 1936, *FRUS*, 1936, IV, p. 998; Chapman to SoS No. 16, 6 November 1936, *FRUS*, 1936, IV, p. 1000.

36. Crosby to Orde, 14 July 1936, F6054/4387/40, FO 371/20303, PRO. Interestingly, the elections in Siam depended to some degree on techniques imported from India for illiterate voting systems. On this, see 'New Voting Law Provides Direct Electoral System', *Siam Chronicle*, 19 November 1936; Metcalfe (Foreign and Political Department, Delhi) to Bangkok 9 November 1936 (DO No. D.5996.X/36) (Coll. 33/13), L/P&S/12/4065, IOLR.

37. Crosby to Orde, 14 July 1936, F6054/4387/40, FO 371/20303, PRO; Orde minute, 16 October 1936, F6054/4387/40, FO 371/20303, PRO.

38. Chapman to Hull No. 432, 14 October 1936, *FRUS*, 1936, IV, p. 996.

39. Orde minute, 3 November 1936, F6577/4837/40, FO 371/20303, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 451, 6 November 1936, F7529/4837/40, FO 371/20303, PRO; Orde minute, 11 January 1937, F7529/4837/40, FO 371/20303, PRO.

40. George Picot, Director of the Asian section of the Quai d'Orsay, and therefore Orde minute, 5 April 1937, F1957/32/40, FO 371/21047, PRO.

41. Bailey to Eden No. 317, 19 August 1937, F5774/96/40, FO 371/21050, PRO; Crosby to Eden No. 306, 21 October 1937, F8671/96/40, FO 371/21050, PRO.

42. Crosby to Orde, 27 November 1937, F7529/4877/40, FO 371/20303, PRO.

43. Crosby to FO, 10 February 1937, F1005/32/40, FO 371/21047, PRO.

44. Caine (CO) to FO, 10 March 1937, F1460/32/40, FO 371/21047, PRO. One Board of Trade official noted: 'I begged the Colonial Office to agree', J.W. minute, 16 November 1937, BT 11/679, PRO.

45. Phillips (ADM) to FO, 13 March 1937, F1460/32/40, FO 371/21047, PRO; Chaplin minute, 15 April 1937, F2144/32/40, FO 371/21047, PRO.

46. Chaplin minute, 15 April 1937, F2144/32/40, FO 371/21047, PRO; Eden to BT, 19 March 1937, F1005/32/40, FO 371/21047, PRO; Crosby to Orde,

14 June 1937, F3492/32/40, FO 371/21047, PRO; India raised no objections, Jefferson to IO, 11 May 1936, F3(2)×/36 (Coll. 33/19), L/P&S/12/4050, IOLR.

47. A lengthy conversation also took place with Brigham, the United States Ambassador in London and his staff, Chaplin minute, 26 May 1937, F3059/32/40, FO 371/21047, PRO.

48. Crosby to FO No. 426, 23 November 1937, F10178/32/40, FO 371/21049, PRO; Chaplin minute, 1 December 1937, F10178/32/40, FO 371/21049, PRO.

49. Record of a meeting between Campbell and Pridi in 'Further Note by the Chairman in Siam', 28 October 1935, and minutes of a special subcommittee of the Council of the Siamese Chamber of Mines, 4 October 1935, fol. 20, CO 852/4/6/15020/B8, PRO. On the situation prior to 1935 see Baxter to Visarn, 9 June 1933, fol. 10, K Kh 0301.1.11/6, TNA.

50. Annual Report for 1935 enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 108, 12 March 1936, F2194/2194/40, FO 371/20302, PRO. See also Campbell minute, 19 December 1936, CO 852/4/6/15020/B8, PRO.

51. Campbell to Shenton Thomas, 17 May 1936, fol. 3, CO 852/4/6/15020/B8, PRO.

52. Campbell minute, 30 January 1936, not foliated, CO 852/33/6/15020/B1, PRO.

53. Shenton Thomas (Singapore) to Lowinger (ITC), 21 December 1935, not foliated, CO 852/33/6/15020/B1, PRO.

54. It was probably for reasons connected with smelting that Malaya went so far as to offer to meet Siamese demands out of her own quota during early 1937.

55. Shenton Thomas (Singapore) to Lowinger (ITC), 21 December 1935, not foliated, CO 852/33/6/15020/B1, PRO.

56. 'Memorandum of a Visit to Siam', 19 July 1936, CO 852/33/6/15020/B1, PRO; Campbell minute, 30 January 1936, CO 852/33/6/15020/B1, PRO. See also Campbell's undated acerbic comments, for example, 'this is bunk' and 'puerile', scribbled on Siamese press material relating to tin, 'Size of Siam's Tin Quota', *Sri Kung*, 21 December 1935, CO 852/33/6/15020/B1, PRO.

57. The Foreign Office were 'resentful', demanding 'evidence' to back up the accusations, Campbell minute, 3 December 1936, CO 852/33/7/15020/B8, PRO; Calder minute, 4 December 1936, CO 852/33/7/15020/B8, PRO.

58. J. Hillman, 'Malaya and the International Tin Cartel', *Modern Asian Studies*, 22, 2 (1988): 237–61 and 'The Freerider and the Cartel: Siam and the International Tin Restriction Agreements, 1931–1941', *Modern Asian Studies*, 24, 2 (1990): 297–323. The latter essay is valuable but neglects the crucial issue of smelting. Hillman also dates the Revolution to 1933 and has Crosby as chargé d'affaires (pp. 308, 315).

59. The British firms secured 50 per cent. Crosby considered the allocation to be 'fair', but noted that in the 1920s Britain had enjoyed 100 per cent dominance. Crosby to FO No. 284, 15 July 1938, F7906/7906/40, FO 371/22216, PRO; Bombay-Burmah Trading Company to Crosby, 12 July 1938, F7906/7906/40, FO 371/22216, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 312, 1 August 1938, F8530/7906/40, FO 371/22216, PRO.

60. California-Texaco (Caltex) had discovered oil in the Netherlands East Indies in 1939 but were not yet producing, M. Wilkins, *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from 1914 to 1940*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974. Asiatic Petroleum Ltd. was a joint marketing organization for Asia formed in 1903 by the British merchant bank Samuel and Rothschilds to compete with the American companies in the face of vicious price

cutting. By 1907 Asiatic had become one of three subsidiaries owned by Royal Dutch Shell. On this, see I. H. Anderson, *The Standard Vacuum Oil Company and the United States East Asian Policy, 1933–1941*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975, pp. 24–5.

61. On the role of Sayre during the 1920s, see Chapter 2, B. Batson, *The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam*, Singapore: Oxford University Press/Asian Studies Association of Australia, 1984, pp. 36–40. The formula of informal notes was undoubtedly employed by Sayre to undermine reciprocity, memorandum by Sayre, 22 November 1935, *FRUS*, 1935, III, pp. 1107–8.

62. The nature of the oil problem was complex. The Head of the Oil Fuel Department in the Ministry of Defence, Vanich, sought a *de facto*, if not a *de jure*, monopoly. Crosby explained that 'although the [government] organisation would not enjoy a legal monopoly, it would according to Nai Vanich, exercise a virtual one in practice, as the Government could impose upon competitors hampering restrictions relating to such things as storage conditions etc. which would end by squeezing them out of the market'. At this stage the Ministry of Defence seemed to be acting without the knowledge of the Foreign Minister or Cabinet. Crosby to FO No. 116, 2 April 1935, F2989/920/40, FO 371/19378, PRO. Crosby received repeated assurances that a monopoly would not be established, Phahol to Crosby, (A55/3141), 22 May 1935, enclosed in Bailey to FO No. 175, 23 May 1935, F4222/920/40, FO 371/19378, PRO.

63. During April 1936 22 million ticals were allocated to the Ministry of Defence, some for 'fuel oil development' but no breakdown of defence expenditure was available, Bailey to FO No. 177E, 24 April 1936, F3141/131/40, FO 371/20297, PRO.

64. Crosby to FO No. 417, 19 October 1936, F6865/6060/40, FO 371/20303, PRO.

65. The Ministry of Defence pamphlet in question was written by Vanich and prefaced by Phibul. It emphasized the necessity of securing large oil stocks, as in Japan and Spain, remarking, 'Oil is a necessity in war, every drop of oil may be compared to a drop of blood.' The pamphlet, however, also attacked the 'extortionate' prices of the oil companies. Crosby to FO No. 414, 15 October 1936, F6864/6060/40, FO 371/20303, PRO.

66. Standard Vacuum Oil, like Asiatic Petroleum, were bombarding officials with illegally obtained documents at this time. Their material was selective, aiming to emphasize the role of Japan in this matter. Typically they chose to circulate the following extract of a letter from Vanich to the Japanese Naval Attaché in Bangkok: 'With reference to our conversation of yesterday relative to the erection of refinery plant for which we have concluded a contract with Messrs. Mitsui Bussan Kaisha Ltd. . . . it comes to my knowledge that the Imperial Japanese Navy would be pleased to give all possible assistance and facility in this connection', Vanich to Chudo (Japanese Naval Attaché, Bangkok), 27 March 1937, enclosed in Parker (Standard Vacuum Oil) to Hornbeck, 17 May 1937, 892.6363/65, RG 59, NARA.

67. Starling (Petroleum Department) to FO, 21 April 1937, F2294/2291/40, FO 371/21054. The text of the draft law was passed from the Foreign Office to the American Embassy in London, Binglow (London) to SoS No. 279, 11 May 1937, 892.6363/61, RG 59, NARA.

68. Minutes of a conversation between Millard of the US Embassy, London, and Ronald, 20 April 1937, F2291/2291/40, FO 371/21054, PRO. Hull to London

Embassy, 13 May 1937, 892.6363/61, RG 59, NARA. See also SD to Bangkok, 14 May 1937, 892.6363/61, RG 59, NARA.

69. Starling (Petroleum Department) to FO, 3 May 1937, F2613/2291/40, FO 371/21054, PRO. On the Anglo-American boycott of Japan over oil-marketing rights in Manchukuo in 1935 see, Grew to SoS No. 77, 10 April 1935, *FRUS*, 1935, III, pp. 891–2.

70. Minutes of a conversation between Millard of the US Embassy, London, and Chaplin, 1 June 1937, F3234/2291/40, FO 371/21054, PRO. See also minutes of a meeting between Ronald, Chaplin, and Millard, 26 May 1937, F3059/32/40, FO 371/21047, PRO.

71. However, these discussions overlooked evidence that Vanich had already approached the Japanese on the question of crude oil supplies, Hall (London) to Hull and Bangkok No. 374, 12 June 1937, enclosing FO letter of 11 June, 892.6363/68, RG 59, NARA; Hull to Bangkok, 17 June 1937, 892.6363/71, RG 59, NARA.

72. Chapman to SoS No. 528, 19 May 1937, 892.6363/67, RG 59, NARA. See also Hornbeck to Parker (Standard Vacuum Oil), 20 May 1937, 892.6363/65, RG 59, NARA. On rice exports, see Doll memorandum, 19 December 1936, fol. 1, K Kh 0301.1.18/18, TNA.

73. Chapman to SoS No. 537, 2 June 1937, 892.6363/69, RG 59, NARA; minutes of a conversation with Pridi enclosed in Chapman (Bangkok) to Hull No. 550, 26 June 1937, 892.6363/72, RG 59, NARA. The oil companies, which pressed Hornbeck during August to demand direct denials from the Siamese Ministry of Defence, Parker (Standard Vacuum Oil) to Hornbeck, 2 August 1937, 892.6363/75, RG 59, NARA.

74. Asiatic Petroleum, Singapore, to FO (P.263), 17 December 1937, F142/142/40, FO 371/22208, PRO.

75. Chapman to SoS No. 528, 19 May 1937, 892.6363/67 F/FG, RG 59, NARA. See also Vanich to Chudo (Japanese Naval Attaché), Bangkok, January 1938, and Vanich to Messrs. Mitsui Bussan Kaisha Ltd., January 1938, enclosed in Crosby to Eden No. 11, 6 January 1938, F1740/142/40, FO 371/22208, PRO. The fact that copies of Vanich's letters were obtained in draft form suggests that the oil companies enjoyed a high-level source.

76. Vanich to Phya Vicharn Chakrakich, Acting Minister of Marine, January 1938, enclosed in Crosby to Eden No. 59, 3 February 1938, F2584/142/40, FO 371/22208, PRO; Vanich to Cities Service Oil Company of New York, January 1938, and Vanich to Gulf Petroleum of Houston, January 1938, enclosed in Crosby to Eden No. 60, 4 February 1938, F2585/142/40, FO 371/22208, PRO.

77. Talbot minute, 30 June 1938, F6917/142/40, FO 371/22208, PRO.

78. Crosby to FO No. 38, 27 June 1938, F6917/142/40, FO 371/22208, PRO.

79. Crosby to FO No. 411, 27 June 1938, F1544/142/40, FO 371/22208. Nevertheless, Crosby repeatedly denounced Vanich as 'a thoroughly corrupt official who has been feathering his own nest', Crosby to FO No. 61E, 4 February 1938, F2586/373/40, FO 371/22211, PRO. Loftus memorandum on Shell and Stanvac, 'Advantages for Thailand's National Security and Development', 29 January 1959, not foliated, K Kh 0301.2.10/24, TNA.

80. Neville to SoS No. 30, 18 November 1937, 892.6363/81, RG 59, NARA; Neville to SoS No. 94, 21 February 1939, 892.6363/89, RG 59, NARA.

81. Baker to Hull, 9 June 1936, 892.00 PR/87, RG 59, NARA.

82. Conversation between Hornbeck and Rajamontri, 13 March 1935, 711/922.60, RG 59, NARA; Far Eastern Division memorandum, 'Siam Treaty Revisions', 26 February 1935, 711/922.62, RG 59, NARA; Sayre memorandum, 22 November 1935, *FRUS*, 1935, III, pp. 1101–8; Conversation between Hull and Rajamontri, *FRUS*, 1936, IV, pp. 994–1000.

83. Memorandum by Sayre, 22 November 1935, *FRUS*, 1935, III, pp. 1107–8; note from SoS to Rajamontri, 2 December 1935, *FRUS*, 1935, III, p. 1109. On the tin smelter, see Chapter 3.

84. Memorandum by Sayre, 9 December 1935, enclosing 'Draft of Suggested Informal Notes', *FRUS*, 1935, III, pp. 1110–1. Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Siam, 14 September 1937, *FRUS*, 1937, IV, pp. 847–57. For orthodox views of Sayre as benign in the 1930s, see F. J. Moore with C. D. Neher, *Thailand: Its People, Society and Culture*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974, pp. 312–13; P. Duke, 'Thai–American joint efforts and co-operation for the abolition of unequal treaties (1918–38)', in Wivat Mung Kandi and W. Warrens (eds.), *A Century and a Half of Thai–American Relations*, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn Press, 1982.

85. Neville to SoS No. 31, 1 November 1937, *FRUS*, 1937, III, pp. 863–72; Acting SoS to Neville No. 24, 1 November 1937, *FRUS*, 1937, III, pp. 863–72; Neville to SoS No. 35, 5 November 1937, *FRUS*, 1937, III, pp. 878–9; Sayre to Damrong, 16 December 1937, Siam file 2 (1930–9), Sayre Papers, LC.

86. Crosby to FO No. 38, 27 June 1938, F6917/142/40, FO 371/22208, PRO.

87. Eiji Murashima, 'The Origin of Modern Official State Ideology in Thailand', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XIX, 1 (1988): 80–96; W. F. Vella, *Chaiyo! The Role of King Vajiravudh in the Development of Thai Nationalism*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978, *passim*; Batson, *Absolute Monarchy*, p. 19; Crosby to FO No. 238, 15 November 1934, F21/21/40, FO 371/19374, PRO.

88. Memorandum by Crosby, 'Militarist Propaganda and Military Policy in Siam', 5 November 1936, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 450, 5 November 1936, F7676/216/40, FO 371/20300, PRO. For detailed surveys of the Yuvachon, see Chapman to SoS No. 485, 30 August 1939, 892.20/31, RG 59, NARA; 'The Yuvachon Movement', *Thai Chronicle*, 20 July 1939; Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, pp. 85, 94.

89. Annual Report for 1934, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 39, 30 January 1935, F1931/1931/40, FO 371/19379, PRO.

90. Economic Report on Siam for 1936, enclosed in Bailey to FO, 1 June 1937, F3189/154/40 FO 371/21050, PRO. By October 1937 Bailey judged that a failure of the Siamese rice crop, with its consequent economic impact, would be 'a blessing in disguise', Economic Report (B), for 1937, Bailey and Meiklereid to FO, 25 October 1937, F10174/154/40, FO 371/21050, PRO.

91. The Siamese Air Force was buying American Martin aircraft and manufacturing Corsair aircraft under licence. The State Department was regularly notified of other arms sales to Siam by Japan and Italy under the terms of the Washington Treaty. Chapman to SoS No. 502, 3 April 1937, 892.00/153, RG 59, NARA; see also Rosso (Italian Ambassador, Washington) to SoS, 4 August 1936, 892.34/70, RG 59, NARA; Hirosi Saito (Japanese Ambassador, Washington) to SoS, 6 October 1936, 892.34/72, RG 59, NARA.

92. Crosby to FO No. 349, 21 October 1935, F6815/296/40, FO 371/19377, PRO.

93. Significantly, Siam opened Legations in Rome and Berlin in the mid-1930s. Crosby to FO No. 480, 27 November 1936, F8021/100/40, FO 371/20297, PRO.

94. Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, p. 33, quoted in E. B. Reynolds, 'Ambivalent Allies: Japan and Thailand, 1941–1945', Ph.D. thesis, University of Hawaii, 1988, p. 97. The failure of the League of Nations over the Italo-Ethiopian conflict featured most prominently. Memorandum by Crosby 'Militarist Propaganda and Military Policy in Siam', 5 November 1936, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 450, 5 November 1936, F7676/216/40, FO 371/20300, PRO. See also Chapman to SoS No. 485, 30 August 1939, enclosing 'The Yuvachon Movement', *Thai Chronicle*, 20 July 1939, 892.20/31, RG 59, NARA.

95. Crosby to FO No. 220, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO, enclosing 'The Opinion of Luang Pibul Songgram' (translation), *Siam News*, 20 May 1936.

96. Crosby to FO No. 220, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO.

97. During 1935 Crosby had found Phibul's behaviour contradictory, being neither monarchist nor constitutionalist. Annual Report for 1934, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 39, 30 January 1935, F1931/1931/40, FO 371/19379, PRO.

98. Crosby to FO No. 220, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO. Chaplin of the Far Eastern Department agreed, minuting, 'It seems doubtful whether Luang Pibul is the stuff dictators are made of', Chaplin minute, 25 August 1936, F5030/216/40, FO 371/20300, PRO.

99. Crosby to FO No. 220, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO.

100. Memorandum by Crosby, 'Militarist Propaganda and Military Policy in Siam', 5 November 1936, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 450, 5 November 1936, F7676/216/40, FO 371/20300, PRO. See also, Chapman to Hull No. 485, 30 August 1939, 892.20/31, RG 59, NARA.

101. Memorandum by Crosby, 'Militarist Propaganda and Military Policy in Siam', 5 November 1936, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 450, 5 November 1936, F7676/216/40, FO 371/20300, PRO.

102. Chapman to SoS, No. 503, 6 April 1937, enclosing text of Phibul's speech of 31 March 1937 (New Year's Eve), as reported in the *Bangkok Times*, 3 April 1937, 892.00/151, RG 59, NARA; Crosby to FO No. 116, 27 March 1937, F2142/164/40, FO 371/21052, PRO.

103. Annual Report for 1937, enclosed in Crosby to Eden No. 29, 19 January 1938, F2080/2080/40, FO 371/22215, PRO.

104. Chapman to SoS, No. 503, 6 April 1937, enclosing text of Phibul's speech of 31 March 1937 (New Year's Eve), as reported in the *Bangkok Times*, 3 April 1937, 892.00/151, RG 59, NARA.

105. Ibid. Chapman noted correctly that no such prohibition existed, it was only a Siamese monopoly that was forbidden. Nevertheless, Phibul felt that this could only be corrected by the 'proper amount' of military power. Chapman declared oil to be of 'especial interest to the United States'.

106. Ibid.

107. Crosby to FO No. 131, 6 April 1937, F2143/164/40, FO 371/21052, PRO; Baker to Hull No. 503, 6 April 1937 enclosing the *Bangkok Times*, 3 April 1937, 892.00/151, RG 59, NARA.

108. Chapman to Hull, No. 503, 6 April 1937, enclosing Phibul's radio broadcast of 31 March 1937 (New Year's Eve), from the *Bangkok Times*, 3 April 1937, 892.00/151, RG 59, NARA.

109. Orde minute, 6 April 1937, F2143/164/40, FO 371/21052, PRO; Thynne Henderson minute, 8 June 1937, F3175/164/40, FO 371/21052, PRO.

110. Clive (Tokyo) to FO No. 140(R), 21 April 1937, F2286/164/40, FO 371/21052, PRO. Ishii Itaro, the Japanese Minister in Bangkok, was removed in April 1937 for his clumsiness in dealing with this episode. He was replaced by Kuramatsu Murai on 9 August 1937. See Annual Report on Heads of Mission, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 1, 1 January 1938, F1736/944/40, FO 371/22213, PRO. Crosby reportedly confided in Ishii that he was horrified by Phibul's speech and hoped Phibul would be 'ousted'; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 177.

111. Siam's finances stood up remarkably well during the period 1935–8, largely due to consecutive outstanding rice crops. Consequently, despite increased expenditure, Siam's budgets remained balanced. Inevitably, G. M. Baxter, Financial Secretary at the India Office, arrogantly attributed this to advisers, some of whom had come from India. Baxter minute to Political Secretary (IO), 20 January 1938 (Coll. 13/38), L/P&S/12/4059, IOLR; Baxter minute, 30 July 1937 (Coll. 22/37), L/P&S/12/4048, IOLR.

112. Doll added, 'They think we are all frightened of what they might do, that we attach considerable, instead of infinitesimal importance to their Lilliputian activities, that our courtesy is deference, when it is in fact condescension. Hence they are all puffed up and mighty is the swelling thereof', Doll to Baxter, 8 June 1937, 70/24/37, FO 628/53, PRO.

113. Crosby feared that Pridi would go into effective exile as Ambassador to Paris. Doll feared that the long-suffering conservative Minister of Finance would then give up the fight, permitting the military access to Siam's reserves. Crosby to FO No. 54, 1 February 1937, F1494/1494/40, FO 371/21083, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 102, 16 March 1937, F2240/1494/40, FO 371/21083, PRO.

114. Confidential Memorandum on the Vernacular Press, 29 April 1937, F3301/1494/40, FO 371/21053, PRO.

115. Crosby to FO No. 29(R), 29 July 1937, F4615/1494/40, FO 371/21053, PRO. 'Crisis in Siam', *Bangkok Times*, 31 July 1937; 'Political Crisis Here Remains Unsolved', *Siam Chronicle*, 3 August 1937. See also Pridi to Crosby, 30 July 1937, 3/106/37, FO 628/53, PRO. For a lengthy discussion of property scandal see, Chapman to SoS No. 582, 17 August 1937, 892.00/161, RG 59, NARA.

116. 'Luang Pradist Explains Siam's Policy in Seeking Revision of Treaties', *Siam Chronicle*, 31 March 1937; Chapman to Hull No. 582, 1 August 1937, 892.00/161, RG 59, NARA.

117. Bailey to FO No. 336, 17 September 1937, F6911/1494/40, FO 371/21054, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 423, 20 November 1937, F10197/1494/40, FO 371/21054, PRO; Annual Report for 1937, enclosed in Crosby to Eden No. 29, 19 January 1938, F2080/2080/40, FO 371/22215, PRO. Crosby remarked that Phahol 'remains aloft, not very like a cherub perhaps, but like some benevolent demigod, looking after the political life of poor Siam as best he can'.

118. Crosby did not agree, and subsequently pointed out that Pridi's triumph over the treaties had administered 'a nasty knock' to the military. Heppel minute, 6 January 1938, F113/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO; Crosby to Eden, 27 December 1937, F113/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO.

119. Lépissier, the new French Minister in Bangkok confided that he believed a *coup d'etat* by Phibul to be very near, hinting at the encouragement of Italian and German elements, Crosby to FO No. 146, 14 April 1938, F4339/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO.

120. Talbot minute, 7 October 1938, F10432/1321/40, FO 371/22214, PRO. Crosby drew further satisfaction from Pridi's decision to remain at the Foreign Office rather than move to the Ministry of Finance where his 'social theories and his impractical idealism' would make him 'dangerous', Crosby to Halifax No. 376, 2 September 1938, F10432/1321/40, FO 371/22214, PRO. Crosby to FO No. 547, 19 December 1938, F13779/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO.

121. In the long term, Phibul's star appeared to be rising. His major rival amongst the militarists, Phya Song Suradet, had been amongst the more prominent Promoters in 1933, but since then had been 'skulking in his tent' and was now 'very much a man of mystery' who increasingly distanced himself from the present regime. Crosby to Halifax No. 344, 15 August 1938, F9420/714/40, FO 371/22213, PRO; Crosby to Halifax No. 264, 2 July 1938, F8526/714/40, FO 371/22213, PRO; Crosby to FO 71(R), 11 November 1938, F11954/714/40, FO 371/22213, PRO.

122. The plot was attributed by the Chief of Police to one of the sons of Prince Svasti, in his time 'one of the best hated men in Siam' and now in exile in England, Crosby to FO No. 498, 12 November 1938, F12317/714/40, FO 371/22213 PRO.

123. Ibid.

124. Prince Purachatra was of the opinion that the idea of the re-establishment of the Thai Empire as it was prior to 1893 owed much to Prince Bovaradet, a proponent of related militarist and irredentist formulas. Bovaradet had presented his views formally before Cabinet in March 1931 and 'dreamed of a Thai Empire under which Siam would recover the provinces lost in 1893, 1904 and 1907. This dream would come true in some thirty years. British rule in India was in its final phase; Malaya was impotent. It thus behoved Siam to build up forthwith a military organization adequate to effect the reconquest of the lost lands when England and France are helpless.' Purachatra added that the version he heard of this concept suggested that 'Siam should build up an army to guard against the day when the Chinese would swoop down through Burma after the British had evacuated it'. Dormer to FO No. 13, 11 January 1934, F1185/21/40, FO 371/18206, PRO.

125. While Siam had lost territory to Malaya and to Burma before the period of British rule, neither area was predominantly Thai. Conversely, the Thai areas of north-east Burma, the Shan States, had not previously been part of Siam, but were coveted by some nationalists.

126. Although officials in London found Crosby's action 'admirable' nothing could be done to prevent the Siamese Ministry of Defence issuing similar maps to its soldiers. Crosby to FO No. 433, 14 December 1935, F504/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO; Chaplin minute, 30 January 1936. See also Crosby to Sri Sena, 13 December 1935, F504/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO.

127. Crosby to FO No. 433, 14 December 1935, F504/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO.

128. Crosby remarked: 'The younger and more ardent spirits of the Siamese army and navy not only dream but talk as if it were already in sight, of a war of liberation against the French (we ourselves, as another neighbouring and imperialistic Power, getting the backwash of this access of Gallophobia). Crosby to FO No. 220, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 226, 5 June 1936, F3504/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO. In the same month an article appeared in the vernacular journal *Therd Rathadhamanoon* entitled 'War between the Races as Seen in a Dream'. The article was subsequently reprinted in a Ministry of Defence journal. Ray, Crosby's French colleague, found Phibul's explanation 'worse than his original offence', Crosby to FO No. 245, 20 June 1936, F3845/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO.

129. Chaplin minute, 2 November 1936, F6577/4837/40, FO 371/20303, PRO.

Chaplin was wrong with regard to Burma where the Shan States in the north were inhabited by ethnic Thai. The Far Eastern Department seemed to have underestimated Siamese aspirations in Burma, even against non-Thai areas. In contrast the Burma Office were offered a graphic illustration of such sentiments during May 1938 when a number of Siamese officials from the Ministry of Finance visited Rangoon. They were reported as 'very nationalistic in their ideas and carried away by Japanese propaganda . . . they referred to Moulmein, Tavoy and Mergui [in southern Burma] and even Penang as having once been included in the Siamese Empire'. Burma Defence Bureau Intelligence Summary No. 5, 27 May 1938 (B1/17) M5/49, IOLR.

130. Memorandum by Crosby, 'Militarist Propaganda and Military Policy in Siam', 5 November 1936, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 450, 5 November 1936, F7676/216/40, FO 371/20300, PRO. For detailed surveys of the Yuvachon, see Chapman to SoS No. 485, 30 August 1939, 892.20/31, RG 59, NARA; 'The Yuvachon Movement', *Thai Chronicle*, 20 July 1939.

131. Vichit arranged for a series of plays with 'allusions to the Thai family of peoples'. These, reported a dismayed Crosby, were received with 'tumultuous applause' by the Bangkok public. Crosby to Halifax No. 179, 6 May 1938, F6378/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO.

132. Luang Vichit Vadhakarn, 'On the Road to Peace' (translation), *Prachmitr*, 6 May 1938, enclosed in Crosby to Halifax No. 183, 9 May 1938, F6382/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO. On the Anschluss and Siam's lost territories, see Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, pp. 147–8.

133. Vichit's speech, which was extreme in tone, contained an element of irony, for he was himself partly of Chinese extraction. Crosby to Halifax No. 342, 19 August 1938, F1004/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO.

134. Nevertheless, Crosby noted 'reference is made by the super patriots in the same breath to the Malay States', Annual Report for 1936, enclosed in Crosby to Eden No. 30, 21 January 1937, F1067/1067/40, FO 371/21053, PRO. Phibul was certainly more cautious and sceptical of Japan than many of the irredentists yet Phibul also wished to recover the lost territories, particularly in Indo-China. He discussed these matters several times with Yatabe, the Japanese Minister, during 1935. See Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 171.

135. This was underlined during Crosby's visit to the King of Luang Prabang in Laos, a 'Thai' area of French Indo-China. The King . . . confessed that his people looked increasingly towards Bangkok. Crosby noted that the key problem was how to integrate the masses rather than the élites of ethnic 'Thai' provinces within the framework of their respective European colonies. The King observed, 'I do not myself at all want to be swallowed up by Siam, for in that case I should soon lose all of my royal prerogatives as I am allowed by the French to retain, but there is no denying the fact that my people look to Bangkok as the religious and intellectual centre *par excellence* to which they must turn for guidance.' The Far Eastern Department spoke of 'a less stinking but possibly more dangerous nationalist movement of a cultural character'. Crosby to Halifax No. 179, 6 May 1938, F6378/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO; Talbot minute, 22 May 1938, F6378/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO.

136. Sarit attacked Japanese Pan-Asiatic statements which failed to discriminate between Siam and the 'vassal states' of the European empires, article by Nai Sarit Charoenrath (translation) in the *Nation*, 9 November 1936, enclosed in Crosby to FO, n.d., F155/155/40, FO 371/21050, PRO.

137. Crosby to Halifax No. 328, 10 August 1938, F10000/1321/40, FO 371/22214, PRO.

138. Some of this sentiment he attributed to 'the overbearing attitude assumed . . . by so many of those who belong to the white races', and some to a 'consciousness of their own inferiority to the white man in so many respects'. As to whether the latter was 'well grounded' or not, the discreet Crosby said, 'I will not venture upon an opinion'. Crosby to FO No. 328, 10 August 1938, F10000/1321/40, FO 371/22214, PRO.

139. Ibid.

140. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 126, 140; A. Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific Region*, London: Longman, 1989, p. 35.

141. Interestingly, the Japanese Army's principal strategic theorist, Colonel Ishihara, was also beginning to pay attention to the South Seas by 1936, and hence this area was not exclusively the preoccupation of the Navy; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 150.

142. Ibid.

143. Bailey No. 24, 2 July 1935, F5243/21/40, FO 371/19374, PRO. Brown argues that Siam had even become a victim of Japanese 'dumping' of manufactured goods such as cement by the mid-1930s, despite the high shipping costs; I. Brown, *The Élite and the Economy in Siam, c.1890–1920*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 155.

144. Annual Report 1935, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 82, 24 February 1936, F1909/1909/40, FO 371/20302, PRO.

145. Crosby to FO No. 220, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO. Crosby remarked that their irregular services had 'been disastrous to our reputation in Siam and adjacent countries'. For a less critical view, see A. Frater, *Beyond the Blue Horizon: Imperial Airway's Eastern Service*, London: Viking, 1987.

146. Siam tactfully declined stating she could not afford to reciprocate, Annual Report 1935, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 82, 24 February 1936, F1909/1909/40, FO 371/20302, PRO.

147. They even offered London a lengthy analysis of a visit of a troupe of Siamese dancers to an industrial exhibition at Yokohama in Japan, Annual Report 1935, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 82, 24 February 1936, F1909/1909/40, FO 371/20302, PRO. On the Japanese cultural offensive of the mid-1930s, see Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 178–82.

148. Crosby to Eden, 7 December 1936, F159/159/40, FO 371/21051, PRO, enclosing 'To What Extent May Siam's Trade Give Cause for Anxiety?' in the *Siam Chronicle*, 21 November 1936; Chaplin minute, 15 January 1937, F159/159/40, FO 371/21051, PRO. This was perhaps a thinly veiled reference to the Japanese Economic Mission which visited Siam in mid-1936 under Y. Yasukawa. The discussions regarding trade imbalances were 'very unconciliatory'. See Annual Report for 1936, enclosed in Crosby to Eden No. 30, 21 January 1937, F1067/1067/40, FO 371/21053, PRO.

149. However, Crosby was startled when in June 1935 he discovered that the number of Siamese students in Tokyo only numbered thirty, which he considered 'surprisingly low'. Similarly, Japan had secured only four low level adviser posts, 'from the point of view of the Japanese . . . disappointingly small'. Annual Report 1935, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 82, 24 February 1936, F1909/1909/40, FO 371/20302, PRO.

150. Rosso (Italian Ambassador, Washington) to SoS, 4 August 1936, 892.34/70, RG 59, NARA; Davis (Singapore) to SoS, 29 April 1937, 892.34/184, RG 59, NARA.

151. Crosby to FO No. 406, 23 November 1935, F8102/923/40, FO 371/19379, PRO; Chaplin minute, 15 May 1935, F2990/923/40, FO 371/19379, PRO. The majority of Siamese orders were placed with the Monfalcone Yard at Trieste in Italy.

152. Bailey No. 24, 2 July 1935, F5243/21/40, FO 371/19374, PRO.

153. Bailey to FO No. 37, 16 July 1935, F4860/21/40, FO 371/19374, PRO.

154. Crosby to FO No. 220, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO. Phibul's decision appears to have been due to pressure from the newly arrived Japanese Military Attaché, Tamura; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 172.

155. Crosby to FO No. 220, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO. However, one India Office official remarked revealingly 'there are obvious difficulties in getting the navy to take Orientals seriously', Rumbold minute, 8 August 1936 (Coll. 33/14), L/P&S/12/4066, IOLR.

156. Crosby to FO No. 220, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO.

157. Talbot minute, 2 January 1937, F714/714/40, FO 371/22212, PRO.

158. Crosby to FO No. 382, 8 November 1935, F7890/22/40, FO 371/19374, PRO.

159. Baker to SoS No. 250, 18 July 1935, *FRUS*, 1935, III, pp. 315–17.

160. Crosby to FO No. 134, 25 March 1936, F2504/100/40, FO 371/20297, PRO.

161. Crosby to FO No. 382, 8 November 1935, F7890/22/40, FO 371/19374, PRO.

162. Rapport du Colonel Roux, au sujet du 'ercement de l'Isthme de Kra', enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 347, 24 August 1936, F6046/844/40, FO 371/20301, PRO.

163. Annual Report for 1936, enclosed in Crosby to Eden No. 30, 21 January 1937, F1067/1067/40, FO 371/21053, PRO.

164. Annual Report 1935, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 82, 24 February 1936, F1909/1909/40, FO 371/20302, PRO. See, for example, Crosby's derision of Dô Hung, the representative of the French Indo-China Secret Service in Bangkok, contained in Crosby to FO No. 365, 30 August 1938, F10430/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO.

165. E. O. Hauser, 'La Rivalité anglo-japonaise dans la Pacifique: Le Canal de Kra menace la puisance de Singapore', *Lu*, 5 March 1937, enclosed in Clerk (Paris) to Eden, 18 March 1937, F1713/149/40, FO 371/21050, PRO.

166. Chapman to SoS No. 502, 3 April 1937, 892.00/153, RG 59, NARA; Report on a tour of Inspection of the Isthmus of Kra made by acting Consul R. Wittington, 24 November 1936, enclosed in Crosby to Eden, 30 November 1936, F149/149/40, FO 371/21050, PRO.

167. Crosby to Eden, 15 March 1937, F1766/149/40, FO 371/21050, PRO. Pridi subsequently initiated an article in the *Bangkok Times*, 9 March 1937, refuting Hauser's contentions.

168. Wilson (Paris) to SD Nos. 1468–70, 19 October 1937, *FRUS*, 1937, III, p. 623; Bullitt (Paris) to SoS No. 1488, *FRUS*, 1937, III, p. 629.

169. Bullitt (Paris) to SoS Nos. 1496–1500, 23 October 1937, *FRUS*, 1937, III, pp. 634–5.

170. Grew to SoS No. 467, 11 July 1938, 751.94/60, RG 59, NARA; Lockhart (Peking) to SoS No. 1784, 14 November 1938, 893.00 PR/51, RG 59, NARA.

171. Minutes of a conversation between Cambon of the French Embassy, London, and Ronald, 8 July 1938, F7178/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO.

172. Ibid. Crosby to Halifax No. 396, 16 September 1938, F10968/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO.

173. Ibid.

174. Aditya was essentially a figure of the old regime of the sort which Crosby often depended upon for information. Like Crosby, Aditya was a graduate of Cambridge. Nevertheless, he was close to Phibul. Crosby to FO No. 402, 25 November 1935, F8103/22/40, FO 371/19374, PRO.

175. Annual Report for 1936, enclosed in Crosby to Eden No. 30, 21 January 1937, F1067/1067/40, FO 371/21053, PRO; Crosby to Eden No. 449, 11 December 1936, F163/159/40, FO 371/21051, PRO. The camera was discovered by the Traffic Manager at Don Muang Airport, Robert Jackson.

176. Crosby to Eden No. 507, 17 December 1936, F496/159/40, FO 371/21051, PRO.

177. Annual Report for 1936, enclosed in Crosby to Eden No. 30, 21 January 1937, F1067/1067/40, FO 371/21053, PRO.

178. Crosby to FO No. 402, 25 November 1935, F8103/22/40, FO 371/19374, PRO. On Aditya see Annual Report for 1938 enclosed in Crosby to FO 25 June 1939, F2390/2390/40, FO 371/23596, PRO.

179. Crosby to FO No. 220, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO.

180. Ibid.

181. Crosby to FO No. 55, 3 February 1936, F1421/100/40, FO 371/20297, PRO.

182. Thynne Henderson minute, 8 May 1936, F2504/100/40, FO 371/20297, PRO.

183. In his famous speech of April 1937, Phibul had conjured up the idea of a Japanese attack on Siam and Britain as Siam's protector, Chapman to SoS No. 513, 17 April 1937, 892.00/152, RG 59, NARA. See also Chapman to SoS No. 4, 6 April 1937, 892.00/150, RG 59, NARA. Talbot minute, 10 June 1936, F6172/2113/40, FO 371/22215.

184. Crosby to FO No. 465, 27 October 1938, F11680/1321/40, FO 371/22214, PRO.

185. Crosby to FO No. 200, 16 June 1936, F3502/216/40, FO 371/20299, PRO.

186. In March 1936 an article appeared in *Asahi Shimbun* suggesting that Pridi had advocated an 'economic league' in Asia led by Japan. Pridi was at pains to deny this in a special interview in the *Bangkok Times*, but Crosby noted that the Singapore press was no less irresponsible than the Japanese, and now waxed lyrical about Pridi's pro-Japanese leanings. Crosby to FO No. 90, 28 February 1936, F1522/100/40, FO 371/20297, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 55, 3 February 1936, F1421/100/40, FO 371/20297, PRO.

187. Crosby to Eden No. 449, 11 December 1936, F163/159/40, FO 371/21051, PRO; Orde minute, 10 May 1937, F2566/159/40, FO 371/21051, PRO.

188. In 1931 officials in London concluded that the Eastern Frontier was so difficult that 'it seems scarcely possible for any large body of men to cross it'. In February 1935 the Indian Army considered 'that aggression on the part of Siam would be most unexpected'. In the same year the Committee of Imperial Defence added that 'if events were to show Siam was falling unduly under Japanese influence it would be necessary to review the whole position'. Report by Commission on the Defence of Burma, August 1931 (397/37), M 3/121, IOLR; Army Department (India) memorandum, 'Defence of Burma', 9 February 1935, 30630/IV/1/GS MOI, M 3/121, IOLR; CID 191-D, 25 June 1935, CAB 5/7, PRO.

189. 'Report by the Inter-Services Conference on the Defence of the Port of Rangoon and of the Oil Refinery and Installations Near Rangoon', January 1938, M 3/410, IOLR; Crosby to FO No. 32, 4 June 1938, F6172/2113/40, FO 371/22215, PRO.

190. This related particularly to armoured vehicles and landing craft, Haining (DMOI) to Dobbie, 25 November 1937, not foliated, WO 106/2441, PRO. On this matter see Ong Chit Chung, 'British Defence Planning in Malaya, 1935–8: From the Defence of Singapore to the Defence of the Malayan Mainland', *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, 70, 1 (1988): 168–9.

191. Ong Chit Chung, 'British Defence Planning in Malaya', pp. 172–3.

192. COS No. 566, 4 March 1937, CAB 53/13, PRO; Dobbie to WO, 22 September 1937, not foliated, WO 32/4188, PRO; Ong Chit Chung, 'British Defence Planning in Malaya', pp. 176–7.

193. Percival, 'Appreciation from the Point of View of an Attack on the Fortress of Singapore', November 1937, not foliated, WO 106/2440, PRO; I. Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain's Eastern Empire, 1919–1941*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 161–3.

194. Dobbie to WO, 19 July 1938, not foliated, WO 106/2440, PRO. For a detailed discussion of this matter, see Ong Chit Chung, 'British Defence Planning in Malaya', pp. 181–4.

195. The GOC Malaya, Major-General William Dobbie visited Bangkok in the Spring of 1938, timed to coincide with Phibul's absence, Crosby to FO No. 38, 26 February 1938, F3590/3590/40, FO 371/22216, PRO.

196. London incorporated this into major defence appreciations compiled in 1940, CID 338 mtg., 17 November 1938, CAB 2/7; COS Paper No. 805 'Singapore: Reinforcement from India', 14 December 1938, CAB 53/31; COS Paper No. 592 (Revise), 15 August 1940, CAB 60/182, PRO.

197. Ong Chit Chung, 'British Defence Planning in Malaya', p. 162; Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base*, p. 88.

198. COS Paper No. 560, 22 February 1937, CAB 53/29, PRO.

199. COS Paper No. 557, 'Malaya: Period before Relief', 6 April 1937, CAB 53/30, PRO; COS Paper No. 560, 22 February 1937, CAB 53/29, PRO. The problems in the Mediterranean were compounded by uncertainty over the French, Hamill, *Strategic Illusion*, p. 286.

200. DP(P) 1st mtg., 19 April 1937, CAB 16/181, PRO; DP(P) 5, CAB 16/182, PRO.

201. COS Paper No. 560, 22 February 1937, CAB 53/29, PRO; Ronald memorandum, 22 April 1937, F2401/597/61, FO 371/221025, PRO.

202. DP(P) 2nd mtg., 11 May 1937, CAB 16/181, PRO.

203. By February 1938 the Foreign Office had concluded that Japan had exhausted herself in China, the COS disagreed, CID 319th mtg., February 1938, CAB, 2/8 PRO.

204. The Foreign Office had been terrorized in October 1937 by Roosevelt's 'Quarantine Speech' which contained the implicit threat of sanctions. Britain feared being catapulted into a war for which she was not ready, or in which the United States might not participate at all. D. Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937–1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation*, London: Europa, 1981, pp. 30–3, 202; Pownall (DMI) to Dobbie, 11 March 1938, not foliated, WO 106/2430, PRO.

205. Crosby to FO No. 485, 7 November 1938, F12115/12115/40, FO 371/22216, PRO; Craigie to FO No. 1016, 14 December 1938, F471/471/61, FO 371/22172, PRO.

206. Even the Far Eastern Department recognized that this was hardly possible, Phillips to FO 17 March 1939, *DBFP*, Series III, appendix No. 2; Crosby to FO 17 March 1939, F2798/471/61, FO 371/23544, PRO; minutes by Clarke, 22 March 1938, Ronald, 23, 28, 29 March, Fitzmaurice, 28 March 1939, F2798/471/61, FO 371/23544, PRO. On recognition of the prospect of global war, see COS Paper No. 785(JP) 25 October 1938, CAB 53/36, PRO.

207. R. J. Pritchard, 'Far Eastern Influences on British Strategy, 1937–39,' Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1983, pp. 131–4. Hamill, *Strategic Illusion*, pp. 290–2; Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base*, p. 158.

208. J. R. Leutze, *Bargaining for Supremacy: Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1937–1941*, Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1977, pp. 3–55.

209. As early as June 1936, Prince Wan had piously assured Crosby that in the event of an Anglo-Japanese war, British violation of Siam's neutrality was 'unthinkable', and was therefore not feared by Siam. Crosby to FO No. 270, 4 July 1936, F4248/216/40, FO 371/20300, PRO, citing an interview with Lt.-Col. Yuddhasastra Kosol, Secretary of State for Defence, by *Issara*; other defence officials wrote that the 'failure of the League of Nations over Abyssinia means we must look to force to protect us from the fate of the peoples on our borders'. Statement by Cmdr. Ananda Netr Rojana (translation) in *City Star*, 12 July 1936, enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 286, 15 July 1936, F5070/216/40, FO 371/20300, PRO.

210. Crosby to FO No. 491, 10 November 1938, F3422/1321/40, FO 371/22214, PRO.

211. When these plans were presented to the Japanese Emperor, he remarked, 'This would be a violation of Siamese neutrality, would it not? I cannot condone such a plan. You must rethink it.' The plans were redrafted. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 193–4.

212. W. Price, 'Siam Turns to Army Rule', *Asia*, May 1938, enclosed in F7495/113/40, FO 371/22207, PRO.

213. He argued that British forces should be able to stop any Japanese attempt to establish bases in south Siam; Percival, 'Appreciation from the Point of View of the Japanese for an Attack on the Fortress of Singapore', November 1937, not foliated, WO 106/2440, PRO.

214. Crosby to FO No. 55, 3 February 1936, F1421/100/40, FO 371/20297,

PRO. Cf. the assertion of the War Office as late as 1939 that 'Thai politics are largely dominated by fear', Lt.-Col. (GS) minute, 17 November 1939, not foliated, WO 106/2338, PRO.

215. Crosby to FO No. 39, 30 January 1935, enclosing Annual Report for 1934, F1931/1931/40, FO 371/19379, PRO.

216. Yatabe (Bangkok) to Hirota (Tokyo), 15 December 1935, GKR File L-3-3-0 No. 8-12-1, quoted in Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 131.

217. Crosby to FO No. 55, 3 February 1936, F1421/100/40, FO 371/20297, PRO.

218. Randall minute, 21 July 1936, F1931/1931/40, FO 371/19379, PRO.

# PART II
# The Approach of the Pacific War, 1939–1942

When the present war was over, there would be no more small nations in the world; all would be merged into big ones. So there were only two ways for us to choose, either become a Power or be swallowed up by another Power. If we got back our lost territory, then we could have the hope of becoming a Power.

Luang Vichit Vadhakarn, Minister of Fine Arts,
*Thai Chronicle*, 2 November 1940.

Americans minimise the issue and talk of big issues, but Thailand is the key to the South.

Ashley Clarke minute, Far Eastern Department,
12 August 1941, F7581/210/40, FO 371/28124, PRO.

# 5

# 'The Voice Crying in the Wilderness': The Impact of the European War on Western Policies in Thailand,* 1939–1940

SUPERFICIALLY, Bangkok appeared to be the focus of significant changes during December 1938. Phibul assumed the premiership, retained the portfolios of Defence and Foreign Affairs himself, and even changed the name of the country from Siam to Thailand. But in reality, circumstances in Bangkok did not change radically. Instead, the attention of Western and Thai policy-makers alike, including Phibul, was transfixed, and to a large extent governed, by events in Europe. Between the Munich Conference of October 1938 and Hitler's advance on Paris in the Spring of 1940, political opinions and strategic thinking in Bangkok oscillated in almost daily response to international events. Consequently, the double blow of the Anschluss and Munich damaged British prestige badly. By the Summer of 1939 Britain appeared even weaker to observers in Bangkok as a result of bowing to Japanese demands during a confrontation over the concession port of Tientsin in China. Yet circumstances were reversed in August 1939 when Japan was dealt a devastating blow. Germany, allied to Japan through the Anti-Comintern Pact of 1936, now signed the Nazi–Soviet Pact and allied herself with Japan's most probable adversary, the Soviet Union, as a result of which the Government in Tokyo fell. This was followed by an Anglo-French display of resolve when they declared war with Germany in September. Britain now appeared to be in the ascendant and so the Thais rushed forward with an offer of a system of non-aggression pacts to be signed with Britain and France. However, the negotiations regarding these pacts had barely been completed before the fall of France in June 1940 left Britain appearing weak and vulnerable once more. Thereafter, Thai irredentists were beside themselves with excitement at the

*Phibul changed the name of Siam to 'Thailand' by decree in the Summer of 1939. Consequently, the name 'Thailand' is employed hereafter in this study.

prospect of recouping the lost territories in Indo-China from a prostrate France.

These European developments had their most profound impact at the strategic level. Serious British rearmament had only begun in 1938 and the Far East was now accorded a decreasing level of priority by the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) in London.[1] British discomfort was sharpened by the incisive enquiries of the Thais concerning the security of Singapore. On 25 May 1939 Prince Aditya, an Anglophile senior statesman, asserted that Thailand was resisting Japanese pressure to join the Anti-Comintern Pact. The Cabinet was currently 'much preoccupied' with a debate over the value of Thailand's neutrality which appeared to be contingent upon a balance between British and Japanese power. Aditya pointedly asked:

> What would Britain do if their hand was suddenly forced by the Japanese? The Prince was not greatly reassured when I told him that we should send out a powerful fleet to Singapore when the emergency arose. What, he asked nervously, did I think was going to happen whilst the fleet was on its way?

'The Siamese', Crosby concluded, 'are in a very nervous state.'[2] While blithely reassuring the Thais that they were the victims of 'Japanese scare tactics', privately, Crosby was no more optimistic and showed his true sentiments by joining his colleague, Robert Craigie in Tokyo, in renewing the calls they had made during 1938 for a fleet to be sent to Singapore. Their appeals were repeated throughout 1939 and although they stood little chance of reversing London's Eurocentric priorities, by September, Crosby was known to military planners as 'the voice crying in the wilderness'.[3]

The high value placed upon the Singapore naval base, which had limped its way through the financial stringency of the inter-war years to final completion in February 1938, constituted only one of two fundamental misconceptions in British Far Eastern strategy.[4] The second misconception was the belief that, Anglo-American defence co-operation could be achieved more easily in the Pacific than in Europe. Consequently, in 1921, Britain had ended her alliance with Japan in return for a mere understanding with the United States. By the mid-1930s it was clear that the United States had no interest in sharing the defence burden of Britain's Asiatic colonies, or her Pacific Dominions. Even if the political problems of American isolationism were disregarded, the

profiles of British and American interests in Asia were markedly different. While both countries had major interests in China, British commitments were greater, representing 6 per cent of all her foreign investment. The United States, in contrast, had more capital invested in Japan. Other than as a source of raw materials, the only major American interest in South-East Asia in the 1930s was the Philippines.[5] The profile of British and American interests in Thailand, other than oil marketing, could not have been more divergent.[6]

By 1938 Britain had at least succeeded in enticing the United States into some joint naval planning. In March 1939 Britain even persuaded the United States to send her fleet to Honolulu as a warning to Japan. Notwithstanding this achievement, the prospect of Franco-Italian naval conflict in the Mediterranean in early 1939 ensured that Britain could not meet both her Middle East requirements and her glib promises to the Pacific Dominions to dispatch a fleet to Singapore.[7] Britain's strategic debility east of Suez determined the two primary objectives of British foreign policy in Asia before December 1941: firstly, to avoid war with Japan at all costs; secondly, not to offend the United States by appearing to indulge in the appeasement of Japan. These contradictory requirements were mirrored in Bangkok, where Crosby sought to pursue a policy of concession towards an increasingly militarist regime in order to bolster the defence of Malaya. Conversely, the United States demanded a hard line in the face of confrontations over oil and, from the Summer of 1940, because of Thai-Japanese co-operation against Indo-China. Yet without an American security guarantee to protect Malaya, Britain could not dispense with her need for a neutral and preferably co-operative Thailand, and consequently British diplomats continued to operate a policy of concession.

Britain's urgent need to placate the Thais and prevent Japanese ascendancy in Thailand reinforced Crosby's case against those businessmen and officials who, ignorant of, or unwilling to accept, Britain's military weakness, continued to advocate a die-hard 'colonial' approach to Thailand, characterized by orders and threats. He warned:

> British firms . . . must reconcile themselves to the altered conditions of the day . . . display sympathy for the legitimate aspirations of the Thais and . . . swim with, not against, the swiftly flowing current . . . foreign merchants who do not recognise the fact had better cease from business in Thailand altogether before worse things befall them.[8]

Paradoxically, the international pressures that contributed to the faster flowing current of Thai nationalism after 1938 were the very same pressures that inclined many British non-diplomatic officials and businessmen to swim ever more stubbornly upstream. This was especially true of Whitehall's new economic ministries, spawned by the war economy after September 1939, which had recruited heavily from commercial companies. In a similarly perverse way, just as Thai nationalists began to question their close but informal relationship with sterling, British financial ministries and institutions, pressed by the costs of rearmament and then war in Europe, were found to be at their least generous. Consequently, as during the international economic crisis of 1931, Britain found that the most severe challenges to her position in Thailand, even before the outbreak of the Pacific War, were the product of turbulence in the international system rather than indigenous nationalism.

## *Thailand, Singapore, and Anglo-French Strategy, 1938–1939*

Although events during late 1938 in Czechoslovakia had left the Thais 'badly shaken', it required the visit of a Japanese military mission to Bangkok in May 1939 to prompt the Foreign Office Far Eastern Department into reflecting on Thai reactions to events in Europe.[9] There were rumours of a Thai–Japanese agreement, but Crosby's regular sources within the Thai Government remained confused or evasive. Some suggested that the purposes of the Japanese mission were merely technical, others suggested they were political, still others that the mission had arrived uninvited and constituted a severe embarrassment. The Far Eastern Department found all this 'very queer'.[10] Further reports of a Thai–Japanese agreement in June 1939 spurred more investigations.[11] In Bangkok Crosby, inured to such rumours by innumerable French 'scares', viewed a tentative Thai–Japanese military agreement as no more than 'possible'.[12] But on 21 June 1939 further intelligence reports had all but convinced London of the existence of such an agreement.[13]

The focus of debate in the Far Eastern Department now shifted to examine how a developing Thai–Japanese alliance might be countered. Talbot, the Thai desk officer within the Department, noted enthusiastically that Crosby had been 'armed' with a telegram outlining Axis weaknesses to be put to Phibul. But other

officials recognized that telegrams fell far short of Crosby's definition of armaments and were unlikely to influence the Thais unduly. They toyed with Crosby's suggestion that he might be allowed to give the Thais an informal indication of the help they might expect in resistance to Japanese aggression. But Howe, who had recently replaced Orde as Head of the Department, dismissed this at once, noting that this was more information than had been offered to Australia.[14]

July 1939 marked the high point of speculation regarding the Thai–Japanese negotiations, prompting even the quiescent United States Minister, Edward Neville, to seek action by his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull. Representations were then made to the Thai Minister in Washington, Abhibal Rajamontri.[15] On 4 July Prince Aditya had spoken again to Crosby, remarking that during April Phibul had declared that while Thailand remained neutral, he preferred the democratic powers. But during May with the arrival of the Japanese mission, 'a complete change had occurred', which Aditya attributed to the growing influence of pro-Japanese members of the Cabinet:

> Luang Sindhu, Commander-in-Chief of the navy, was especially venomous, boasting that the Japanese would soon take Hong Kong and Saigon and would then capture Singapore speedily by land attack. The Premier who is a human weather vane had come under the influence of these men. . . .

Crosby added that the Japanese were 'distributing money freely' amongst prominent Thais, before launching into his familiar call for a fleet.[16] However, the Far Eastern Department were not convinced and now began to suspect that the Thais, or even Crosby, might be exploiting the situation in order to panic London into dispatching a naval force to Singapore. Nigel Ronald, employing one of the Department's favourite stereotypes, concluded that 'the Siamese, being orientals, much given to bargaining and procrastinations have not yet definitely committed themselves to anything'.[17] Therefore, they accepted an assurance given by Phibul on 7 July 1939 that there 'never would be a secret understanding between the Siamese and Japan'.[18] Accordingly, requests from the French Foreign Minister for a joint *démarche* over the supposed treaty were rejected.[19]

The debate over a Thai–Japanese alliance rumbled on in a desultory fashion during the early Autumn of 1939.[20] The Intelligence Staff at Singapore claimed that they had access to a

source within the Thai Ministry of Defence whom they referred to obliquely as source 'No. 2'. 'No. 2' had discussed the possible existence of a Thai–Japanese treaty with members of the Thai National Assembly, the Japanese Mitsui Company, and the Thai Ministry of Defence. In particular he had talked at length to Phibul's private secretary, Major Amborn, and the latter had asserted that 'it was only a rumour that there existed any secret treaty between Siam and Japan. It was too risky to have that nowadays and if there had been any he should know it for certain as he did all the important filing and was present when any signature was required by Luang Peebol [Phibul].' None the less, Amborn continued, 'We Thai people like the Japanese better than any other nation, they are our Mentors.... Our aims and objectives are the same.' Despite the absence of a Thai–Japanese agreement, British officials considered this picture of Phibul's Ministry 'very bleak'.[21]

Uncertainty over the question of an agreement reflected Phibul's obsessive secrecy and deliberate ambiguity in the conduct of his foreign policy. His personal control of foreign policy created confusion for the West and Thai Cabinet Ministers alike. Phibul's *modus operandi* was well illustrated by the abortive Thai–German talks concerning raw material supplies in 1939. During March, the Far Eastern Department received reliable information concerning a German attempt to obtain wolfram from deposits at Koh Samui, an island in the Gulf of Siam. The Thai Foreign Minister, Sri Dharmadhibes, asserted that the question had never been before the Thai Cabinet. It was subsequently revealed by Prince Aditya that letters had been exchanged between Hermann Goering and Phibul without the knowledge of any other minister. During May 1939 an 'embarrassed' and 'evasive' Phibul refused to admit to these exchanges.[22]

Despite Phibul's secrecy and personal diplomacy, by August 1939, both Crosby and the Far Eastern Department had correctly discounted the existence of any major Thai–Japanese agreement. Phibul, argued Crosby, was mercurial, uncertain, and attempting to keep all his options open, thus his sympathies 'varied as the wind blew'. This view was reinforced in late August, when the announcement of the Nazi–Soviet pact dealt a severe blow to Japan and the pro-Japanese faction in Bangkok led by Luang Sindhu. Crosby now confidently declared himself to be weary of the Thai–Japanese question, adding that if an agreement existed it would have been concluded through compulsion, rendering it valueless.[23] Yet contemporaneously, British and French military

officials were meeting at Singapore. There, reports of Thai–Japanese co-operation produced a much firmer reaction.

In April 1939 Anglo-French staff conversations were conducted in London 'in the spirit of utmost frankness'. Particular attention was to be paid to the fact that Japanese forces might violate French and Thai territory.[24] Subsequently, regional Anglo-French staff talks were held at Singapore during the last week of June between delegations led by Admiral Sir Percy Noble, British Naval Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) China Station and General Martin, the C-in-C of French forces in Indo-China. They began by establishing a framework of priorities for the defence of South-East Asia. Singapore, they agreed, was the keystone of their strategy, while Indo-China appeared vulnerable and therefore merely constituted an advanced base in Singapore's defence, and as such would not be reinforced. Meanwhile they recognized that even the defence of Singapore, and therefore the Indian Ocean, was wholly dependent upon the timely arrival of reinforcements.[25]

Against the background of this unpalatable strategic appreciation, the Conference then turned to consider the probable attitude and actions of Thailand in the event of a Japanese attack. Martin and Noble agreed that rumours abounded concerning a Thai–Japanese alliance. Martin then declared that French concern was so great that they wished to read a prepared statement proposing measures to ensure Thai military co-operation with the West. He opened by denouncing Thailand's 'doubtful neutrality' as an intolerable burden to Anglo-French defence planning. Therefore, he continued, the British and French diplomats in Bangkok should demand a promise of 'benevolent neutrality' in the event of a Japanese attack. This 'benevolence' was to include free passage of troops through Siam between British and French colonies; an undertaking to resist Japanese landings on the coast of the Gulf of Siam; and permission to use Siamese air and naval bases. In return Siam would receive a guarantee of territorial integrity. Furthermore, if Siam were to refuse, Martin proposed the following action:

(a) Blockade of the Gulf of Siam by the allied fleets, using Saigon and Singapore as a base.
(b) Military action on land and in the air starting from Cambodge [Cambodia] for the French forces, from Burma and perhaps Malaya for the English forces, with Bangkok as a target.

The preference of the French for abrasive tactics when dealing with

Thailand was well known, nevertheless Noble was clearly taken aback by Martin's proposal. He discreetly suggested that Martin's detailed plans for retribution should be considered by the conference's military subcommittee. These plans were not permitted to resurface in the report submitted by the Conference to their superiors in London and Paris.[26]

Nevertheless, the final report of the Conference called for strong action against Thailand, insisting that the geographical position of Thailand 'makes her neutrality a vital factor in the security of Indo-China, Burma and Malaya', and calling for a joint *demarché*, firstly to force Thailand to 'declare, without ambiguity, her intentions; and second, to deter her from complicity with Japan'. Britain and France would demand the free passage of troops between the two colonies. While British officers at Singapore favoured harsh tactics, they also noted that without sizeable reinforcements for the Far East, such a *demarché* might easily fail.[27]

Crosby learned of these military deliberations only by chance from the GOC Burma, who returned from the Singapore Conference via Bangkok. Crosby attacked the 'exaggerated and distorted ideas of the French' on a Thai–Japanese military pact, adding that any *demarché* 'would certainly be refused and would alarm and antagonise the Siamese who have been assured repeatedly that we insist upon nothing more than absolute neutrality. . . . We should place them in a cruel position if we asked them to declare in our favour.' The Far Eastern Department shared Crosby's misgivings, and made strong representations to the CID who eventually accepted that a *demarché* against Siam would be counterproductive.[28] Moreover they were aware that Axis intelligence had already obtained full details of the Conference.[29] The French meanwhile reaffirmed their position as the *bête noire* of the Far Eastern Department by declaring their intention of establishing 'for certain' what the American attitude would be in the event of a war in the Far East. Dening, a senior official, was horrified that the French were intent on launching themselves into this most sensitive of areas and so the French were verbally instructed of 'the dangers we see in appearing to prod America' over the Far East. British diplomats had therefore managed to blunt harsh Anglo-French military polices emanating from Singapore. Nevertheless, the Singapore Conference was not without effect. The importance of Siam was now clear to strategic planners in London. The Chiefs of Staff, reflecting on the findings of the Conference, concluded that 'the key to the situation is Siam'.[30]

There were two principal reasons underpinning the incompatibility of French policies with those of British diplomats in London and Bangkok. Firstly, Indo-China was now threatened by an ebullient Japan, an irredentist Thailand, and an increasingly volatile indigenous population, so French strategists had every reason for alarm.[31] Lepissier, the French Minister in Bangkok, was 'positively hysterical' on the question of a Thai–Japanese military treaty.[32] Secondly, French policy in Asia was strongly influenced by the colonial Government of Indo-China and Outre Mer, the French Colonial Office in Paris, rather than by the diplomats of the Quai d'Orsay. It was characterized by a die-hard attitude punctuated by occasional acts of deliberate provocation, the precise reverse of Crosby's prescription. The 'colonial' rather than 'diplomatic' nature of French policy was underlined by the fact that Lepissier's intelligence officer in Bangkok, Dô Hung, was not a Secret Service (Deuxieme Bureau) officer, but a member of the Special Branch (Sûreté) of the French Indo-China colonial police.[33]

Crosby had further reasons for doubting the frequent French reports of Thai–Japanese co-operation.[34] As a neutral capital in Asia, like similar neutral capitals in Europe, Bangkok had always been a focus for exaggerated stories of intrigue and clandestine activity. The long-resident Crosby was therefore inured to this and found Lepissier's constant alarms to be 'the bane of my life'. He continued, 'I am growing weary of the tale, to which I have been listening for over thirty years now, that every Japanese doctor, dentist, barber or photographer in a Siamese town is either an Admiral or a Field Marshal in disguise.'[35] Perhaps Crosby was too philosophical, for the undercover activities of Japanese attachés, missions, and 'tourists' were undoubtedly increasing.[36] The Far Eastern Department shared Crosby's increasingly Francophobe sentiments. This was underlined during May 1939 when Crosby recounted Lepissier's most recent 'intelligence report' that 1,500 Thai troops had massed on the French border disguised as bicycling policemen. The Department rushed to heap derision upon the French Minister and his staff and even senior officials like Nigel Ronald dismissed Lepissier as 'rather an ass'. In attacking the French colonial 'die-hards', British diplomats also discovered an effective vehicle for denouncing similar attitudes amongst less sympathetic British officials in other departments who could now be accused of a French mentality. More importantly, senior figures such as Ronald were increasingly conscious of the contradictions created by the Anglo-French alliance which,

while valued in Europe, constituted 'a severe handicap' in the Far East.[37] This was underlined in the context of the non-aggression pacts negotiated with Thailand during 1939 and 1940.

## *The Thai Non-Aggression Pacts, 1939–1940*

The Summer of 1939 was uncomfortable for Western diplomats in Bangkok. They endured the humiliations of British concessions to Japan over the blockade of the port of Tientsin on 22 July 1939. From London, Crosby received only telegrams instructing him on how to present unfavourable developments in Europe in a more encouraging light. It was already abundantly clear that the Thais were carefully weighing their position, and asking whether the balance between Britain and Japan was sufficiently even to sustain their neutrality. Propaganda, Crosby frequently remarked, could not 'be anything like a substitute for the mailed fist, a touch of which we need badly in the Far East just now . . . in our relations with Thailand, at any rate, we have reached a stage when ships and guns have become the only effective instruments by which we can make ourselves respected.'[38] But events in Europe ensured that the prospects of dispatching a fleet to Singapore were increasingly remote and the Far Eastern Department spoke irritably of Crosby's 'favourite hobby horse—the display of force'.[39]

However, the position of the West was transformed in August 1939 by the Nazi–Soviet Pact which Craigie, the British Ambassador in Tokyo, described as 'one of the worst jolts ever suffered by Japanese diplomacy'. This agreement was wholly contrary to the German–Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact of November 1936, and came at a time when Japanese and Russian troops had been engaged, since May, in extensive fighting at Nomohan on the Manchurian border.[40] The pro-German military extremists in Japan were badly discredited and the political unrest that followed resulted in the fall of the Hiranuma Government. While Japanese prestige flagged in Bangkok, the Thais perceived the Anglo-French declaration of war on Germany on 3 September 1939 as a long-overdue display of decisiveness. Matters were further improved by the formation of a propaganda section within the British Legation in Bangkok during September 1939.[41] Meanwhile, despite continued Franco-Japanese friction in northern Indo-China, the Far Eastern Department swelled with optimism.[42]

R. A. Butler, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who exercised increasing responsibility for the Far East, even talked momentarily of a renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.[43] The international climate had changed markedly.[44]

The events of August and September took Phibul by surprise and he now sought to revise his policy accordingly. On 5 September Crosby listened, 'with mingled astonishment and gratification' as Phibul proposed that Thailand conclude mutual non-aggression pacts with Britain and France. Explaining the initiative, Phibul pointed to his worry at partial French mobilization in Indo-China and his dismay at the ceaseless press speculation regarding Thailand's future allegiance. Moreover, he had previously feared Japan's reaction to this idea, but in the wake of the Nazi–Soviet Pact, Anglo-Japanese relations had improved.[45] The Far Eastern Department hesitated, for while refusal would certainly alienate the Thais, acceptance might arouse the suspicions of Japan. Only the unrestrained enthusiasm of their French allies for Phibul's initiative swayed London in its favour. If nothing else, Phibul's approach suggested that the Thai–Japanese alliance was now 'a thoroughly discredited myth'. Characteristically, Phibul had consulted his Cabinet only after making his proposal to Britain and France. The pro-Japanese members were unenthusiastic, viewing it as unhelpful to Japan, while others feared offending Tokyo. The Thai Government's two Foreign Affairs Advisers, Prince Wan and the American Frederic Dolbeare, were quick to point out that Britain, France, Germany, and China had already guaranteed Thailand's neutrality in past treaties. Phibul confessed during October that in the light of these arguments he was reconsidering his offer. Crosby cut through Phibul's reservations by suggesting that the pacts must encompass Japan rather than exclude her, thus embracing the recent spirit of Anglo-Japanese *rapprochement* developing in London. Crosby's idea was quickly adopted by Phibul.[46]

However, war in Europe had provoked heightened expectations as well as fears in Bangkok. Phibul could not resist the temptation to twist his initiative to extract further advantage with regard to Thailand's lost territories in Indo-China. On 20 October 1939 a doleful Crosby reported to the Foreign Office that the Thais had altered their terms for a non-aggression pact with France. Recognizing the patently weak bargaining position that France was placed in by her preoccupation in Europe and the corresponding

vulnerability of Indo-China, the Thais now confidently demanded a minor adjustment of the Thai–Indo-China frontier, to tie it to the course of the Mekong River. Crosby concluded that Phibul 'cannot resist the idea which has occurred to him of striking a slick bargain with the French; the notion of such a deal, and the prospect of the "kudos" which is likely to bring him in Thai circles, may have been too much for him'.[47] The Far Eastern Department saw that only political prestige was at stake in this minor issue. The *thalweg* or 'deepest channel' principle of delimitation sought by the Thais on the Mekong River had long been accepted by the British regarding the rivers on the Thai–Burma border.[48] Yet M. Roché of the French Embassy in London argued that the retrocession of even insignificant areas of French territory would fuel the more extravagant claims of the Thai irredentist movement and stated frankly that France feared that Anglo-Thai pressure would force her to comply. The Far Eastern Department dismissed French fears as 'quite ridiculous' but refused to offend their allies by supporting the Thai border initiative.[49]

Only in November 1939 did the Far Eastern Department recognize the nature of the dilemma posed by the non-aggression pacts. Britain desired the pacts because they would guarantee a neutral Thailand to the north of Singapore. Yet Britain was loath to put pressure on her sensitive French allies. However, if only Japan signed a pact with the Thais, Japan would gain a 'disastrous' lead in Bangkok. One official, Henniker-Major, advocated putting pressure on the French in both Bangkok and Paris. Ashley Clarke, however, conscious of the Foreign Office's European priorities, only permitted low-level representations through Crosby's French colleague, Lepissier.[50] But Lepissier made an ironic and simultaneous appeal to the Foreign Office for assistance in putting more pressure upon reluctant officials in Paris. Like Crosby, Lepissier now denounced the present Thai–French frontier as 'a relic of the bad old days' and blamed its survival upon the colonial Government of French Indo-China. Lepissier placed his hopes in the diplomats of the Foreign Office in London and the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, whom he hoped would persuade the recalcitrant French colonial officials of Outre Mer to make concessions. It was clearly the intention of Phibul to employ the desires of British and French diplomats for the pacts to put pressure on French colonial officials over the border issue.[51]

The colonial nature of French policy in Asia formed the antithesis

of the approach advocated by British diplomats. Lepissier explained that

> the Quai d'Orsay were adopting a polite enough tone towards him, but they were evidently afraid of the Ministry of Colonies [Outre Mer] . . . the attitude of the French Colonial Ministry was not one merely of unfriendliness towards the Thais but that it was at the same time anti-British. The French Colonial Ministry, he said, looked upon ourselves with suspicion, whilst as regards Thailand they were bigoted imperialists whose instinct was either to treat the Thais with contempt or else bend them to their will by force. . . .[52]

Crosby joined Lepissier in denouncing the 'old French attitude of harshness and unappeasement' towards the Thais as 'nothing short of suicidal' in the light of the competition between Japan and the West for Thai favours. Meanwhile, in London the War Office now joined Crosby and Lepissier in calling for a British attempt to change French colonial policy, fearing that the French would drive Thailand 'further into the arms of the Japanese'.[53] On 24 November 1939 the Far Eastern Department responded to this pressure. While refusing to approach Paris, they decided to break ranks with their allies and sign the Anglo-Thai Non-Aggression Pact.[54] British officials were pretending that a parallel Franco-Thai pact was of no interest to Britain.[55] But in Bangkok the Thais refused to be duped by this artificial display of sang-froid, hoping that Britain would eventually pressurize Paris. The Far Eastern Department had not foreseen the Thai strategy of playing them against the French Colonial Office and complained that they were now 'on the horns of a very awkward dilemma'.[56]

Phibul suspected, correctly, that Britain would be reluctant to step out of line with her French ally and so called her bluff. On 10 December 1939 Phibul reaffirmed that Thailand would accept the offer of a pact with Britain alone.[57] The Far Eastern Department, painfully aware of their contradictory requirements in Europe and Asia, now began the unsavoury task of attempting to apply pressure on their allies in Paris. 'I do not like this at all,' minuted Ashley Clarke.[58] On 24 January 1940 Oliver Harvey, an official at the Paris Embassy visited the Quai d'Orsay in an attempt to persuade Chauvel, Director of its Asian section, of the virtue of border concessions to the Thais. But Chauvel simply insisted that it was a matter for the Ministry of Colonies.[59] The Far Eastern Department shied from a direct approach to Daladier, the Foreign Minister. Instead, under growing pressure from

Australia to conclude an Anglo-Thai non-aggression pact, they began to search for 'some other way out' of their Franco-Thai dilemma.[60]

Crosby observed the sporadic progress of Franco-Thai negotiations over the related issues of their pact and the border with despair through the Spring of 1940, during which the French made concessions only to raise further objections. The French Minister in Bangkok was entirely in sympathy with the British position, advocating concessions to secure the non-aggression pacts, but unlike Crosby, he enjoyed little influence with his superiors in Paris.[61] Instead, Lepissier spoke of his superiors as 'les clans coloniaux, imperiaux, anti-britannique', urging the British Foreign Office to employ 'frank and brutish methods' to overcome the 'cretinisme des bureaux' in Paris. Conversely it was Lepissier's ability to get on well with the Thais that constituted 'the head and source of his offending in the eyes of the die-hards' in Paris. Moreover, the French cast Crosby in the role of 'Lepissier's evil genius'.[62] The Far Eastern Department were not surprised to hear that he had received a punishment posting to Venezuela on 11 May 1940, albeit delayed until September. Crosby's close friend and colleague, Edward Neville, the United States Minister, also announced his departure on 10 May 1940.[63] Surprisingly, a week later, because of the fall of France, French delegates reluctantly conceded the border revision to the Thais, facilitating the signature of the Franco-Thai Non-Aggression Pact.[64] Ratification, however, would be quite another matter.

If the Far Eastern Department was dismayed by the recalcitrance of its French allies over the issue of the pacts, then it was delighted by similar difficulties concerning the Thai–Japanese pact. The Japanese sought to manoeuvre for advantage, holding out for additional clauses such as expressions of 'cultural unity', while Rengo, the Japanese Radio Service, called for Thai recognition of the Japanese puppet regime of Wang Ching-wei in China. All this reflected growing Japanese interest in South-East Asia caused by British and French preoccupation in Europe. Middle-ranking Japanese naval officers in particular had been electrified by the prospect of Britain's involvement in a European war. Very detailed plans were drawn up for an attack on Hong Kong and Singapore as early as September 1939. Even the Japanese Foreign Office moved from the policy advocated by Yatabe, of pursuing Thai–Japanese relations for their own sake, to perceiving Thailand as a stepping stone to the South Seas.[65] Crosby re-

inforced Thai circumspection by pointing out that recognition of Wang Ching-wei would irritate the United States, upon whom the Thais were increasingly dependent for manufactured goods after the outbreak of war in Europe.[66] Phibul informed Crosby of a further demand for a 'consultation' clause, which Thailand conceded, but then promptly offered also to Britain and France.[67] Further British insight into Japanese pressure upon Thailand was gained from the intercepted correspondence of Italian diplomats in Burma, which revealed that their Japanese colleagues had been boasting of the threats Japan had issued to the Thais over the form of the pact.[68]

During the Winter of 1939–40, the same sources, the intelligence organizations of the Governments of India and Burma, continued to supply information on Japanese initiatives culled from the Japanese and Italian Embassies in Rangoon. This brought fresh rumours of Thai–Japanese agreements. While Crosby eventually dismissed these as inflated accounts of a recent Thai–Japanese civil aviation agreement, such information was considered carefully.[69] This, combined with the opaque references to Thai–Japanese negotiations provided by Phibul and the expansion of Japanese secret service activity in Thailand, underlined the increased level of Japanese pressure that Phibul now operated under. Crosby therefore accepted Phibul's frequent reassurances of Thai neutrality with gratitude, but also with increased scepticism. On 7 February 1940, during a lengthy interview with Crosby, Phibul went further, taking the remarkable step of apologizing for his xenophobic outbursts during 1937. He confessed that

> not so long ago, he had been impetuous and had upon occasion been guilty of indiscretions for which he had thought we were justified in blaming him.... But, he said, he was older now and years brought wisdom; moreover, he had now assumed greater responsibilities.... We need not be in the least afraid, he went on, that he harboured any designs upon British territory in this part of the world. On the contrary, he had every reason to wish, for the sake of Thailand herself, that peace and order would continue under British rule in India and in Burma. Disturbances in these countries could not fail to affect adversely his own land in these days of interlocking international interests, and at a moment when stabilisation, and not confusion, was the watchword here.

The Far Eastern Department had no doubt that a strong British Empire was attractive to Phibul as a counterpoise to Japan. But the question Phibul did not answer, and probably had not yet

fully addressed, was his likely course of action if British prospects declined further.[70]

Britain was released from the dilemma posed by the Franco-Thai disagreement over the non-aggression pacts on 12 June 1940. Thailand simultaneously signed agreements guaranteeing her neutrality with Britain, France, and Japan. The United States, predictably perhaps, felt no need to sign such a pact with Thailand but nevertheless praised Bangkok for an initiative that they called 'commendable and courageous'.[71] Much pomp and ceremony surrounded the signature of these belated treaties. In this connection the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who had been in office barely a month, wrote effusively to Phibul, stating, 'I am confident that under your able leadership Thailand will play an increasingly important part in these times as a bulwark of peace in South East Asia.'[72]

But, at the same time, the creation of Churchill's coalition government was itself a clear indicator of the further decline of Britain and France in Europe. There had been a rapid shift away from those conditions that had spurred Phibul to placate the democratic powers with his non-aggression initiative in the Autumn of 1939. The Dunkirk evacuation had ended on 2 June 1940 and a week later, to Hitler's amusement, Mussolini declared war on an already prostrate France in the hope of territorial gains. Mussolini was only one of a number of opportunistic dictators greedily eyeing French territories in the early Summer of 1940. Since the end of April 1940, Phibul had been pressing the French to discuss the restoration of all of Thailand's lost provinces, in 'the extreme case of Indochina passing out of the hands of France altogether'.[73]

## *'Thailand for the Thai': Economic and Political Nationalism*

During the late 1930s the activities of the Axis powers in Europe, and to a lesser extent the growth of militarism in Japan, had a profound impact upon domestic politics as well as foreign relations in South-East Asia. This is clearly illustrated by the nature of Thailand's new government led by Phibul, which assumed office in the last days of December 1938. During 1939 Phibul's style shifted away from simple militarism, becoming, 'more and more one who is virtually . . . a dictator on his own

account'. At the same time Phibul assumed an increasingly statesman-like profile and displayed hitherto unsuspected political depths. He attracted his main rival, the democratic Pridi, to his reformed Cabinet as Minister of Finance, and Direk Chaiyanam, a follower of Pridi, as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.[74] After the elderly Foreign Minister, Sri Dharmadhibes, retired on 15 July 1939, Phibul assumed the office himself, a manoeuvre which left Direk as *de facto* Foreign Minister.[75] Nevertheless, of the twenty-six members of Phibul's Cabinet only ten were civilians. More ominously, there were also political arrests and seventeen executions, the first political executions of the constitutional period.[76]

Phibul's intention to model his regime on the European dictatorships was underlined during July 1939 when he adopted a system of Rathaniyom or 'rule by decree' which did not require ratification by the People's Assembly. The system was drawn up by the ardent nationalist Vichit Vadhakarn, whose focus was very much upon Germany, and drew the comment 'pure Hitlerism' from Britain.[77] Equally significant was Phibul's first edict by which Siam was renamed 'Thailand' and its people declared to be 'Thais'.[78] There were clear implications here for Britain, China, and especially France who all had Thai populations within their borders. Thai irredentism was not a new phenomenon, but under Phibul's regime it derived a new vigour from the volatile international situation. Crosby warned:

> The fact remains . . . that the restoration to Siam of her 'lost provinces' would be looked upon as no more than an act of justice. This being so, if Japan were to go to the lengths of attacking the French in Indo-China, the repercussions in this country might be very serious and are unpredictable.[79]

Perceived French vulnerability in Indo-China was now combined with an organized programme of government propaganda designed to increase militarist sentiment in a previously apolitical population. Typically, service in the paramilitary youth movement, the Yuvachon, was now compulsory.[80] During the Spring of 1939 local garrison commanders were to be found addressing excited civilian audiences all over Thailand on the present strategic situation in South-East Asia. The active transformation of hitherto élite nationalism into a popular force alarmed the West.[81]

Western diplomats tended to discount irredentist references to

ethnic Thai territories in northern Burma and also to non-Thai areas in southern Burma and Malaya. In 1938 Vichit, the prominent Thai ultra-nationalist and member of the Government, visited Burma to discuss 'Thai–Burmese solidarity' with Burmese nationalists and the Japanese Consul-General at Rangoon.[82] Subsequently, police surveillance revealed Vichit's participation in a plot to smuggle arms from Thailand into Burma.[83] But as late as the Autumn of 1940 the Burma Office dismissed this as 'wordy plotting' and 'not a very serious menace'.[84] Therefore, in contrast to the French, the British perceived few direct threats from Thai irredentism. Britain's only political troubles were caused by the intrigues of the ex-King Prajadhipok, now languishing in exile at Virginia Water, Surrey, which gave Crosby periodic cause for protest to London.[85] Moreover, in direct contrast to the French, in 1939, Britain had readily agreed to adjustments on the *thalweg* principle along the Thai–Burma border. Leo Amery, Secretary of State for India and Burma, asserted that this was a worthwhile concession, 'greatly appreciated by the Thai Government'. The cessation of territory involved was greater than that resisted by the French in 1939 and 1940 and Britain's ready agreement only reinforced French suspicions of Anglo-Thai collusion against France over the disputed Mekong frontier.[86]

Because of the large Chinese population in Thailand, Burma, and Malaya, the issue of minority populations remained an area of firm Anglo-Thai co-operation. Like the Government of Malaya, the Thai Government had always regarded its Chinese population as Thai nationals, whereas the Chinese Government operated a policy of *uis sanguis* and regarded them as Chinese nationals.[87] Consequently, Sino-Thai diplomatic relations had never been established and the Chinese population had 'always been kept well in order by the threatened, or actual application of physical force'. After 1938, Phibul also advanced this as the principal reason for his not recognizing the Japanese puppet Wang Ching-wei regime in China, for, he stated,

> overseas Chinese . . . had always been a troublesome lot, and they were going to be still more troublesome in the future, in Malaya no less than in Thailand, if in any disputes of theirs with the local government they were going to be able to invoke the assistance of the Japanese diplomatic or consular authorities.[88]

The Far Eastern Department reciprocated these sentiments, noting that 'with our experience of Kuomintang activities in Malaya we

can sympathise'.[89] Accordingly, Britain rejected Chinese requests for British help in defending the rights of the Chinese in Thailand.[90]

Therefore, had Phibul's slogan 'Thailand for Thai' been applied only to political and territorial questions, Thai nationalism would have presented Britain and the United States with few problems before 1942. Phibul, however, also employed this slogan in its economic as well as its territorial sense. In the first few months of 1939 Phibul's programme of economic nationalism had a largely anti-Chinese flavour, being directed against the 'myth' of the usurious Chinese middleman who was thought to control the important Thai rice trade. Anti-Japanese boycotts by the Chinese community in Thailand, imposed as a result of the Sino-Japanese War, had damaged the Thai economy. Phibul now restricted the use of Chinese in Chinese schools, banned the ubiquitous Chinese signs in Bangkok, closed all but one Chinese newspaper and formed a state company to compete in the rice business.[91] Vichit drew open and favourable comparisons with the campaign against the Jews in Germany. The irony of a xenophobic movement that copied European ultra-nationalism was not lost upon the West.[92]

However, during 1939, a number of factors served to focus Thai economic nationalism upon Western interests and influence. Firstly, Japan repeatedly complained of Thailand's place within the sterling bloc and the economy of the British Empire. Japan particularly resented the role of William Doll, the British Financial Adviser to the Thai Ministry of Finance.[93] Secondly, British rearmament meant that Thailand could not buy the arms she sought, with sterling. To buy these materials from elsewhere required dollar revenue and accordingly Thailand tried to redirect exports away from the British Empire to earn this currency. Moreover, the Thais feared the consequences of tying their currency reserves to a country whose future looked less than certain. Finally, by 1939, the United States, Germany, and Japan began to compete for Thai raw materials, particularly tin and rubber, employing the idea of 'British exploitation' to persuade the Thais to trade elsewhere. Therefore, in the same way that conflict in Europe had exacerbated Thai ambitions against the formal territorial structure of the French Empire, so too the financial uncertainties and economic demands created by the European war undermined British informal influence in Thailand which was, above all, economic in nature.

The Far Eastern Department and British diplomats in Bangkok accorded only a low priority to the defence of British informal economic influence in Thailand by 1939, preferring to concentrate on political and strategic questions. However, their policy prescriptions met with trenchant opposition, both from British colonial 'die-hards' and from British financial officials committed to conservative financial management or Eurocentric priorities. William Doll, the British Financial Adviser, combined both these characteristics and when the Thai Cabinet changes of 22 December 1938 returned the radical Pridi to the Ministry of Finance, Doll delayed his retirement to do battle with this established enemy of conservative financial policy.[94] Doll feared in particular 'what orthodox financiers . . . can only term an unholy alliance' whereby 'both the left and the right wings have been promised all the money they may need for their respective programmes'.[95] Further complexities underlay Doll's decision to stay on. Most important was the rumour that, while the Thais did not dare offend the Bank of England by sacking Doll outright they did not intend to accept a replacement.[96] Doll's worst fear was that an adviser of another nationality might be appointed. Therefore he remained in place, convinced that the continuity of British tenure was simply 'of too greater importance . . . to take risks'. Doll noted that his American colleague at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Frederic Dolbeare, was increasingly overshadowed by a parallel Thai adviser.[97]

By March 1939 Doll had fulfilled all of Crosby's worst fears. In a private letter to Howe, Head of the Far Eastern Department, he explained that Doll himself had drafted the final report of the retiring Finance Minister and had employed it to 'pie-jaw' the Thai Cabinet, 'lecturing' them on what their policy ought to be. The nationalists had taken great offence. Doll addressed his new Minister, Pridi, 'like a schoolmaster' employing 'a dictatorial tone' and spoke openly of staying on to 'neutralise' his policies. Doll belonged to the old school of advisers 'who used to have it all their own way' and therefore presented an impediment both to Pridi's policies and also to the Far Eastern Department's policy of concession.[98] Moreover, Doll was mistaken in believing that it was primarily Thai politicians of the left that he was opposing, for 'it is nationalism', declared Crosby, 'not socialism, which is at the back of these schemes'.[99] In contrast Crosby enjoyed a growing friendship with the liberal and Anglophile Pridi and took ill-disguised delight in the fact that Pridi was creating 'a new heaven and a new earth' for the Bank of England's man in Bangkok. A

Thai Financial Adviser had recently been appointed in parallel to Doll 'to collaborate with him',[100] and, by February 1939 Doll was forced to obtain some budget estimates from the local press.[101]

Crosby's picture of the antagonism between Pridi and Doll was perhaps overdrawn. Privately, Doll confessed that in practice he feared Pridi's radical clique, 'a most unpleasant group of hangers on', rather than Pridi himself. One of these supporters had regularly attacked Doll and Pridi's predecessor, Phrai Jaiyos, in the Bangkok press under the pseudonym '555'.[102] Pridi had retained his long-standing objective of ending the burden of capitation tax upon the peasantry and Doll responded by declaring his sincere admiration for Pridi's objectives, even speaking of 'a strong undercurrent of sympathy between us'.[103] However, Doll quickly displayed the limits of his sympathy when he opposed Pridi's alternative *ad valorem* tax, arguing that it would hurt the rice exporters, many of whom were British.[104] Conversely, Pridi's new-found moderation stemmed less from a change of perspective and more from his time as Foreign Minister which, he said, had taught him that it was of 'paramount importance' not to imperil Siam's international credit with radical measures.[105] Thus his desire to compromise was related to his need for Doll's assistance in raising new loans on the London market.[106]

The uneasy nature of the relationship between Pridi and Doll was illustrated by Pridi's plan for a Thai National Bank to exercise control over the currency and exchange rates. On 19 October 1938 Sir Otto Niemeyer, Governor of the Bank of England, had written to Doll instructing him to resist the idea vigorously. He argued that this would be bound to constitute 'a potent inflation instrument' and that what Thailand really required was an agricultural mortgage bank.[107] Therefore, Doll outwardly conceded to Pridi's wishes, but in form only, arranging the functions of the bank so that it constituted little more than an extension of the Thai Treasury. Significantly, this mirrored the solution to a similar problem in Egypt, where the Bank of England was also powerful.[108]

This confrontation also had an Anglo-American dimension. In February 1939 Doll departed for Britain on six months' leave. But shortly after his return in October Crosby resumed his attack on the 'blundering and obdurate' Doll, complaining bitterly of his latest displays of 'obtuseness and tactlessness'. Doll was

> increasingly quoting the Bank of England and Sir Otto Niemeyer. . . . [And] worst of all bad things, he is didactic; the present day Thais simply

will not stand being lectured by their own employees.... Doll is incapable of understanding or of adjusting himself to, the spirit of the new Thailand.[109]

Crosby was not only alarmed by the prospect of provoking the Thai nationalists. Crosby noted that, as during Britain's financial crisis of 1931, Thailand was now looking across the Pacific to the United States. Doll tended to forget that Thailand only sat within the sterling bloc informally and voluntarily, largely because her major trading partner was British Malaya. While any shift from this position would entail great upheaval for Thailand, after September 1939, the benefits of association with sterling were visibly in decline because of war pressures. Therefore the British position was not only threatened by nationalist sentiment but also the growing power of the dollar. Already Pridi had appointed Dolbeare, the American Foreign Affairs Adviser, as Adviser to the Thai National Bank in Doll's stead. Crosby warned that Pridi 'is now turning to America as the financial Mecca of Thailand rather than England'. This had been prefigured a few months earlier when Thai diplomats in London had explained to the Bank of England that 'in certain circumstances' Thailand might decide to change the basis of her currency from sterling to dollars.[110]

The divergence of opinion between Crosby and Doll derived much of its momentum from the different nature of their responsibilities and those of their respective superiors in Whitehall. Yet Doll was certainly not blind to strategic and political questions, for when discussing a possible successor during 1938, he had requested someone with 'a handle to his name' to assist in shoring up Britain's battered prestige, adding that Japanese propaganda and 'the possibility of turning the Singapore Base through Siam' should be borne in mind by the Bank of England. Furthermore, he admired Crosby's political abilities, conceding that 'there has never been a foreigner who impresses and commands Siamese respect to the extent he does'.[111] But during 1939 the European war placed both men under contradictory pressures. Crosby sought to retain the sympathy of the Thai nationalists at all costs. Meanwhile Doll's financial rectitude drove him to oppose nationalist schemes, reinforced by the Bank of England whose own wartime burdens dictated greater stringency, particularly over currency questions. These disagreements quickly developed into a battle between diplomats and economists for precedence within British policies.

During September 1939, David Waley, a senior Treasury official,

had somehow obtained a letter from Crosby to Doll addressing the question of Pridi's National Bank. Crosby insisted that the Bank of England should 'cease further opposition' to Pridi's scheme, and 'make the best of a bad job'. 'I see little point', he concluded, 'in our quoting to him London financial experts, as being the Law and the Prophets for I know this line of argument makes him rebellious.'[112] Waley passed this letter to 'the financial experts' at the Bank of England, where Crosby's heretical opinions drew a firm counterblast from one of its Directors, Sir Otto Niemeyer:

> Crosby is a well known crank—perhaps from being buried so long in Central America—and for some inscrutable reason has a fanatical and unfortunately openly expressed hatred of the Bank of England. He's been a thorn in the flesh of more than one financial adviser and is a misfortune in Siam. Hence this fussy rubbish.[113]

Armed with Nieyemer's opinions, Waley confronted the Far Eastern Department, declaring himself 'shocked' by Crosby's economic prescriptions and upholding the restraint of the Bank of England as 'fundamentally right'. However, the Far Eastern Department shared Crosby's emphasis on the wider political questions and replied that 'no one can quarrel with Sir Josiah Crosby's pronouncements on the right way to handle the Thais'.[114] Therefore, in this and in subsequent matters, the Whitehall departments continued to talk past each other, addressing different priorities and backing their own men.

## *Dollars, Oil, and Tin*

By 1939 Western problems with Thai economic nationalism were becoming increasingly linked to the international shortage of dollars required to buy American goods. On 12 July 1939 the Thais had requested dollar exchange from the Bank of England to fund the purchase of arms no longer available from Britain. Yet Britain also required precious dollars for her own attempts to rearm by purchasing equipment from the United States. Moreover, as a result of wartime economic pressures Britain had moved from a policy of the informal sterling bloc to the Sterling Area, a policy involving rigid control of both the value of the pound and, above all, exchange. Consequently, on 9 October 1939 the Treasury refused the Thai request for dollars, hoping to 'squeeze' the Thais into using some of the small proportion of Thai reserves that were

held in dollars. Unbeknown to the British, Pridi was already investigating possible help from American banks.

The Treasury put the issue to the Far Eastern Department with striking simplicity, asking 'how important the goodwill of Siam is, and whether it is worth paying for *in dollars*, which we can only afford with the gravest difficulty'. They replied that in the wake of the Nazi–Soviet Pact of August 1939, the danger of the Thais being immediately dragged into alignment with Japan was slight. Moreover, Japan was equally short of dollars, reducing the danger of the Thais sliding towards the yen bloc. One official added that the price of Thai exported commodities was accelerating with wartime demand and therefore, 'like most distant neutrals they will anyhow probably make something out of the war'. Thus, the European War, which ensured that no British fleet could be sent to Singapore, also ensured that no dollars would be allocated to Thailand. Britain was overstretched at the economic as well as the strategic levels.[115]

Britain's wartime exigencies had also strengthened the hand of Whitehall economic departments and business interests, devoted to a 'die-hard' policy over oil marketing within Thailand.[116] Asiatic Petroleum had procured further documentation pointing to forthcoming restrictive legislation and the advent of Phibul as premier and Minister of Defence seemed to augur well for this militarily directed oil project.[117] The American Minister, Edward Neville, pronounced the proposed Thai measures to be 'very drastic'.[118] The international situation appeared to conspire against the attempts of Neville and Crosby to facilitate a compromise solution.[119] The growing demand for oil due to international tension ensured that the London and New York Directors of the oil companies attached little importance to the Thai market and so opted for hard tactics, refusing to enter into a joint marketing agreement with the Thai Government or to supply oil for the proposed Thai refinery.[120] This stood in contrast to the companies' more cautious response to nationalist challenges in Spain and Japan only a few years earlier. Moreover, both Ministers found themselves simply dwarfed by the power of the companies and by the size of the issues involved. Typically, Crosby complained that

> the intelligence service of the local branch of the Asiatic Petroleum Company is such an efficient one, there is no information which I can myself usefully impart. . . . It is they, indeed, who keep the [British] Legation up to date and to whom I myself have to resort for news of what is afoot.[121]

Equally, Neville confided to Crosby that a major dispute was in progress between the oil companies and the American Government, the complexities of which eluded him. Consequently, he confessed to being 'afraid of getting his head washed' if he showed too much interest in oil issues.[122]

The Liquid Fuel Act, promulgated during April 1939, presented Neville and Crosby with a *fait accompli.* This Act imposed a *de facto* government monopoly by requiring all firms to undertake crippling burdens, such as bulk storage of oil in Thailand, a prohibitively expensive undertaking designed to make foreign fuel distribution and marketing operations untenable. Neville and Crosby advised the oil companies that the Thais were within their rights and, after joint discussions, the companies decided on withdrawal from the market. In the State Department, the Adviser on International Economic Affairs lamented that this was part of a world-wide phenomenon, the most recent examples occurring in Finland and Chile. In the latter case Standard Oil of New Jersey had abandoned US$5,000,000 worth of equipment without compensation.[123] Even the sympathetic Crosby confessed himself to be shaken and concluded that the Head of the Oil Fuel Department, Vanich, 'wants to put the companies out of action'. Crosby advised the companies to remain in operation but to threaten Phibul with an oil famine.[124] Both Neville and Crosby feared that absolute withdrawal would offer a 'grand opportunity' to Japan and therefore they cajoled the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs into last-minute negotiations.[125] However, the Western companies were decidedly unenthusiastic about talks,[126] while the Thai Ministry of Defence, in Doll's opinion, 'wished them to fail'. The American Legation accused the Thais of 'deliberate bad faith' and noted with undisguised delight that there were 'already shortages' of oil.[127]

Thailand had undoubtedly followed the same route to a national monopoly that Japan had taken in 1934, partly on Tokyo's advice.[128] However, the circumstances were now very different for even Thailand's mentor was facing the vulnerability of her own oil supplies, and thus turning her attention to sources in the Netherlands East Indies.[129] Meanwhile world-wide demand for oil accelerated, both in Asia, due to the Sino-Japanese War, and in Europe where countries sought to build up war stocks.[130] In Washington, therefore, the State Department, having few other economic or strategic interests in Thailand, saw no reason to restrain the oil companies, while the Far Eastern Department was

not capable of taking independent action over oil.[131] Oil shortages came quicker to Thailand than to Japan. American diplomats expressed disbelief at the 'ostrichlike' Thai Minister of Economic Affairs and his 'childlike' failure to understand the implications of Thai oil policy. They noted that on 24 June, the Thai National Day, 'alleged domestically produced gasoline is to be dispensed to the public from a large and hastily constructed filling station ostentatiously situated opposite the Royal Palace and adjacent to the offices of the Ministry of Defence. Not a drop of gasoline has been produced in the Government oil refinery up to the present date.' The Thai refinery was not expected to be in production before October.[132] By the Spring of 1940 Thailand was suffering a serious oil famine while Vanich and some of his officials were arrested to face charges of amassing funds abroad.[133]

If the Thais did not foresee the consequences of the oil embargo, then Western officials did not anticipate its impact on Thailand's relationship with sterling. By the Summer of 1939 oil was generally scarce and could only be bought for dollars from American firms not previously associated with Thailand and thus not involved in the embargo. Thus Thailand turned in vain to Britain's hard-pressed Treasury and the Bank of England to request scarce dollars to buy oil that she had previously bought with sterling.[134] Perversely, the long-awaited Liquid Fuel Act, inspired by Japan, hurt both Britain and Thailand, while driving the latter towards the dollar.[135]

By the end of 1939 the Phibul Government attached growing importance to two elusive imports, oil and modern armaments. The former could be obtained from the United States, the latter from the United States and Japan. Neither could be bought for sterling. Therefore, quite apart from any nationalist desire to escape British informal influence, there were strong incentives for Thailand to review her relations with the Sterling Area. An obvious target was Thailand's established practice of exporting her tin ore to Malaya for sterling, where it was smelted and exported to the United States, earning approximately US$20 million per annum in foreign exchange for the British Treasury.[136] Accordingly, in late December 1939 Crosby received information that the Thais intended to revive long-standing plans to construct their own tin smelter, obviating the need to export via Malaya. The Thais had also opted to finance this project with Japanese rather than British loans to thwart any prevarication by William Doll. Almost certainly the tin mines in Thailand, owned mostly

by British and Australian firms, would then be forced to smelt in Thailand by monopoly legislation of the sort that once existed in Malaya. Writing to the Governor-General of Malaya on 26 December 1939, Crosby predicted 'nothing short of ruin for the British and Australian mining enterprise' in Thailand.[137]

Both Crosby and the managers of local tin firms agreed that, given the political climate, Britain could only retain control by a co-operative strategy, offering to fund the smelter themselves at a cost of £1.5 million.[138] But the Directors of the British companies in London, led by the Siamese Tin Syndicate Limited and the Eastern Smelting Company Limited ridiculed the proposal.[139] They also refused to recognize growing Thai irritation at receiving a fixed pre-war price of £230 per ton of tin ore while free-market prices spiralled upwards, or indeed that the Thais simply resented British control over marketing regardless of price.[140]

During March 1940 Crosby continued to press for a British-built smelter in Thailand, pointing out that the Bank of England would only supply Thailand with US$321,600 of exchange per annum towards a US$5 million oil bill, in contrast to the US$20 million per annum earned for Britain by the export of Thai tin from Malaya. Crosby also voiced his fears that Thailand might retaliate via her rice trade with Malaya, the key component in the Anglo-Thai economic relationship that ensured Thailand formed 'economically an integral part of Further India'.[141] Ashley Clarke of the Far Eastern Department pushed these arguments at a meeting held at the Colonial Office with the Eastern Smelting Company Limited on 18 April 1939, but the Colonial Office insisted upon defending Malaya's smelting dominance.[142] The strength of the Colonial Office position owed much to support from new Whitehall wartime supply, production, and economic warfare departments that had been created overnight using personnel from commercial backgrounds. The diplomats muttered darkly about these 'new ministries where for the duration of the war there are businessmen who are called upon to judge in their own cause'.[143] However, during the Autumn and Winter of late 1940, Indo-China wholly preoccupied the Thai Government.[144] Thus the Far Eastern Department decided 'to let sleeping dogs lie'.[145]

The questions of dollars, oil, and tin were therefore inextricably linked. Together they recalled Anglo-American experience during the period 1929–33 when the British position in Thailand was weakened by international rather than internal crisis. As if to

recall this earlier episode, Horner, the Bangkok Manager of British–American Tin Company Limited, revived his 1933 scheme for an American-backed Thai tin smelter.[146] In 1939 Horner urged British officials to resist the Thai smelter scheme to the last breath while making his own secret proposal to the Thai Government suggesting that their smelter should be funded with American or Canadian rather than Japanese capital.[147] Clearly, Thailand's search for dollars appeared to undermine Britain's position in a multiplicity of different ways.

By February 1940, Crosby and Doll throroughly understood the relationship between dollars, oil, and tin in Thailand and the related weakness of Britain's position on these issues. But economic officials in London appeared to require a practical demonstration. On 14 February 1940 Doll and Pridi made a renewed appeal to London for US$5 million of currency exchange to pay for oil, in the face of an attempt by a faction in the Thai Cabinet to move the Thai currency on to an entirely dollar basis.[148] Niemeyer at the Bank of England made a curt refusal, insisting that Thailand should find the dollars from the growing proportion of her tin and rubber that were sold to the United States. He added haughtily, 'It is a pity that you quarrelled with the oil companies. If not you might have got your oil from the Anglo-Persian [Oil Company] or some non-dollar source.'[149] However, the Thais were in a position of strength and coolly threatened to do just that by redirecting their *total* tin and rubber production away from Malaya. Meanwhile, they began to sell all the sterling they held outside London for dollars on the open market. Simultaneously, interested British oil companies who expected Thai orders applied pressure to the Treasury.[150] Officials at the Bank of England toyed briefly with the unlikely solution of coaxing Thailand into joining the formal Sterling Area with its draconian currency restrictions.[151] But Niemeyer knew his bluff had been called and quickly conceded, offering Thailand their US$5 million of precious currency exchange.[152] Pridi enthused over this victory and conveyed effusive thanks to Crosby, not least because he feared that the Thai Cabinet might otherwise have embarked on a catastrophic trade war with Malaya. Meanwhile Doll, aware of his own increasingly isolated position in Bangkok, confessed to 'delight' at the capitulation of his superiors in London.[153]

## *Conclusion*

During the period December 1938 to May 1940, Crosby and the Far Eastern Department saw no alternative to the policy of accommodating Thai nationalism, partly as a means to protect British interests but principally to avoid driving Thailand into the arms of Japan. This policy had functioned remarkably well prior to 1939, for the post-revolutionary period had not witnessed a substantial diminution of British influence. However, complex international pressures now created paradoxical difficulties. On the one hand, the growing strategic value of Thailand increased the validity of diplomatic arguments for conceding to the demands of Thai nationalism. But on the other hand, European exigences, particularly at the economic level, rendered concessions more difficult. The most immediate obstacles to a policy of concession, other Whitehall departments, drew strength from the onset of war in Europe.

More importantly, war in Europe required Britain to co-ordinate her policies with those of her allies and prospective allies. But for the Anglo-French alliance, the task of negotiating an Anglo-Thai non-aggression pact and of placating Thai irredentism would have been a simple matter. However, the alliance involved Britain in the Indo-China question and tangentially with the colonial 'diehards' in Hanoi and Outre Mer in Paris. The Thais played on this British weakness, further complicating an already awkward policy. In April 1940 Crosby described the additional problems of trying to please a Thai Cabinet which contained a perplexing range of personalities and opinions. While Crosby sought to ingratiate himself with Pridi, the new Finance Minister, he had to bear in mind Pridi's long-standing enmity to Phibul, the Premier. Thus on 5 April 1940 he depicted himself as 'a circus rider who is mounted upon two horses at one and the same time. It is an uneasy posture,' he added, 'and I touch wood as I write.'[154]

Yet for both Crosby and the Far Eastern Department their greatest displays of athleticism were yet to come in attempting to square their policy with the overriding importance of staying in line with their prospective ally, the United States. This dilemma would become more acute after May 1940, largely because of divergent Anglo-American policies towards a developing border conflict between Thailand and Indo-China.[155] Meanwhile, the United States posed awkward problems at the economic level.

Thailand had discovered by 1940 that a number of elusive commodities were best obtained with dollars and had begun to reorientate herself accordingly. Ironically, this process was accelerated by an Anglo-American oil embargo. Thailand could now obtain oil only from companies who had not previously traded with Bangkok, and they demanded dollars. The Petroleum Department in London, which had pressed hard for the embargo, now confessed that the result of this had been 'nonsensical'. At present, it continued:

> The [British] Treasury is forced to provide a large sum in dollars in order to enable Thailand to replace from American oil that which should properly have been supplied by British interests, while they [the Treasury] are simultaneously considering payment of a substantial doucement to the Shah to compensate him for the fall in the Iranian production of sterling oil. Meanwhile there is good reason to suppose Caltex, an American company selling for dollars oil produced in Bahrein is quoting low prices in order to obtain the business. Thus the Treasury pays out free exchange in two directions, while the British companies lose their markets to American companies, and Thailand carries on as before.[156]

However, the Thais were not carrying on as before, but 'looking more and more towards the USA' drawing away from sterling, which was part of the bedrock of British influence in Bangkok.[157] On 8 March 1940, the Thais purchased their first cargo of crude oil from the American Caltex Company Limited with dollar exchange provided by the British Treasury, in order to supply their new Japanese-built refinery. The reaction of the Far Eastern Department underlined the complex dilemma of defending Britain's position in Thailand against her prospective allies as well as her potential adversaries. 'There is', they remarked bluntly, 'an American as well as a Japanese nigger in the woodpile.'[158]

1. Significantly, in March 1939, the CID refused to state the time such a fleet would take to arrive; P. Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, p. 67.

2. Crosby to FO No. 254, 25 May 1939, F5296/1830/40, FO 371/23594, PRO.

3. Crosby to FO No. 236, 10 May 1939, F4802/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO; undated minute on COS Paper No. 461, 'Singapore—Period before Relief', 29 September 1939, not foliated, WO 106/2443, PRO.

4. For a discussion of this issue, see Chapter 3.

5. Nevertheless, after 1940, Malaya was the source for 90 per cent of American crude rubber imports and 70 per cent of her tin; D. Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937–1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation*, London: Europa, 1981, p. 53.

6. C. Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain and the War against Japan, 1941–1945*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978, pp. 41–6.

7. S. Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars*, Vol. II, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. 346–52; J. R. Leutze, *Bargaining for Supremacy: Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1937–1941*, Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1977, pp. 19–27.

8. Crosby to FO No. 109, 26 February 1940, F1671/75/40, FO 371/24751, PRO.

9. Crosby to FO No. 247, 16 May 1939, F5250/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO.

10. Crosby to FO No. 38, 20 June 1939, F6147/246/40, FO 371/23592, PRO; Dening minute, 21 June 1939 and Howe minute, 21 June 1939, F6147/246/40, FO 371/23592, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 39, 22 June 1939, F6201/246/40, FO 371/23592, PRO; Ronald minute, 26 June 1939, F6201/246/40, FO 371/23592, PRO.

11. Ronald minute, 29 June 1939, F6649/246/40, FO 371/23592, PRO.

12. Ibid.

13. Talbot cited a number of sources, including 'SIS report No. 72 of 12 June', Talbot minute, 21 June 1939, F6310/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO.

14. Howe also pointed to the potential security risk in giving this information to the Thais, Ashley Clarke minute, 23 June 1939, F6310/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO; Gibb minute, 22 June 1939, F6310/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO; Howe minute, 23 June 1939, F6310/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO.

15. Chapman (Bangkok) to SoS No. 23, 4 July 1939, *FRUS*, 1939, III, pp. 118–19; memorandum by Sayre of a conversation with Abhibal, 25 July 1939, *FRUS*, 1939, III, pp. 119–20. During this conversation Abhibal advanced a curious piece of information. He stated 'in the strictest confidence' that 'Britain had undertaken to defend Thai ports in return for a promise to side with Great Britain in event of war'. Sayre, an Assistant Under-Secretary of State and an ex-Foreign Affairs Adviser to the Thai Government, was probably correct in noting that he was 'out of direct touch' and therefore his views, though sincere, were 'not to be relied upon'.

16. Crosby to FO No. 43, 4 July 1939, F6881/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO. Aditya was considered to be 'very close to the centre of Siamese Government' and 'a sincere friend', Talbot minute, 6 July 1939, F6881/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO. Other accounts confirm these shifts in Phibul's policy. J. A. Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue*, London: Hurst, 1991, pp. 122–9; Murai (Bangkok) to Arita (Tokyo) No. 126, 29 July 1939, GKR, A-6-0-0, Nos. 1–27, Vol. II; E. T. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand: 1928–1941', Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1967.

17. Ronald minute, 6 July 1939, F6881/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO. See D. Dilks (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938–1945*, London: Cassell, 1971, diary entry for 19 June 1939.

18. Crosby to FO No. 47, 7 July 1939, F7071/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO; Ronald minute, 8 July 1939, F7071/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO. No significant Thai-Japanese agreement was concluded.

19. FO to Phipps (Paris) No. 327, 11 July 1939, F7016/1860/40, FO 371/23595. See also Paris to FO No. 1023, 7 August 1939, enclosing memorandum by French Minister of Foreign Affairs, 5 August 1939, F8622/1860/40, FO 371/23595.

20. Memorandum by COIS, 'Notes on Siam', NID/01755/39, 20 November 1939, F12040/43/40, FO 371/23586, PRO; Henniker-Major minute, 25 November 1939, F12040/43/40, FO 371/23586.

21. Memorandum by COIS, 'Notes on Siam', NID/01755/39, 20 November 1939, F12040/43/40, FO 371/23586, PRO.

22. Subsequently, the Thai–German initiative was terminated, Crosby to FO No. 240, 11 May 1939, F4804/1830/40, FO 371/23594, PRO; Talbot minute, 24 May 1939, F4804/1830/40, FO 371/23594; Crosby to FO No. 246, 16 May 1939, F5249/1830/40, FO 371/23594, PRO.

23. Crosby to FO No. 349, 18 July 1939, F7826/246/40, FO 371/23592, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 353, 20 July 1939, F8058/246/40, FO 371/23592, PRO. No agreement was signed with Japan; see Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 238–64.

24. Air Ministry to AOC Far East No. 38, fol. 1A, 13 May 1939, AIR 2/4128, PRO. See also AFC(J) 17, memorandum by Hollis, 'Intervention of Japan', 20 April 1939, AIR 9/112, PRO.

25. Report of the Anglo-French Naval, Military and Air Force Conference at Singapore, 22–27 June 1939, fol. 32B, AIR 2/4128, PRO. This paper subsequently became COS Paper No. 941, 'Anglo-French Conference at Singapore', 11 July 1939, CAB 53/50, PRO.

26. Text of Martin's prepared statement on Siam, 'Probable Attitudes and Actions of Siam' attached to minutes of 3rd mtg., June 1939, fol. 32A, AIR 2/4128, PRO. The subsequent proceedings of the Military subcommittee alone were neither reproduced nor circulated. AFC(J) (39) 11th mtg. (Revise), 25 April 1939, fol. 35–8, AIR 9/104, PRO. Japan received a report that a secret Thai delegate had been at the Conference but there is no evidence of this in the British documentation; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 220.

27. Report of the Anglo-French Naval, Military and Air Force Conference at Singapore, 22–27 June 1939, fol. 32B, AIR 2/4128, PRO. Conversely, they maintained that the rearmament programme in the Far East should be accelerated. The reason for this was the very real danger of Japanese air attack from 'bases *placed at* Japan's *disposal* by *Siam* or established in *Borneo*', C-in-C China to Admiralty, 28 June 1939, annexed to JP (39) 452, 'Franco-British Conference at Singapore', CAB 55/17, PRO.

28. Crosby to FO No. 41, 29 June 1939, F6628/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO; minute by Ronald, 3 July 1939, F6628/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO; FO to Hollis (CID), 24 July 1939, F7285/2742/61, FO 371/23547, PRO. See also JP (39) 465 and COS (39) 941, CAB 55/18, PRO.

29. Cornwall-Jones (CID) to Howe, 8 August 1939, F8630/2742/61, FO 371/23547, PRO. The British became aware of the security failure through the interception of Japanese consular Y (wireless) traffic on 29 June 1939. The source was 'a friend of Liu Wen Te', who was employed in the Information Bureau at Hong Kong, Captain on Staff, HMS Tamar to C-in-C China/DNI, 5 July 1939, ADM 1/10227, PRO; Godfrey (DNI) to First Sea Lord, 6 July 1939, ADM 1/10227, PRO.

30. Dening minute, 7 June 1939, F5338/4027/61, FO 371/23551, PRO; WO

to GOC Malaya, 23 August 1939, 56124(MOI)28/8, (WS/2176) L/WS/1/177, IOLR. Dobbie employed these findings to call for more troops, GOC Malaya to WO, 23 August 1939, 823 Gi 28/8 (WS/2176) L/WS/1/177, IOLR.

31. French Indo-China had already been subject to Japanese pressure over the role of the port of Hanoi in the Sino-Japanese War. The French had made concessions on this issue as early as 1938. In April 1939 Japan annexed the Spratly Islands off the coast of Indo-China. Bullitt (Paris) to SoS No. 264, 11 February 1939, *FRUS*, 1939, Vol. III, pp. 104–5; Grew (Tokyo) to SoS No. 2363, 8 April 1939, 851G.014/15, RG 59, NARA.

32. Crosby to FO No. 554, 23 December 1938, C875/249/17, FO 371/22921, PRO.

33. Illuminating parallels can be drawn between the ideas of Dô Hung and the attitude of the British Singapore Special Branch to events in Thailand; cf. pp. 112–13. On Britain and Indo-China, see N. Tarling, 'Britain and the First Japanese Move into Indochina', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XXI, 1 (1990): 35–66.

34. For an example, see 'Une Mission militaire Japonaise operant actuellement au Siam', 14 June 1939, enclosed in Crosby memorandum, 27 June 1939 (Coll. 33/10), L/P&S/12/4058, IOLR.

35. Crosby to FO No. 262, 5 June 1939, F7135/246/40, FO 371/23592, PRO.

36. See, for example, GOC Malaya to M12, 26 June 1939, F7249/246/40, FO 371/23592, PRO. The GOC Malaya maintained an 'anti-Japanese espionage service' at Singapore under Major Morgan. See Crosby to FO No. 316, 4 July 1939, F7485/246/40, FO 371/23592, PRO.

37. Crosby to FO No. 237, 10 May 1939, F4803/43/40, FO 371/23587, PRO; Ronald minute, 23 May 1939, F4803/43/40, FO 371/23587, PRO. However, not all French intelligence reports were discarded out of hand. In October 1939 Dô Hung, claimed to have been offered the mobilization plans of the Thai army. These plans supposedly embraced two contingencies; (a) a Thai attack upon French Indo-China; (b) a combined Thai-Japanese attack upon French Indo-China, Malaya, and Burma. This was to be combined with an internal revolt in Burma. Crosby suggested that this might be related to known Japanese plots in Burma. See Crosby to FO No. 512, 17 October 1939, F12898/62/40, FO 371/23587, PRO.

38. Crosby to FO No. 393, 26 July 1939, F8462/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO. For an example of the material sent by London see, FO to Crosby, 11 September 1939, F8895/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO.

39. Crosby to FO No. 393, 11 August 1939, F9143/1860/40, FO 371/23593, PRO; Henniker-Major minute, 25 August 1939, F9346/1860/40, FO 371/23593, PRO.

40. R. L. Craigie, *Behind the Japanese Mask*, London: Hutchinson, 1946, p. 71. On the Nomohan incident, see I. Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy, 1869–1942*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, pp. 231–3, 240–1. In fact the fall of the Hiranuma Government in Tokyo operated to Britain's disadvantage, removing senior naval officers who had exercised a degree of restraint over more junior officers who wished to expand to the south; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 241; A. Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific Region*, London: Longman, 1989, pp. 79–80.

41. Soon after the outbreak of war Crosby opened a News Bureau at the

British Legation under Vice-Consul Andrew Gilchrist with a budget of £1,500. Some £720 of this was employed clandestinely to 'support' the *Bangkok Times*, the closure of which Crosby argued 'would strike a grievous blow at British prestige in general and our work of propaganda in particular', Crosby to Minister for Information, 165/25/39, 25 September 1939, not foliated, FO 930/53, PRO. A detailed description of the organization of the News Bureau is given in Scott to Minister of Information, 23 September 1939, not foliated, FO 930/53, PRO.

42. Henniker-Major minute, 21 September 1939 and Ashley Clarke minute, 23 September 1939, F10316/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO.

43. The attempts of Halifax and R. A. Butler, and also Craigie, to make concessions and to 'appease' Japan were resented by the Permanent Under-Secretary, Cadogan, and also by the Far Eastern Department. Cadogan noted in his diary: 'Incidentally, RAB [R. A. Butler] is the most baleful man, a craven pacifist, a muddle headed appeaser and a nit-wit, he talks defeatism to the press men. I'm on his tracks. . . . I shan't be able to stand him much longer. Can the Party find no one better than this. . . .' Diary entry for 21 March 1940, Cadogan Papers, 1/9, Archival Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge.

44. Lowe, *Pacific War*, pp. 89, 106. As late as 30 March 1940 the Directorate of Military Intelligence and Operations prepared a memorandum entitled 'Japan as an Ally'. Meanwhile in Paris a number of officials, notably Léger, sought to placate Japan in the hope of joining her in an alliance. MO2 memorandum, 30 March 1940, fol. 1A, WO 106/2436, PRO; see also Bullitt (Paris) to SoS No. 2534, 20 October 1939, *FRUS*, 1939, III, pp. 295–7.

45. Crosby to FO No. 439, 1 September 1939, F10059/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 448, 7 September 1939, F10316/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO.

46. Henniker-Major minute, 21 September 1939, F10316/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 23 September 1939, F10316/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO; FO to Phipps (Paris) No. 704 Saving, 26 September 1939, F10316/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO; Phipps (Paris) to FO No. 739 Saving, 3 October 1939, F10741/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO.

47. Crosby to FO No. 519, 20 October 1939, F11460/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO.

48. The Thai–Indo-China border followed the Mekong River approximately which permitted France to interfere with rights of navigation on the River. Crosby to FO No. 493, 20 October 1939, F11136/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 3 November 1939, F11329/1860/40, FO 371/23595, PRO.

49. Roché aide memoire No. 511, 1 November 1939, F11483/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO; Henniker-Major minute, 2 November 1939, F11483/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 3 November 1939, F11483/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO.

50. Crosby to FO No. 151, 3 November 1939, F11516/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO; Henniker-Major minute, 4 November 1939, F11516/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 7 November 1939, F11516/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO.

51. Crosby to FO No. 529, 27 September 1939, F11648/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 158, 14 November 1939, F11850/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO. French policy towards the Sino-Japanese War seems to have been dominated by George Mandel, Minister of Colonies, Bullitt (Paris) to SoS No. 2866, 30 November 1939, *FRUS*, 1939, III, p. 716. See also Bullitt (Paris) to

SoS No. 1061, 3 June 1939, *FRUS*, 1939, III, p. 756.

52. Crosby to FO No. 572, 18 November 1939, F12204/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO. The Governor-General of Indo-China later informed Lepissier that the resistance of the Ministry of Colonies was motivated by 'banking interests', particularly the powerful Banque d'Indochine and connected financial circles, Crosby to FO No. 600, 4 December 1939, F12641/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO.

53. Minute by Lt.-Col. GS (MO2), November 1939, not foliated, WO 106/2438, PRO.

54. Campbell (Paris) to FO No. 845 Saving, 12 November 1939, F11808/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 15 November 1939, F11808/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO; Howe to Phipps (Paris) No. 2805, 20 November 1939, F11976/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO.

55. Crosby to FO No. 572, 18 November 1939, F12204/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO.

56. Crosby to FO No. 18, 6 January 1940, F476/19/40, FO 371/24750, PRO.

57. *Bangkok Times*, 14 December 1939; Crosby to FO No. 629, 22 December 1939, F122/19/40, FO 371/24750, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 4, 5 January 1940, F158/19/40, FO 371/24750, PRO.

58. Ashley Clarke minute, 4 January 1940, F19/19/40, FO 371/24750, PRO.

59. Harvey (Paris) to FO No. 63 Saving, 24 January 1940, F893/19/40, FO 371/24750, PRO. See also, J. Chauvel, *Commentaire*, Vol. 1, *De Vienne à Alger (1938–1944)*, Paris: Fayard, 1971, pp. 226–33.

60. Dixon (DO) to Cavendish Bentinck, F729/19/40, FO 371/24750, PRO; Howe to Dixon, 7 February 1940, FO 371/24750, PRO.

61. Campbell (Paris) to FO No. 139 Saving, F1441/19/40, FO 371/27450, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 52, 9 March 1940, F1733/19/40, FO 371/27450, PRO. The Far Eastern Department recognized that Lepissier was effectively working against his masters and attempted to give Lepissier better security by not following the usual Foreign Office practice of copying such telegrams to other Whitehall departments, Henniker-Major minute, 26 February 1940, F1347/19/40, FO 371/27450, PRO.

62. Crosby to Howe, 30 December 1939, F324/324/40, FO 371/24754, PRO. Lepissier, it appears, laboured under a variety of physical as well as political disadvantages. A senior British diplomat offered the following description of Lepissier while serving in Iraq in 1937: 'M. Lepissier is intelligent and well informed and, I am told, a good Arabic scholar. But he has to face life with an uncommon share of physical handicaps. His face and body are subject to a painful nervous twitching, which, willy-nilly one is obliged to watch when attention should be upon what he is saying. But I have now got used to this, and I like him and find him almost stimulating. He is married to a pleasant woman who is as calm as he is nervous.' 'Report on Heads of Mission' by Clark Kerr (Iraq), 6 January 1937, F372/372/96, FO 371/20799, PRO.

63. Lepissier was being moved from a legation of the first rank to a legation of the third rank, Crosby to FO No. 178, 11 May 1940, F3245/3245/40, FO 371/24755, PRO. On Neville, see Crosby to FO No. 175, 10 May 1940, F3245/3245/40, FO 371/24755, PRO.

64. Campbell to FO No. 233, 20 May 1940, F2926/19/40, FO 371/24751, PRO.

65. Crosby to FO No. 19, 24 January 1940, F583/19/40, FO 371/24750,

PRO; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 242–3, 245.

66. Phibul's reluctance to recognize Wang Ching-wei owed more to his fear of Thailand's own Chinese population, Crosby to FO No. 225, 6 February 1940, F1322/19/40, FO 371/24750, PRO.

67. Coultas to FO No. 129, 11 May 1940, F2926/19/40, FO 371/24751, PRO.

68. External Affairs Department (Government of India) Simla, to Crosby, 02928-X/40, 27 May 1940, F3236/19/40, FO 371/24751, PRO. Appendixed to this letter are translations of three intercepted letters, including one to the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 4 May 1940.

69. Typically, during November Crosby investigated a report stating that 'the Japanese Consulate in Rangoon has received official information from the Japanese Consul-General in Bangkok that the Japanese and Thai Governments have concluded some form of secret pact. In spite of official denial, rumours from many quarters still persist that some pact has been concluded—probably to the detriment of China.' Crosby underlined this by pointing to his own experience of running informants. India Office to FO, 6 December 1939, F12449/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 622, 19 December 1939, F13166/1860/40, FO 371/23596, PRO. On the Thai–Japanese Air Service Agreement, see Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 251.

70. Crosby to FO No. 69, 7 February 1940, F1323/19/40, FO 371/24750, PRO; Mayall minute, 27 February 1940, FO 371/24750, PRO.

71. Japan chose to sign in Tokyo rather than Bangkok for fear of offending her Axis allies, Crosby to FO No. 155, 12 June 1940, F3395/19/40, FO 371/24751, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 149, 7 June 1940, F3395/19/40, FO 371/24751, PRO; Chapman to SoS No. 35, 13 June 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 24–5.

72. Churchill to Phibul enclosed in FO to Crosby, 13 July 1940, F3395/19/40, FO 371/24751, PRO.

73. Crosby to FO No. 240, 8 May 1940, F2888/19/40, FO 371/24751, PRO. Another opportunist was General Franco who was eyeing North Africa, COS (40) 207th mtg. (3), 4 July 1940, CAB 79/5, PRO.

74. Crosby to FO No. 633, 27 December 1939, F290/123/40, FO 371/24753, PRO.

75. Neville to SoS No. 346, 18 February 1939, 892.00/186, RG 59, NARA; Crosby to FO No. 553, 22 December 1933, F64/43/40, FO 371/23586, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 51, 15 July 1939, F7398/43/40, FO 371/23586, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 346, 17 July 1939, F7825/43/40, FO 371/23586, PRO.

76. Charivat Santaputra, *Thai Foreign Policy, 1932–1946*, Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1987, pp. 164–7; J. Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, pp. 61–80.

77. Crosby to FO No. 339, 14 July 1939, F7786/43/40, FO 371/23586, PRO.

78. Crosby to FO No. 265, 7 June 1939, F7174/43/40, FO 371/23586, PRO; Luang Vichit Vadhakarn, *Thailand's Case*, Bangkok: Thai Commercial Press, 1941, pp. 120–3.

79. Crosby to FO No. 554, 23 December 1938, C875/249/17, FO 371/22921, PRO.

80. This initiative was directed by a half-German officer in the Thai army, Lt.-Col. Prayoon Pamornmontri, 'The "Yuvachon" Movement', *Thai Chronicle*, 20 July 1939; 'Yuvachon Chief Outlines Aims of the Youth Movement in Thailand', *Bangkok Chronicle*, 14 March 1940; Chapman (Bangkok) to SoS No. 485, 30 August 1939, 892.20/31, RG 59, NARA.

81. Crosby to FO No. 255, 26 May 1939, F5297/43/40, FO 371/23586, PRO.

82. 2nd Interim Report, Director of the Burma Defence Bureau, 28 August 1939 (B(I)399), M 5/79, IOLR.

83. These activities were heavily compromised by a Burmese 'nationalist' in Bangkok who was in fact U On Pe, 'a secret police agent, . . . sent here by the Government of Burma', and also by a network of informants run by Crosby, Crosby to Governor of Burma, 28/38/39, 21 June 1939, not foliated, WO 106/5591, PRO.

84. Monteath to Sterndale Bennett, 11 September 1940 (B(I)399), M 5/79, IOLR.

85. Phibul's son, attached to the Royal Navy at Dartmouth for training, asserted that King Prajadhipok was attempting to influence Thai students in England in favour of a royalist counter-coup. Crosby was incensed and demanded the immediate expulsion of the King but the Far Eastern Department noted ruefully that they could not eject him 'without full proof'. A discreet warning was eventually delivered to the King. Crosby to FO No. 128, 9 March 1939, F2695/61/40, FO 371/23586, PRO; Talbot minute, 30 March 1939 and Mounsey minute, 14 April 1939, F2695/61/40, FO 371/23586, PRO; Crosby to Howe, 7 June 1939, F7140/61/40, FO 371/23586, PRO.

86. Burma Office to FO, B11352/39, 8 January 1940, F217/217/40, FO 371/24753, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 1 Saving, 19 March 1940, F2137/217/40, FO 371/24753, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 89, 4 April 1940, F2303/217/40, FO 371/24753, PRO; Burma Office to FO, B2524/40, 14 June 1940, F2590/217/40, FO 371/24753, PRO.

87. Crosby to FO No. 316, 2 October 1940, F5680/217/40, FO 371/23586, PRO.

88. Crosby to FO No. 157, 3 April 1939, F4784/4784/40, FO 371/23597, PRO. An example of this is the open correspondence between Phibul and Chiang Kai-shek in the *Bangkok Times*, 7 December 1939; Crosby to FO No. 225, 6 February 1940, F1322/19/40, FO 371/24750, PRO.

89. Ewans minute, 16 September 1939, F11603/4784/40, FO 371/23597, PRO.

90. Cadogan minute of a conversation with Dr Quo (Chinese Ambassador, London), 15 August 1939, F9027/4784/40, FO 371/23597, PRO, and Ashley Clarke minute, recording a conversation between Butler and Quo, 3 December 1940, F5326/477/40, FO 371/24754, PRO.

91. D. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984, pp. 254–5.

92. K. P. Landon, 'Thailand for the Thai', *Asia* (October 1939): 118–27; for a contrary view, see 'Thailand for the Thai' in the *Bangkok Chronicle*, 4 November 1939.

93. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 246.

94. Doll to Niemeyer (BE), 20 December 1938, fol. 57E, OV25/5 (669/4), BE. His decision to retire may have been prompted by the ill-health of Mrs Doll who had contracted 'Hong Kong foot', a disease that could only be cured in the 1930s by leaving the humid climate of South-East Asia, Doll to Niemeyer (BE), 28 February 1938, fol. 18, OV25/5 (669/4), BE.

95. Crosby to FO No. 553, 22 December 1933, F64/43/40, FO 371/23586, PRO.

96. Doll to Niemeyer (BE), 24 February 1939, fol. 786, OV25/5 (669/4), BE.

97. Doll to Niemeyer (BE), 3 February 1939, fol. 76a, OV25/5 (669/4), BE.

98. Crosby to Howe, 6 March 1939, F3906/140/40, FO 371/23588, PRO.

99. Annual report (Economic), 5 April 1939, F4790/251/40, FO 371/23592, PRO. Some American opinion also tended to emphasize the nationalist rather than socialist content of Pridi's economic policies, K. P. Landon, 'Thailand for the Thai', *Asia* (October 1939): 118–27; see also Chapman (Bangkok) to SoS No. 555, 24 November 1939, 892.00/199, RG 59, NARA.

100. Crosby to Howe, 6 March 1939, F3906/140/40, FO 371/23588, PRO.

101. Crosby to FO No. 192E, 17 April 1939, F4039/242/40, FO 371/23590, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 150, 27 March 1939, F4113/242/40, FO 371/23590.

102. '555' was the pseudonym of Phra Sarasat Pholkand whom Doll considered to be a 'distinctly louche personality' and in the pay of the Japanese, Doll to Niemeyer, 30 December 1938, fol. 580, OV25/5 (669/4), BE.

103. Ibid.

104. Pridi's new Revenue Code was nevertheless promulgated in the Spring of 1939, Crosby to FO No. 192E, 17 April 1939, F4039/242/40, FO 371/23590, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 150, 27 March 1939, F4113/242/40, FO 371/23590, PRO.

105. Doll to Niemeyer (BE), 30 December 1938, fol. 580, OV25/5 (669/4), BE.

106. Crosby to FO No. 4, 3 January 1939, F242/242/40, FO 371/23590, PRO. Doll's constant emphasis in dealing with Pridi was that he should not 'imperil credit' for Thailand in the City of London. See Doll to Niemeyer, 30 December 1938, F352/352/40, FO 371/23590, PRO.

107. Niemeyer (BE) to Doll, 19 October 1938, fol. 38, OV25/5 (669/4), BE; Niemeyer minute, 29 August 1939, fol. 46, OV25/5 (669/4), BE.

108. Crosby to FO No. 192E, 17 April 1939, F4039/242/40, FO 371/23590, PRO; Doll to Niemeyer (BE), 24 February 1939, enclosed in Crosby to Howe, 6 March 1939, F3906/140/40, FO 371/23588, PRO.

109. Crosby to Howe, 6 October 1939, F1140/242/40, FO 371/23590; Crosby to FO No. 541, 3 November 1939, F12003/240/40, FO 371/23591, PRO.

110. Crosby to Howe, 6 October 1939, F1140/242/40, FO 371/23590, PRO. On discussions in London, see minute by E. H. M., 22 August 1939, fol. 42g, OV25/6 (670/1) BE.

111. Doll to Niemeyer (BE), 20 December 1938, fol. 57E, OV25/5 (669/4), BE.

112. Crosby to Doll, 19 September 1939, supplied by Waley (T) to the Bank of England and therefore to be found at, fol. 55, OV25/6 (670/1), BE.

113. Niemeyer (BE) to Waley (T), Very Private, 27 September 1939, fol. 56, OV25/6 (670/1), BE. In fact Crosby had only been in Central America for three years.

114. Waley (T) to Howe, (F14510), 7 December 1939, F12547/242/40, FO 371/23591, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 31 December 1939 and Henniker-Major minute, 15 December 1939, F12547/242/40, FO 371/23591, PRO.

115. Dutton (T) to Howe, 9 October 1939, F10907/242/40, FO 371/23590, PRO; Ronald and Henniker-Major minutes, 13 October 1939, F10907/242/40, FO 371/23590, PRO.

116. Information provided by Socony-Vacuum Oil Company (Bangkok) enclosed in Baker to SoS No. 111, 3 August 1934, 892.6365/36, RG 59, NARA.

117. Crosby to FO No. 560, 27 December 1938, F204/204/40, FO 371/23589,

PRO; Crosby to FO No. 562, 28 December 1938, F206/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 28, 10 January 1939, F1825/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO.

118. Draft copy of the Liquid Fuel Act as supplied by personnel of Standard-Vacuum Oil, enclosed in Neville (Bangkok) to SoS, 24 February 1939, 892. 6363/90, RG 59, NARA.

119. Crosby to FO No. 106, 23 February 1939, F2138/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO. Crosby denounced the approach of the management of Asiatic Petroleum as 'nothing short of fatuous'.

120. Crosby to FO No. 562, 28 December 1938, F206/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO.

121. Crosby to FO No. 560, 27 December 1938, F204/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 562, 28 December 1938, F206/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 28, 10 January 1939, F1825/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO.

122. Crosby to Howe, 24 February 1939, F2245/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO.

123. Clauses 17, 18, 22, and 23 of the proposed bill permitted the Siamese Ministry of Defence to suspend foreign oil import permits permanently or temporarily 'to protect national interests' and also to impose import quotas, Crosby to FO No. 126, 8 March 1939, F2694/204/40, FO 371/23589. Memorandum by Adviser on International Economic Affairs, 26 May 1939, 892.6363/96, RG 59, NARA.

124. Crosby to FO No. 250, 22 May 1939, F5252/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO.

125. Chapman (Bangkok) to SoS No. 20, 22 June 1939, 892.6363/97, RG 59, NARA.

126. Crosby to FO No. 40, 22 June 1939, F6278/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO; Starling (Petroleum Department) to Ronald, 666/7, 22 June 1939, F6305/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO; Starling (Petroleum Department) to Ronald, 666/7, 6 July 1939, F7015/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO.

127. 'Annual Economic Report (B) for 1939', enclosed in Crosby to FO No. 576E, 20 November 1939, F233/233/40, FO 371/24754, PRO; Chapman to SoS No. 453, 20 July 1939, 892.6865/102, RG 59, NARA.

128. On this question, see I. H. Anderson, *The Standard Vacuum Oil Company and the United States East Asian Policy, 1933–1941*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975 pp. 71–104.

129. M. A. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987, pp. 136–47; Anderson, *Standard Vacuum Oil*, pp. 121–6.

130. Southard (Hong Kong) to SoS No. 577, 28 December 1939, *FRUS*, 1939, III, pp. 719–20.

131. MacKay memorandum, 'Oil Situation in Thailand', 25 April 1939, 892.6363/106, RG 59, NARA.

132. Chapman (Bangkok) to SoS No. 432, 23 June 1939, 892.6363/100, RG 59, NARA.

133. Barnett (PD) to Ashley Clarke, PD666/7 pt.5, 22 April 1940, F2937/372/40, FO 371/24754, PRO.

134. Crosby to FO No. 250, 22 May 1939, F5252/204/40, FO 371/23589, PRO.

135. On Asiatic Petroleum Ltd. see Chapter 4, n. 60.

136. Crosby to FO No. 97, 5 March 1940, F1927/75/40, FO 371/24751, PRO.

137. Crosby to Governor-General Malay States, 26 December 1939, F289/76/40, FO 371/24751, PRO.

138. Crosby to FO No. 86, 26 February 1940, F1671/75/40, FO 371/24751, PRO.

139. They argued that commercial shipping rates would undermine its viability. Memorandum by the Eastern Smelting Company Ltd., n.d., F521/75/40, FO 371/24751, PRO; Weir (Manager, Eastern Smelting Co.) to Secretary, Siam Tin Syndicate Ltd., 4 January 1940, F521/75/40, FO 371/24751, PRO; Memorandum by the Eastern Smelting Company Ltd., January 1940, F1070/75/40, FO 371/24751, PRO.

140. Their suggested solution of buying Thai ore at the current market price, met only one of Thailand's many objections. A further problem for the CO was the shortage of work for the two Malayan smelters in operation even with Thai ore, memorandum by Hunter (Siamese Tin Syndicate Ltd.), n.d., F1231/75/40, FO 371/24751, PRO.

141. Crosby defined 'Further India' as 'comprising Burma, Malaya, Siam and Indo-China', Crosby to FO No. 97, 5 March 1940, F1927/75/40, FO 371/24751, PRO.

142. Henniker-Major minute, 25 March 1940, F1932/75/40, FO 371/24752, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute of a meeting at the Colonial Office on 18 April 1940, F2267/75/40, FO 371/24752, PRO; CO to Governor-General Straits Settlements No. 806, 2 April 1940, F2267/75/40, FO 371/24752, PRO.

143. Ashley Clarke minute, 2 May 1940, F2818/75/40, FO 371/24752, PRO. The Foreign Office loathed the creation of new wartime ministries and departments dealing with questions such as economics, supply, information, and subversion, all of which touched upon foreign policy, since these new Whitehall entities provoked ceaseless bureaucratic battles. Cadogan parodied these problems delightfully in his diary: 'I can't stand these. I am suddenly told that a Department in the Ministry of Obfuscation has to be reorganised: it must come back "under control" of the Ministry of Circumlocution. But there is a great difficulty, as the Head of Department—Col. Shufflebottom—ought not to be there, and I ought to substitute Mr Piffkins. (Other people tell me this is a ramp, and the real man is Mr Nuffkins.) I don't know S. or P. (or even N.). I can't grasp what they are supposed to be doing. I have got no data to go upon: how the *Hell* can I decide? But I was at it all day—and work accumulating.' Diary entry for 6 October 1939, in Dilks (ed.), *Cadogan Diaries*.

144. Ashley Clarke to Gent (CO), 5 April 1940, F2267/75/40, FO 371/24752, PRO.

145. Ashley Clarke minute, 13 November 1940, F4628/75/40, FO 371/24752, PRO.

146. See Chapter 3, pp. 145–8; also Potter (Bangkok) to SoS No. 277, 21 June 1933, 892.6354/29, RG 59, NARA.

147. Crosby to FO No. 86, 26 February 1940, F1671/75/40, FO 371/24751, PRO.

148. Doll to Niemeyer (BE), 14 February 1940, fol. 5, OV25/7 (670/2), BE; Doll memorandum 'Siam and US dollars', 1 March 1940, fol. 12, OV25/7 (670/2), BE; Crosby to FO No. 65, 5 February 1940, F1320/232/40, FO 371/24753, PRO. In January 1938, National Provincial Bank, the primary holders of Thai reserves and also one of their major creditors in London had arbitrarily

refused to reduce Thailand's interest rate, Doll to Minister of Finance, 30 January 1938, fol. 14, K Kh 0301.1.23/53, TNA.

149. Ashley Clarke minute, 20 March 1940, F1744/232/40, FO 371/24753, PRO; Niemeyer (BE) to Waley (T), 28 February 1940, F1744/232/40, FO 371/24753, PRO; Niemeyer (BE) to Doll, 5 March 1940, F1945/232/40, FO 371/24753, PRO.

150. MacDonald (CO) to Governor, Straits Settlements, No. 306, 1534/1/40, 2 April 1940, fol. 28, OV25/7, (670/2), BE; Doll memorandum, 3 April 1940, fol. 6, K Kh 0301.1.23/55, TNA.

151. B. minute 4 March 1940, fol. 13, OV25/7 (670/2), BE. The Bank of England toyed only briefly with idea of basing Thai currency on the Straits (Singapore) dollar which constituted 'sterling one place removed', J. F. minute, 18 March 1940, fol. 17, OV25/7 (670/2), BE.

152. Niemeyer had always recognized the fundamental weakness of the British position, for as early as 4 October 1939 he had posed the rhetorical question: 'Do we want the Siamese Government to sell £10 million sterling in the black market?', Niemeyer (BE) to Deputy Governor (BE), 4 October 1939, fol. 100, OV25/6 (670/1), BE.

153. Owen (T) to Mayall, 30 March 1940, F2180/232/40, FO 371/24753, PRO; Doll to Niemeyer (BE), 5 April 1940, F2285/232/40, FO 371/24753, PRO; Pridi to Crosby, 3 April 1940, fol. 4, K Kh 0301.1.23/55, TNA.

154. Crosby to Howe, 5 April 1940, F2821/232/40, FO 371/24753, PRO.

155. Crosby to FO No. 175, 10 May 1940, F3245/3245/40, FO 371/24755, PRO.

156. Petroleum Department to Owen (T), July 1940, F3128/5712/40, FO 371/24754, PRO.

157. Bangkok Legation Foreign Trade Report, 1939, F11247/256/40, FO 371/24754, PRO.

158. Mayall minute, 8 March 1940, F1671/75/40, FO 371/24751, PRO; Texas Oil Company memorandum, 7 August 1940, fol. 19, K Kh 0301.1.23/55, TNA.

# 6
# The West and the Franco-Thai Border Crisis, 1940–1941

THE vulnerability of Britain's position in Europe and Asia during the early Summer of 1940 cannot be overemphasized. On 10 May 1940 Germany began an invasion of France and less than a week later, the French Prime Minister telephoned Winston Churchill and confessed: 'We are defeated, we have lost the battle.' Whitehall was busy preparing for an expected German invasion of southern England and rumours abounded concerning the evacuation of the British Government to Canada. During these difficult months Churchill considered a compromise peace with Germany. The fall of France and the Netherlands worsened the already awkward position of Europe's Asiatic colonies and, correspondingly, from May 1940, the strategic initiative in South-East Asia passed to Japan and, to a lesser extent, Thailand.[1]

Churchill immediately recognized the Asian significance of these European events and wrote hopefully to Roosevelt: 'I am looking to you to keep that Japanese dog quiet in the Pacific, using Singapore in any way convenient.' Roosevelt, however, remained noncommittal. The British Chiefs of Staff (COS), reflecting on the likely consequences of the fall of France for South-East Asia, noted that while the resources of the region were vital to the war effort, nevertheless Singapore could not be reinforced. Like Churchill, they concluded, more in hope than expectation, that they would have to look to the United States to safeguard their interests in the Far East. But a few days later Cordell Hull vetoed an American attempt to embark on firm measures against Japan, advocating instead 'a moral embargo'.[2]

It should be emphasized that there were significant factions in Washington pressing for vigorous action against Japan even in the Summer of 1940. In July 1940, Henry Morgenthau, the Treasury Secretary, and Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of State for War, had attempted to mobilize an economic blockade of Japan, but were

prevented by Roosevelt and the State Department. Even the reticent Hull had pressed Joseph Grew, the American Ambassador in Tokyo, to try and obtain a Japanese guarantee of security for European colonies. Anglo-American naval talks, albeit inconclusive, were also held in the Summer of 1940. However, in the short term, the debate in Washington over assistance to Britain's position in South-East Asia was undercut by a growing conviction that Britain might soon suffer the fate of France.[3]

Anglo-American awareness of the increasing vulnerability of European colonial territories in South-East Asia was accompanied by a shift in the pattern of policy-making within the State Department and the Foreign Office regarding this region. While Crosby and his Western colleagues in Bangkok remained an influential force, concern about a possible Japanese advance to the south ensured that, for the first time in many years, senior diplomats and military planners now devoted sustained attention to areas such as Thailand and Indo-China. In Britain, October 1940 witnessed the creation of the Cabinet Far Eastern Committee, chaired by the unpopular Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, R. A. Butler, and which devoted much time to South-East Asia. However, with the exception of R. A. Butler, Thailand remained largely the preserve of officials, albeit of increasingly senior rank, until August 1941. Additionally, the international situation changed the nature of the concerns that preoccupied British policy-makers and also the Thai Government in Bangkok. Therefore, economic questions, which had hitherto operated as a significant independent factor, were increasingly ignored or subsumed within grander strategic concerns.[4]

Although there were no comparable structural changes within the State Department, Cordell Hull now pursued an increasingly public foreign policy towards South-East Asia, with the strongest emphasis upon the *status quo*. Moral posturing had achieved little against Japan during the early 1930s but remained an essential adjunct of Hull's public policy, set within a climate of firm domestic isolationism. Hull's response to Japanese pressure on Indo-China in July 1940 was therefore to restate his principles:

> Our position in the maintenance of the status quo in French Indochina is part of a general policy which this Government endeavours constantly and consistently to pursue of respect for the status quo except for changes as may be brought about through orderly processes with due consideration for the rights and legitimate interest of all concerned.

Yet this was more than mere moral posturing. Most Americans and indeed many British officials believed that in Asia no state would dare risk American retribution by committing aggression. Both Japan and Thailand were to prove them wrong during 1940. Moreover, while it is hard to generalize about attitudes in an administration as divided as Washington, nevertheless, by December 1940 there was an emerging twofold consensus that Britain would survive and that South-East Asia was essential to her war effort.[5]

The fall of France in May 1940 at least promised to spare the Foreign Office Far Eastern Department from further attempts to reconcile their policies with the die-hards of Outre Mer in Paris. Indo-China followed France and, in the Summer of 1940, after some confusion, Indo-China became more Vichy than the metropolis, while Britain permitted the Gaullist resistance in the colony to dwindle to insignificance. At the same time, however, Britain was encountering increasing difficulties in co-ordinating her policies with those of her prospective ally, the United States. British officials were loath to irritate Washington, for she now appeared to be the only long-term solution to Britain's predicament in Europe and Asia, as well as the only short-term source from which to replace desperate material losses incurred during the battle for France during May 1940. During the Summer of 1940 Roosevelt remained uncertain of British survival and was reluctant to supply naval vessels under the 'Destroyers for Bases Deal' for fear that they would soon fall into German hands. Yet conversely, once the United States began to take action by applying economic pressure on Japan in the Autumn of 1940, Britain was reluctant to follow. Britain feared that sanctions might trigger a war in South-East Asia in which the United States was not fully involved. Instead, Britain sought an elusive American military guarantee for her Asian colonial possessions.[6]

Ironically, some of the most awkward contradictions between British and American policies in Asia arose out of American attempts to offer political support to Britain in Europe. The 'hawks' in Roosevelt's Cabinet such as Morgenthau, who opposed American isolationism and were sympathetic to Britain, chose to emphasize the sanctity of the territorial *status quo* against aggression as a rigid moral principle. This stance against the use of force in international disputes represented an attempt to occupy the moral high ground against the American isolationist lobby. Others, such as Hull, also viewed this principle as a corner-stone of world stability. But Britain only paid lip-service to this principle, being in no

condition to fight in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, and so would not take a firm line against Japanese aggression in China during 1937, or subsequently in Indo-China during 1940. Instead, British officials favoured an opportunistic policy that embraced a degree of 'appeasement'. Therefore Britain was caught between a desire to please somewhat Anglophile ideologues in Washington by appearing robust in defence of the *status quo* and a need to avoid confronting Japan dictated by Britain's military weakness.

Because of the rigid American commitment to the *status quo*, British and American policies clashed badly over Thailand during 1940 and 1941. At first glance this appears surprising. Superficially, there seemed to be every reason for the United States to pursue a sympathetic policy towards Thailand in parallel to that prescribed by British diplomats in London and Bangkok, for traditionally Thai–American relations had been good. Thailand held a high opinion of the United States, being impressed by American material and political support for Britain and also her stand over the question of the rights of small nations such as Poland. All this was reinforced by the willing retreat of the United States from her colonial interests in the Philippines during the 1930s and the service of Americans as Foreign Affairs Advisers to the Thai Government. However, in late 1940, Thailand incurred the wrath of Hull by employing force to recover her 'lost territories' from the weak Vichy regime in Indo-China. The United States therefore branded Thailand an aggressor nation, placing her in the same category as Germany and Japan. As if to confirm this judgement, ministers in Phibul's Cabinet persisted in comparing their ambitions to Hitler's recovery of the German Sudetenland. The issue of the 'lost territories' in Indo-China, combined with Thai–American confrontation over oil in the late 1930s, ensured that, at a time when the United States had begun to develop coherent high-level policies towards South-East Asia, Thailand proved to be a maximum source of irritation in Washington.

In contrast, Britain's weak position at Singapore dictated an expedient pro-Thai policy, competing with Japan for the allegiance of the Government in Bangkok, even to the extent of condoning, perhaps encouraging, Thai aggression against Indo-China. Britain's objective was to retain a neutral Thailand as a buffer zone between Japan and her South-East Asian territories.[7] In pursuit of this objective, Britain sought, with some success, to exploit residual Thai fears of Japanese regional domination. The divergence of British and American policies towards Thailand resulted in considerable

acrimony. This was exacerbated in 1939 by the departure of the American Minister in Bangkok, the affable Edward Neville, and his replacement by Hugh Grant, who followed Hull in holding rigidly to the territorial *status quo*. With regard to Grant's appointment as the new American Minister in Thailand, it should be noted that Roosevelt appeared to consider Bangkok something of a punishment posting for undesirables. This did not augur well for American policy at this critical time.[8]

In a peculiar way, Anglo-American disagreement over Thailand during 1940 and 1941 mirrored subsequent Anglo-American wartime rivalry over the future of European Empires in general and over the future of Thailand in particular. This was because future wartime disputes also turned upon unequivocal American support for the related principles of non-aggression, the rejection of territorial aggrandizement, and self-determination. In 1940, it was Thailand, tacitly encouraged by Britain and Japan, that was cast in the role of the imperialist and aggressor, while, ironically, colonial French Indo-China was perceived as the victim. This ensured American opposition to Thai objectives in 1940–1 and correspondingly to Britain's pro-Thai policy. Significantly, during 1940 and 1941, while quietly condoning Thai plans for acquisitions in Indo-China, Britain was also preparing plans for the acquisition of Thai territory on the Kra Peninsula. These British plans would enjoy prominence both before and after the outbreak of the Pacific War. Like Thai ambitions in Indo-China, British ambitions against Thailand were quite at odds with American policy and, as such, ensured continued Anglo-American dissonance over Thailand well after December 1941.

## *Thailand, Vichy, and the West, May–August 1940*

In May 1940 Phibul attempted to mislead Western officials as to his objectives. Phibul understood that many awaited his reaction to the fall of France and the consequent unique opportunity to recover Thai territory lost to French Indo-China in 1893. On 14 May, during a meeting with Crosby, Phibul suggested that his reaction was dismay, for he believed pressure from the 'hotheads' in the Thai Ministry of Defence to seize Thailand's 'lost provinces' would now intensify. Meanwhile, Phibul argued that his own preoccupation was the fear that Japan would seize the initiative immediately, attacking Singapore via an amphibious operation at Songkhla near the Thai–Malayan border, with Thailand as a battle-

ground in a wider conflict between Britain and Japan.[9] Phibul's pious statement appeared to be confirmed by the news that plans had been laid to move Thai gold reserves out of Bangkok in the event of invasion. But in reality, as will be seen, Phibul's feelings were mixed. Undoubtedly, on the one hand, he was perturbed by the possibility of a strong Japan rather than a weak France occupying the border provinces of Indo-China. But on the other hand the opportunities offered by the prostration of France could not be ignored. Consequently, a nervous Phibul sought a *modus vivendi* with Japan that would allow her to acquire territory and limit her participation in any wider regional conflict.[10]

The collapse of metropolitan France also had a significant impact in Japan. The Yonai Government was already under public pressure to pursue a forward policy in South-East Asia given the weakness of the European Powers, commonly expressed in the slogan 'Japan must not miss the bus'. The Yonai Government fell on 16 July 1940 and was replaced by an administration under Prince Konoye. Yonai had already responded to public sentiment by issuing a double ultimatum to Britain and France requiring the closure of the Burma Road, a supply route to China, and similar routes from northern Indo-China.[11] On 3 July, Direk, the Thai Deputy Foreign Minister, informed Crosby that a 'reliable source' had mentioned that Japan would invade Indo-China 'soon' to enforce her ultimatum.[12] Britain and France gave way a few days later.

Britain was in no position to contemplate war in Asia, being confronted with the possibility of the imminent invasion of Britain and also Italy's entry into the war, threatening the Mediterranean. The COS were ready to countenance the abandonment of Shanghai and even the demilitarization of Hong Kong as a price worth paying to avoid confrontation with Japan.[13] The closure of the Burma Road lasted only three months and was of little strategic significance, but at the political level it served to underline once more the difficulty of squaring British and American policy in Asia. Britain's concession over the Burma Road resulted from the lack of American military support in Asia, yet to the irritation of officials in London, it met with fierce American criticism. It also reduced British prestige further in the eyes of the Thai Government. The French experienced parallel irritations over Indo-China during June 1940, being told by Washington to sustain the *status quo* while receiving only verbal support.[14]

Japan's ultimatum to Britain over the Burma Road had provoked expectations in Bangkok of a major conflagration across Asia. On

30 June 1940, Prince Wan, the influential Foreign Affairs Adviser, had confessed to Crosby that a more limited Japanese action, in which Indo-China was 'carved up', would be attractive. In this case Thailand would lay claim to all of Laos and Cambodia, that is, all of her 'lost provinces' and 'a little more'. Therefore, while fearing Japan, Thai nationalists nevertheless echoed Japanese fears that they might 'miss the bus', for as Prince Wan put it, the opportunity presented by a prostrate Indo-China was simply 'one which Thailand could not afford to lose'. All Thais now speculated furiously over the fate of Indo-China.[15] This was confirmed on 7 July, when Crosby visited Phibul to obtain information on Thai ambitions 'from the horse's mouth'.[16] Phibul accepted that an immediate Japanese invasion of Indo-China was unlikely, but he now expected Japan to encourage a nationalist rebellion in Indo-China that would facilitate a Japanese puppet government, as in Manchukuo. In such circumstances Thailand would press extensive claims, but at the same time he 'contemplated with alarm' the prospect of a Japanese puppet state as a neighbour and stressed that his preference was to obtain concessions from the weak French Vichy regime. Phibul added that he also feared Japanese actions against the Dutch and that he saw no hope of lasting peace without Anglo-American military co-operation in Asia.[17]

Britain knew that Phibul could not obtain his objectives in Indo-China without Japanese approval and therefore felt that he exaggerated his fears of Japanese action there. But they also accepted his protestation that a wider war, resulting in the disappearance of British rule in India, Burma, and Malaya would be 'a disaster of the first magnitude' for Thailand. In any case Britain was now bidding against Japan for Thai allegiance and dared not oppose Thailand's embarrassing claims; therefore Ashley Clarke, Deputy Head of the Far Eastern Department, noted that Britain should 'keep out of this business as far as we can'.[18]

During May and June 1940, Britain was also ignoring repeated calls for assistance from pro-British Gaullist elements in Indo-China struggling against Vichy, for fear that this might annoy Japan. This decision was vindicated by a detailed review of Britain's strategic position in the Far East conducted by the COS in the Summer of 1940 which revealed that Britain could not risk confronting Japan in Indo-China. This was the first major study of the subject since 1937 and revealed a growing land and air threat to Singapore. Over the last six years, military officials in Malaya had succeeded in shifting the emphasis of thinking in London from the defence of

the 'fortress' of Singapore to the defence of all Malaya. Nevertheless, Malaya lacked the resources for *any* sort of defence scheme, however well considered. Malaya had only one-quarter of the 336 aircraft thought to be required and all its existing machines were obsolete. Yet no reinforcements were forthcoming in 1940 as Churchill refused to accept the views of the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Malaya, General Bond, or indeed his predecessors, that Japan would advance from bases to the north in Malaya or Siam. Consequently, British strategic planning for Malaya remained frozen until late 1940.[19] Because of the inadequacy of defence provision for Malaya, the maintenance of Thailand as a neutral buffer zone free from ties to Japan took on yet greater importance. Meanwhile, the pessimistic COS paper reviewing Britain's Far Eastern predicament was more influential in Tokyo than in London, for a copy of the report subsequently fell into Axis hands in late 1940.[20]

Consequently, when faced with calls for 'military assistance' against Japan from Indo-China's Gaullist Governor-General, George Catroux, Britain's Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, quietly disregarded Britain's firm public promise to support all French colonies that fought on after the fall of metropolitan France. Halifax also stressed that the Anglo-French Staff Conference held in 1939 at Singapore had 'laid no specific obligations on the two parties'. However, these technicalities shrouded more significant questions identified by Halifax, namely, would the United States also support Indo-China and would such support have any impact on the war in Europe? The answer to both these questions was clearly no.[21] In these circumstances Britain was bound to avoid the possibility of confrontation with Japan over the Gaullists in Indo-China. British officials were therefore thankful when the resistance was eclipsed by Vichy forces.

Under the Vichy regime in Europe, French policy on Asian questions was dominated for the first time by the diplomats of the Quai d'Orsay under the new Foreign Secretary, Paul Baudouin, rather than the colonial officials of Outre Mer. Baudouin, however, proved to be heavily influenced by his personal financial interests in Indo-China and his recent governorship of the powerful Banque d'Indochine. Baudouin therefore pursued a 'policy de banque' that was if anything less flexible than previous French policy.[22] In any case chaos reigned as the diplomats of the Quai d'Orsay were moved to cramped temporary accommodation in Vichy, where Chauvel, Director of the Asian Section, shared a single

desk with the Director of the Middle Eastern Section. Arguably, the colonial officials of Outre Mer, notorious for their Anglophobic excesses, had even more cause for dismay, for their ministry had been located mischievously in the Hotel de la Grande Bretagne at Vichy.[23] Nevertheless, sufficient coherence existed to allow Vichy to appoint Admiral Decoux as Vichy Governor in place of the overtly Gaullist Catroux. Initially, Catroux refused to be moved and Indo-China enjoyed the farce of two Governors-General until he was persuaded to depart by means of threats. The Vichy Governor did little to clarify the allegiance of the colony as Decoux stressed his intention to co-operate with Britain given the special circumstances prevailing in the Far East.[24]

Meanwhile, the continued deterioration of the European Powers during August 1940 spurred Japanese strategists to new levels of excitement. On 7 August a conference of War Ministers and General Staff section chiefs stressed the importance of an attack on Singapore and the need to step up preparations. This was underlined by a Japanese ultimatum to Decoux's Vichy regime in Indo-China, demanding the use of air and naval bases in Indo-China, with Singapore as their intended objective.[25] 'We should be under no illusions,' noted Dening in the Far Eastern Department. 'It is but a step to Siam, and bases in Siam will put Malaya in great danger.' Britain looked hopefully to the United States for a lead in this new crisis but the American reaction took the form of a simple public restatement of their commitment to the *status quo*. Britain concluded that if the United States would not threaten force, then 'we certainly cannot'.[26] Decoux's subsequent decision to offer staunch resistance to Japanese demands without outside assistance made British officials doubly cautious for fear of provoking Japan.[27] Nevertheless, Japan's drive for strategic facilities in Indo-China was ultimately aimed at Singapore and, as such, presented Britain with an inescapable dilemma. Sterndale Bennett, now Head of the Far Eastern Department, explained: 'The accepted view is that we cannot go to war with Japan over Indochina. On the other hand we cannot afford to let Japan take one strategic position after another, so at the end we are left to fight with every disadvantage, with our backs to the wall at Singapore.' In view of Japan's ambitions in Indo-China, Thai neutrality could only be of growing importance to British strategy in South-East Asia. Therefore, while Britain resolved to offer no resistance to Japanese or Thai ambitions in Indo-China, there remained the alarming possibility of

Thai–Japanese collaboration in their respective enterprises. This would imply the end of Thai neutrality and a further Japanese foothold *en route* to Singapore.[28]

The prospect of a Franco-Japanese confrontation increased the territorial ambitions of the Thais. On 6 August Phibul personally informed Crosby that he was unable to refuse a Japanese invitation to send a military mission to Tokyo. Phibul attempted to soften the blow by speaking of a parallel Thai mission to be sent to Europe and by dwelling on 'the great temperamental differences' between the Thai and Japanese peoples and of his 'unabated sympathy for Britain'. Crosby offered a more cynical interpretation of the mission, suggesting that Phibul was a 'realist' preparing his country for a potentially massive change in the world order. While Phibul was 'inspired largely by fear', he also recognized the opportunities offered by events in France and Indo-China and 'wished to go down in history'.[29] The Far Eastern Department agreed.[30] British officials noted that in Washington too, for the first time, concerted high-level interest was displayed in the link between events in Thailand and Indo-China, when Sumner Welles, the Under-Secretary of State, expressed his alarm to the British Ambassador on 22 August.[31]

In general, Crosby was correct in viewing Phibul's foreign policy as being dominated by a confused and constantly shifting balance between fear and ambition. However, his interpretation of the details of the Thai–Japanese relationship was inaccurate. During August Britain was shaken to discover the reality behind the Thai mission to Tokyo in August 1940. Phibul had presented this mission as an unwelcome Japanese idea in the face of which he had been 'reluctantly forced to crumble'.[32] But Japanese communications intercepted by an Anglo-Australian signals intelligence station in Darwin proved conclusively that this mission was wholly Phibul's initiative.[33] On 25 August 1940, it reported:

> Our Minister in Bangkok has been attributing this Thai mission to Japanese pressure.
>
> In a previous Y [intercepted communication] the Japanese Foreign Minister enquired what this mission was all about, as he'd never heard of it, it now appears that the soldiers and sailors are equally innocent.
>
> It is hard to escape the conclusion that the Thais have initiated the project, probably hoping to get Japanese consent to their cutting a slice of French Indochina. Hoodwinking our Minister is an incidental necessity.[34]

The intercept was forwarded to a crestfallen Crosby, who replied, 'I can well believe it', adding that Phibul 'may be willing to pay the price exacted by Japan'.[35] This reinforced a growing feeling in London, particularly amongst the military, that Crosby was 'a little too considerate' of Phibul and lent credence to rumours that Japan was holding out for base facilities in Thailand as part of a Thai–Japanese pact of mutual assistance. Meanwhile, in Tokyo, although surprised by the Thai initiative, the Japanese set about exploring its potential, setting up a staff conference in early August 1940 to discuss Thai irredentist claims.[36]

Phibul was both closer to Japan and more optimistic than he had been prepared to admit and, under growing public pressure, he aimed to strike a deal with Japan for the 'lost territories'. Phibul sought formal British, American, and even French approval for the transfer of territory to Thailand in the event of Japan's expansion into Indo-China.[37] Thailand also refused to ratify the Thai–French Non-Aggression Pact, signed in June 1940, demanding as a price, not only redefinition of the frontier on the Mekong, 'but in addition to this an assurance from the Vichy Government that in the event of France abandoning Indochina, she would make over to Thailand, as her legitimate successor, all the territories which the Thais have ceded to the French since 1893'. These demands were presented at Vichy in France by the Thai Minister.[38] But the unpleasant nature of his reception, 'like a dog', emphasized the continued intransigence of French metropolitan officials on this question.[39] Some suspected that these improbable Thai demands were merely designed for the increasingly jingoistic press.[40]

Meanwhile, the Japanese presented the recalcitrant French with a final ultimatum for access to bases in Indo-China on 2 September. This was rejected and limited fighting broke out between French and Japanese forces at Haiphong near the border with China.[41] Japanese actions appear to have taken Phibul by surprise and, not for the last time, Phibul absconded into the country, missing a Cabinet meeting.[42] Decoux also sensed impending crisis and appealed to Britain and the United States to restrain the Thais and for assistance against Japan.[43] However, the Foreign Office reiterated their fears that French resistance would inevitably appear to be controlled from Singapore and might therefore spark off an Anglo-Japanese confrontation. Instead they hoped to see Decoux assisted by China.[44] In any case the British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in London dismissed any chance of effective resistance in Indo-China on the grounds that

the indigenous population were highly disaffected under French colonial rule.[45] The COS and subsequently the War Cabinet accepted these arguments, seeing nothing but harm in 'a robust policy'. Washington offered the French only verbal support, confirming London's prediction that the United States would 'do nothing as usual'. In fact, Hull gave sustained consideration to British requests for support to the French. However, the problem was not so much domestic resistance in the United States, but the confused state of affairs in Indo-China. Hull noted that he was trying to collect aeroplanes to send to Indo-China to justify resistance: 'The difficulty however was to know what the real policy of France was. If aeroplanes were sent who would they help? Was there a secret agreement between Vichy, the Germans and Japan?' Privately, Britain shared Hull's reservations.[46]

Consequently, the only response to Decoux's appeal came from Phibul, who now informed the French openly that Japan had offered him the 'lost provinces' if Thailand would 'stand with' Japan against Indo-China.[47] In the absence of Western support for Decoux, Crosby now presented the question of the 'lost territories' to the Far Eastern Department as a straight choice between Thai or Japanese occupation. Crosby revealed his personal sympathies, as well as underlining the general British strategic rationale, when he argued on 16 September 1940 that 'on grounds both of intrinsic justice and of our own imperial interests we must, if it comes to a choice, prefer Thai to Japanese occupation'.[48]

Phibul's requests for American support for his territorial claims were rejected with hostility and a firm restatement of Hull's declaration of 16 July 1937, in favour of 'peaceful negotiation and agreement'.[49] Hugh Grant, the American Minister, like Crosby, was initially persuaded that there was as yet 'no direct collusion between the Thais and the Japanese' over Indo-China.[50] Nevertheless, by early September it was clear to Grant that sporadic fighting between Decoux's forces and the Japanese near Haiphong had left the Thai leaders 'fearful of being left out in the cold' while the Japanese took over all of Indo-China. Thailand was therefore 'straining at the bit'. Up until September, Britain had succeeded in hiding her support for Phibul's objectives from the United States. Crosby had even suggested a parallel Anglo-American *démarche* to Phibul in favour of caution, which Grant was quick to accept. Meanwhile in Washington, the Thai Minister, Mom Rajawong Seni Pramoj, was called to the State Department to be given a stiff warning.[51] But on 15 September Crosby hinted

to Grant that British resolve might 'weaken' if it appeared Japan was likely to advance as far as the Thai frontier.[52] Grant now warned Hull that the British intended 'to leave us out on a limb in splendid isolation', and predicted, correctly, that 'the British policy of appeasement is about to be applied to the Thai–Indo-China affair'.[53]

Phibul was now under intense pressure from Thai irredentists.[54] Phibul therefore attempted to intimidate the French into making border concessions by speaking of 'Japan's generous promises' to Thailand but Decoux replied by citing contradictory Japanese guarantees of French sovereignty over Indo-China, which were about to be reinforced by a further agreement between Decoux and the Japanese.[55] Limited fighting continued between French and Japanese troops around Haiphong until 18 September when Decoux rejected a further Japanese ultimatum.[56] Decoux only capitulated to Japan on 24 September after further sporadic negotiations and heavy bombing.[57] Decoux had held out longer than British officials had expected, or desired, and it was with some relief that they greeted his eventual capitulation and his reversion to what British officials perceived to be 'true Vichy style'.[58]

To Phibul's dismay, Thai ambitions appeared to be thwarted by a Franco-Japanese agreement signed in the last week of September guaranteeing Japanese bases in northern Indo-China and also French rule. Britain chose this moment to remind Phibul that, after all, a weak French neighbour was perhaps more palatable than the Japanese.[59] Yet Phibul's enthusiasm was scarcely dampened, and in an 'exceedingly frank' interview with Crosby on 28 September, Phibul 'virtually admitted that he had made up his mind to occupy [French territory] if Vichy persisted in turning down his demands'. He added that 'the Thai army were spoiling for a fight . . . some officers had declared their wish for one, even if they were to lose it'. He blamed irredentist pressure which was 'getting too strong for him', adding that he would at least have to satisfy earlier Thai demands for limited revision of the border on the Mekong River. This was a veiled reference to his fear that he might be eclipsed by another military figure, such as Sindhu, if he did not please the ultra-nationalists in the officer corps. He accepted that London and Washington would protest, but asserted that Thailand's move would not constitute aggression, merely the just recovery of territory lost to previous French aggrandizement. Phibul was far less frank on the question of Thailand's military

mission to Tokyo whose return was currently 'delayed'. This convinced Crosby that Thailand 'must be negotiating in Tokyo for the consent of Japan to the occupation of the territories on the right [western] bank of the Mekong [River] if Vichy prove obdurate and to the acquisition by Thailand of Laos Province and of Cambodia in the event of the break-up of Indo-China'.[60] Crosby continued to urge Phibul not to take military action but at the same time defended Phibul's decision in his reports to London. Only Japan and the United States had the power to persuade the obstinate French to concede. American disdain left Japan as Thailand's only available sponsor.

By 28 September Crosby and Phibul were frankly discussing a Thai invasion of Indo-China. Crosby warned that collusion with Japan 'could only mean the end of her real independence'. Phibul replied 'with philosophic resignation, and with the air of one who had made up his mind to face the facts at last, that small countries were bound to have a big one as their patron nowadays'. Phibul added that he accepted that this entailed a degree of economic and political servitude to Japan. Phibul then reverted to his old theme of his wish for stability, insisting that 'what he desired most of all was the creation of a strong bloc consisting of Britain, the United States, and the Netherlands, which could keep Japan in check'. France was conspicuous by its absence from Phibul's supposedly idyllic *status quo*, indicating that he desired a Japanese advance into eastern Indo-China but no further. Both Phibul and Crosby knew the creation of such a balancing American-sponsored bloc to be extremely unlikely. Phibul had been nothing if not frank and so Crosby counselled London to follow Phibul's example, 'to anticipate the worst and be prepared for it'.[61]

Phibul was now strongly influenced by both internal and external events. Within Thailand, Phibul feared that without a sufficient display of irredentism his days were numbered. Meanwhile, at the international level, Phibul was greatly impressed by the fact that the Japanese move into Indo-China coincided with the conclusion of the Triple Alliance of 27 September 1940 in which Germany, Italy, and Japan seemed to be dividing up the world between them. If Thailand wanted her lost territories, indeed if Thailand was to survive what appeared to be an approaching war in Asia, then it appeared she must make her peace with the Axis.

Consequently, the day after the conclusion of the Triple Alliance, and on the same day as his frank conversation with Crosby, Phibul

took firm action to move closer to Japan. Disregarding the fact that a Thai mission was already *en route* to Tokyo, and without informing his Cabinet, Phibul sent a new message to the Japanese naval attaché in Bangkok, offering to co-operate with Japanese aims in Asia. Tokyo were so surprised that they asked for confirmation, which Phibul gave in person three days later. Japan now faced a twofold embarrassment. Firstly, a mission under Prom Yothi had already arrived in Tokyo, but with no real power to negotiate. Secondly, much to the dismay of Japanese Foreign Minister, Matsuoka Yosuke, French Indo-China had only capitulated to Japan in return for a guarantee of sovereignty over all of Indo-China. Matsuoka therefore presided over two sets of awkward protégés with contradictory claims. Nevertheless, in Tokyo the military were elated by Phibul's approach with its prospect of bases close to Malaya and Singapore.

A closer inspection of the terms that Phibul offered Japan reveals that Phibul was still attempting to contract out of, rather than into, a wider war in South-East Asia. Phibul requested a guarantee of territory for Thailand first, offering in return only benign neutrality. Japanese troops were allowed safe passage through Thailand to Malaya and could purchase the supplies that they required. Enthusiasm for 'Asia for the Asiatics' was conspicuous by its absence. It was not surprising then that, after reflection, Tokyo's response was noncommittal. Nevertheless, thereafter Phibul took Japanese support for his aims in Indo-China for granted.[62]

Crosby's refusal to condemn Thai policy publicly or privately now provoked a confrontation with the American Minister. Grant let loose the frustrations of the past few months, insisting that 'the British admission to the Thais that it may become necessary for Thailand to come to an agreement with Japan concerning Indo-china will only encourage such action. I believe Lord Halifax has made a serious mistake and that you British will live to regret it. I fear that you are planning another Munich.' Grant reinforced the imagery of appeasement by recalling Britain's weak policy over Manchukuo. Under the weight of this attack, Crosby admitted that 'his Government had made many blunders' but nevertheless continued to defend his policy as 'realistic'. He insisted that the proximity of Thailand to British interests made her friendship 'imperative', in contrast to the more secure position of the United States. Crosby then pointed obliquely to the fact that the United States urged Thailand to stand up to Japan but offered her no material support, by recounting that Phibul had pointed out that

'the only solution' was an American-led bloc of powers capable of using force against Japan.[63]

The views of the British and American Ministers were at odds because of the divergent policies of their governments. But the Thais also contrived to give the two men contrasting pictures of Thai policy. An instructive comparison can be made between Crosby's conversation with Phibul, discussed above, and Grant's account of a conversation with Phibul on 4 October 1940, during which Phibul gave the misleading impression that he was

> a prisoner and certainly a puppet of a military clique which has the power and is determined to use force. . . . The Prime Minister is told what to say and do. . . . While I talked with the Prime Minister in his private residence, army officers, who I could see through the open door into an adjoining room, listened to our conversation. He appeared to be very heavily guarded and under military surveillance. The Prime Minister said the people and particularly the army officers were demanding action and in an unguarded moment, which is common to these Thai, he added that 'they might kill me if I do not follow their desires'.

Grant's report of Phibul as a 'prisoner' bordered on high farce. Phibul's theatrical performance was probably designed to persuade the American Minister that a Thai invasion was inevitable if there were no French concessions and thus an attempt to engineer last-minute American pressure upon Vichy for territorial concessions to Thailand. Grant was taken in but the effect was simply to reinforce American rigidity, for he responded with another sermon on 'the strict maintenance of the *status quo*'. Notwithstanding this, Phibul never missed an opportunity to stir the differences between the two Ministers, frequently remarking that the United States was 'severe' while Britain was 'good and friendly'.[64]

In contrast to American opposition to Thai irredentism, which was rigid, the issue of American support for Britain in South-East Asia lacked consensus and was widely debated in Washington during the final months of 1940. Events in Indo-China, followed by the Tripartite Pact, galvanized Joseph Grew, the American Ambassador in Tokyo. Writing to Roosevelt in September, he urged that the southward drive of Japan was not only a threat to Britain but also 'a definite threat to American interest in the Pacific' and in this region American security was partly dependent on a British imperial fleet. It followed from this that 'if we decide to support the British Empire we must uphold the status quo in the Far East'. Roosevelt did not reply. Equally, Hull, addressing

his staff, emphasized that the United States could not stand by and let Japan take Singapore. Yet in October, Stimson and Morgenthau still found their plans for an embargo blocked by the State Department. On 4 October, Churchill asked Roosevelt if he would permit further military talks and dispatch an American fleet to visit Singapore. Both suggestions, however, were rejected due to strong opposition from the United States Navy.[65]

Worries on the part of the United States Navy about a two-ocean war were a key impediment to American support for the European Powers in South-East Asia in both 1940 and 1941. In November 1940 a British naval officer in Washington was shown the American 'War Plan Dog', and to his dismay noted that it emphasized the Atlantic. In late November a redraft of the American war plan 'Rainbow 3' was rejected by the Navy on similar grounds. General Marshall epitomized this view, insisting on 16 December 1940 that South-East Asia was a British issue, and 'so far as Malaya is concerned, we should avoid dispersing our forces into that theater'.

Naval resistance was overturned in December 1940 because of a change of heart by the hitherto noncommittal Roosevelt. On 18 December 1940 Churchill sent a forceful dispatch to the President explaining the importance of South-East Asian resources to the European war effort. Roosevelt considered this at length. At the same time he received similar representations on Singapore from Hornbeck, an Anglophile voice in the State Department. The impact of this upon Roosevelt's thinking is revealed by his correspondence with Francis B. Sayre, then serving as American High Commissioner in the Philippines. Sayre had recently urged Roosevelt to ignore Far Eastern entanglements and to concentrate on Europe. However, Roosevelt now chose to refute this recommendation in strong terms:

> ... the European issue remains in the balance. If Japan, moving further southward should gain possession of the region of the Netherlands East Indies and the Malay Peninsula, would not the chances of Germany's defeating Great Britain be increased and the chances of England's winning be decreased thereby?

In December 1940, the presumption that South-East Asia was vital to the European war had found favour with Roosevelt. But at the same time this had not yet been translated into firm policy, nor into substantial reassurances to London. Scepticism regarding American assistance therefore continued to shape British policies

in South-East Asia throughout the Winter of 1940 and the Spring of 1941.[66]

## *The Franco-Thai Border Conflict, October 1940–January 1941*

Between October 1940 and January 1941, against a background of a continuing British search for support from Washington, three principal objectives dominated the policy of British diplomats towards South-East Asia: (1) to offer tacit support to Thailand in the hope that she would obtain her 'lost provinces' without having to resort to assistance from Japan, the price for which would probably be a Thai–Japanese alliance; (2) to avoid war with Japan at all costs, and thus to appease Japan as she advanced into the northern part of Vichy Indo-China; and (3) to disguise this appeasement as far as possible to avoid giving offence to the United States, upon whom Britain's long-term hopes were focused. Remarkably, British officials persevered with these policies despite uneasy Thai–Japanese collusion over Indo-China; indeed they probably overestimated the degree to which Phibul had moved towards an understanding with Japan. As early as October 1940, partly due to Phibul's frank expositions and partly due to the interception of Japanese communications, the Far Eastern Department felt that they entertained few illusions about the strength of Phibul's ambitions towards Indo-China. 'The Thais and the Japanese', they asserted, 'are fixing things up between themselves and Japan's pound of flesh no doubt comprises bases in Thailand.' Notwithstanding this conclusion, the Cabinet Far Eastern Committee maintained that there was no alternative to Crosby's policy of tacitly backing Thailand while hoping, simultaneously, to reinforce Phibul's underlying fears about the extent of Japan's ambitions. Phibul, they concluded, wished to see a strong British presence at Singapore as a regional counterbalance to Japan.[67]

Because of fear of adverse American reactions to British support for Thai ambitions, assistance remained low-key. Typically, when British officials orchestrated pro-Thai comment in the British press, they avoided *The Times* and *Reuters* because of their association with the British official line, and instead arranged for favourable copy supporting Thai demands to appear in the *Guardian* and the *Yorkshire Post*.[68] Britain's partiality in the Thai–Indo-China

border dispute was further underlined by rare practical action in mid-October 1940 when the British fleet in the Mediterranean were instructed to hold up French troop transports *en route* from Djibouti to Saigon. These troops were reinforcements against the Thais rather than against the recently placated Japanese.[69] Vichy sought American pressure on Britain to reverse this decision, but without success.[70]

British appeasement was underlined by a continuing concern that residual Gaullist resistance in the colony might provoke a new Japanese offensive.[71] On 13 October a directive from the Cabinet Committee on Foreign (Allied) Resistance insisted that 'nothing should be allowed to break out in Indochina'.[72] Pressure upon the Gaullists from Vichy security agencies was intense.[73] This, combined with a lack of British support, ensured its existence was brief. On 7 November, with more relief than regret, Ashley Clarke pronounced the resistance in Indo-China to be 'dead'.[74]

British resolve to support Thailand was shaken several times during 1940. In October, British officials were mortified when Phibul began to boast to the French of German support. Germany, he insisted, was 'urging Thais to take by force territories in Indo-China which she desires'. He continued, 'The German Government has even promised intervention at Vichy within 48 hours of firing first shot and to impose upon French Government redistribution of territories along racial lines which will give to Thailand all that she wants including Laos Province and Cambodia.' Furthermore, as early as 21 May 1940, American diplomats had information suggesting Germany had offered Thailand the northern Malay States of Kedah and Kelantan if she won the war.[75] These claims appeared to confirm the British view that Germany wished to see a military confrontation in South-East Asia in the hope of embroiling Britain in a war with Japan.

Predictably perhaps, Grant took the most pessimistic view. After hearing a bellicose speech by Phibul in mid-October calling for Japanese success in Indo-China, Grant came to the remarkable conclusion that it had not been written, even in part, by the Premier, and instead 'smells strongly of Tokyo'. He continued to view Thai foreign policy as subject to the whims of both Germany and Japan, incapable of independent action and therefore not worthy of attempts to redeem it. Thai territorial claims, he continued, were incidental to the main issue, which was, in fact,

> a long range plan to bring about the complete break up of Indochina and the involvement and subsequent control of Thailand, which is in turn

only a phase of the ultimate program of the Japanese to sweep southward, abetted by Germany in the furtherance of its battle with Britain.

Germany is winning this war, Great Britain is destined to be beaten, the United States is impotent in the Far East and Japan is irresistible in the eyes of the Prime Minister and his Ministers.

Thus the substance of Grant's argument continued to be that there was no such thing as Thai foreign policy, only instructions from the Axis.[76]

Both British and American speculation about Germany and Japan was wide of the mark. In fact Phibul had been dazzled by the German–Italian–Japanese Tripartite Pact of September 1940, and as a consequence had sought both German and Japanese support for his ambitions in Indo-China, but without success. As has been seen, Phibul had even gone so far as to offer Japan troop-transit rights through Thailand to Singapore in the event of an Anglo-Japanese war. The Japanese Army were delighted by this proposal, but Tokyo was also conscious of the contradictory guarantees of sovereignty given to Indo-China during September in return for bases there. In addition they noted that Phibul did not offer Japan a military alliance and was therefore hoping to contract out of any future regional confrontation.[77]

German documentation also confirms that Phibul's claims of German support were fictitious. During October 1940 a high-ranking Thai delegation led by Colonel Prayoon, a half-German Thai Minister, held numerous discussions with German officials in Berlin, including Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister. Ribbentrop began by outlining current German policy which Prayoon approved 'with great vigour, especially as regards the defeat of England and the elimination of this international trouble-maker from Asiatic politics'. But on the key question of Thailand's 'lost territories', Ribbentrop stated unequivocably that he had 'no intention of taking colonies away from the French'. In December Prayoon was informed that Germany would only assent to solutions in Indo-China approved by Japan or Vichy, but Berlin comforted the dismayed Prayoon by diverting the discussion 'to Thailand's claims on Burma'. Germany later complained to the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin that Vichy would be more co-operative in the Far East if 'they were not harassed and provoked by the Siamese'.[78]

The 'German' initiative and fears that Thailand might have been drawn into the Tripartite pact momentarily caused British support for Thailand to falter. Speculation abounded concerning

an Axis plan whereby Germany would attack Britain, Spain would attack Gibraltar, Italy would attack Egypt, and Thailand and Japan would attack Malaya. Axis intervention, Crosby informed Phibul, had put 'an entirely different complexion' on Thai claims and now 'raised the naked question of Thailand's entry into a war against Britain and by implication against the United States as well'. The Deputy Foreign Minister, Direk, denied all knowledge of German overtures but Crosby still berated him about 'sordid bargains' that contradicted Thai neutrality.[79] Grant, the American Minister, was delighted and issued his own stern warning.[80] Yet British uncertainty over Thailand's position in October 1940 represented only a momentary aberration from previous policies. The Far Eastern Department knew relations between Germany and Japan to be poor and, remarkably, spoke of British and German interests being in temporary alignment. Germany, they thought, wished to provoke confrontation while Britain offered Thailand support in the hope of staving off an agreement with Japan. They confessed that the idea of British and German policy being in concert in South-East Asia, albeit with different long-term objectives, 'does sound fishy'. Nevertheless, Britain continued to support Thailand and remained conspicuously quiet when Sumner Welles, the American Under-Secretary of State, publicly condemned Thai ambitions.[81]

A British policy that was at odds with the United States, but according to Phibul, aligned with Nazi Germany, was difficult to defend against those in London who chose to question the attitudes of British diplomats towards Thailand. There were many who wished to do so. British officials dealing with economic and strategic questions called for a hard line against Thailand, as they had done in 1939. This was underlined by their reactions to a spurious military mission sent by the Thais to Singapore on 7 October 1940 to offset the British discomfort caused by the Thai military mission to Tokyo in August. Led by Colonel Karb Kunjara, it discussed Anglo-Thai co-operation in the event of a Japanese invasion of southern Thailand. This, combined with Phibul's recent bans on irredentist demonstrations, constituted an outward display of continued neutrality which Crosby found 'surprising' and 'gratifying'.[82]

In contrast, the new GOC Malaya, Major-General Bond, treated Karb's offer of defence co-operation with derision, insisting that Thailand 'had no such intention'.[83] As evidence of Thai duplicity, Bond pointed to Karb's insistence that he was ignorant of parallel Thai missions to Germany and Japan. Conversely, Crosby found

Karb's ignorance quite consistent with Phibul's 'unstable and secretive' style of diplomacy, insisting that this mission constituted one more sign that Thailand was not yet fully committed to Japan.[84] Phibul, he insisted, was simply 'at his old game of trying everyone both ways'.[85] In London the COS shared Bond's scepticism. They toyed briefly with threatening the Thais with pre-emptive bombing raids on Thai aerodromes near Malaya, but were dissuaded by the Foreign Office.[86] These conflicting views stemmed from differing responsibilities. The COS loathed Phibul's deliberate equivocation as it denied them any firm basis on which to conduct contingency planning for war. But it was precisely this equivocation that Crosby sought to prolong, asserting that the alternative was a Thai–Japanese alliance.

Later in October, officials within the British Treasury and in the newly formed bureaucracies dealing with economic warfare joined the COS in calling for a tough policy. They suggested exploiting Thailand's place within the British imperial economy as a means of exerting pressure, pointing to Thai dependence on India for gunny bags without which her rice could not be exported and upon British shipping companies to export the rice.[87] But as the Foreign Office repeatedly reminded these economic officials, Malaya purchased approximately 40 per cent of Thai exports, while Thailand provided nearly 70 per cent of Malayan rice imports. Therefore, Thailand was interdependent with, rather than dependent upon, the British Empire. Economic punishment was at best 'a double-edged weapon' that the British Empire could not apply with impunity.[88]

Having blunted opposition to their policies in London, the Far Eastern Department stayed firmly behind Thailand when, on 29 October, Phibul warned of his forthcoming invasion of Indo-China.[89] Intermittent clashes between the French and the Thais had already occurred on the border and Crosby warned London that British opposition would be 'folly . . . whatever Washington might say'.[90] In London the Foreign Office officials declared that 'the time had come' to decide on British policy. In practice, however, they merely rehearsed an already well-defined policy for the benefit of ministers who gave their approval.[91] Both the Cabinet Far Eastern Committee and the Foreign Secretary, Halifax, agreed that the difficulty was to avoid annoying either the Thais or the Americans. Halifax therefore confirmed that secret expressions of sympathy for Thailand would continue, but overtly Britain should 'do nothing'.[92]

Late October and early November saw the occurrence of further

incidents on the Thai–Indo-China border and Western officials were now convinced of some sort of informal Thai–Japanese understanding over Indo-China. On 15 November Prince Wan conceded to Crosby that, in the event of Japan moving into southern Indo-China and taking over Saigon,

> Thailand would probably proceed to occupy Laos Province of Indo-China and Cambodia . . . he saw no alternative to it, since Thailand could not afford to see Japan in occupation of these territories. He confessed that such a course might look like aggression and that a formula would have to be devised to cover it. Prime Minister was satisfied that, if French were to offer resistance, Thai forces were in a position to overcome it.

Crosby baulked at Prince Wan's clumsy attempts to present this option as in any sense anti-Japanese and insisted that Japanese collusion would be 'essential'. Crosby stated Britain's fear that Japan would demand bases in Thailand for use against Malaya in return for her co-operation. Prince Wan crumbled and confessed that this was 'possible', but added that Thai concessions offered to Japan in return would be 'cultural and economic' rather than military and would not include bases or recognition of Japan's 'New Order' in Asia. He added a twofold assurance, insisting firstly, that the Thais would resist any Japanese presence in Thailand militarily, and secondly, that, in any case, Japan would initially choose to attack Malaya from air and sea bases in southern Indo-China rather than from Thailand. The Far Eastern Department refused to accept this precise forecast of the strategy Japan would employ in December 1941, and of the growing importance of air power. Instead they concluded that Japan valued her present *modus vivendi* concluded with Vichy over bases in Indo-China during September, and therefore would only support Thai claims against Indo-China 'in return for . . . bases in Thailand'.[93]

In reality the border conflict continued to present Japan with dilemmas no less unpleasant than those confronting London. On 5 November 1940, at an inner Cabinet meeting in Tokyo, it was decided that Japan had already obtained all the bases she required in the short term from Vichy in Indo-China, and therefore they should attempt to maintain the *status quo*. It followed from this that they were only prepared to grant Phibul two small areas of Indo-China, while in return they would require a long list of concessions including military co-operation, recognition of Manchukuo and economic assistance to Japan. Moreover, Bangkok would have

to remove Western elements, particularly advisers. Not surprisingly, when Phibul was confronted with these terms, he cancelled further discussions.[94]

American policy constituted the major obstacle for Britain's attempts to preserve Thai neutrality. Crosby complained that Grant, the American Minister in Bangkok, was now a 'fanatic' and held him largely responsible for the harsh line the State Department took towards Thailand. Grant, he continued, had 'made a mess of things with the Thai authorities who now dislike him cordially'. Crosby was clearly encouraged to indulge in tirades against Grant by the Thais. Talking with Crosby on 28 October 1940, Direk 'spoke with bitterness of the unsympathetic attitude of the United States Government towards Thai claims'. He said that Grant was behaving like a bully and that 'the Thai people would always remember'.[95] Crosby added, with not a little conceit, that 'were it not for the imperative need for Anglo-American co-operation I could dispose of him without difficulty'.[96]

Grant's denunciation of Thai objectives became more shrill as incidents on the Thai–Indo-China border developed into serious fighting by the third week of November.[97] Bombing became widespread in border areas, Thailand mobilized, and the atmosphere in Bangkok brimmed with confidence.[98] Britain still hoped that Thailand would succeed in acquiring her 'lost territories' without having to conclude a military agreement with Japan as the price. Therefore, on 23 October R. A. Butler and the Cabinet Far Eastern Committee made a bold attempt to reverse American policy at source, by putting Britain's predicament frankly to Washington and by appealing for a joint *démarche* to persuade Vichy to concede to some of Thailand's claims. The Committee also mentioned 'limited' military support for the Thais.[99] In Washington, however, Stanley Hornbeck, a senior political adviser on the Far East at the State Department, insisted that 'Cordell Hull was so firm an adherent of the policy of not assenting to forcible annexation of territory that during his tenure no change of substance in the United States attitude towards Thailand was to be expected'.[100] Grant's efforts in Thailand, therefore, far from constituting what Crosby perceived as excessive personal zeal, appeared to reflect Hull's trenchant commitment to non-aggression. Although, by way of a gesture, Sumner Welles decided to curtail Grant's ceaseless restatement of American principles on the grounds that it only 'kept open a wound to national pride' in Thailand, nevertheless,

during December the United States repeatedly underlined that their policy flowed from Hull's general commitment to the principle of non-aggression. Sumner Welles informed the British Embassy in Washington that 'concessions to the Thais now would in fact be concessions to blackmail and have further effects all over the Far East'. Hamilton, Head of the Far Eastern Division, chimed in quoting as doctrine the words of the original statement of principle from Hull's speech in July 1937.[101]

With fighting on the border escalating in October and November, the United States put herself further out of favour in Bangkok and London by refusing to deliver American military aircraft that Thailand had already paid for, prompting Direk to make statements to the press about American bad faith.[102] By 12 November the aircraft issue had become a *cause célèbre* with the Thais, while the British employed it as a useful stick with which to beat both Grant and American policy, something they achieved partly through the medium of the British-owned newspaper, the *Bangkok Times*.[103] Crosby's irritation was increased by the fact that the American embargo had merely resulted in the departure of a Thai purchasing mission for Tokyo, intent on buying Japanese aircraft with precious dollar exchange recently extracted by Thailand from the British Treasury.[104] In order to pressurize American policy, Britain exaggerated the importance of the aircraft issue. Doll wrote to his American colleague and fellow adviser, Dolbeare, arguing that, until November, the Thai Cabinet had been struggling successfully to control 'the Frankenstein' of popular nationalism. 'But then', he continued,

> came the bombshell of the stoppage of ten aeroplanes from America at Manila. Already paid for . . . the Thais looked on these planes as already their own. . . . This stoppage came as the last straw. It opened the door for the Japs who moved in with offers to the Thais of all the planes and other war material they might want, and the fat was definitely in the fire . . . in order to pay for them, we now have to face attempts to deroute tin and rubber Nipponwards (as Rengo [Japanese Radio] would put it), torpedo our agreements with London and make merry hell.

Doll closed with the syrupy assurance that 'every Britisher here regards Americans as fellow countrymen: your troubles are our troubles'.[105]

Crosby offered a more honest analysis of the situation, attributing Thai aggression to an upsurge in popular nationalism combined with an international climate that favoured the pro-Japanese

factions within the Thai Cabinet. The fighting had now taken on a momentum of its own:

> Military party and 'Jingos' are in full control and the Prime Minister has joined them . . . the [French] bombing of Nakhon Panom has roused them to a frenzy of indignation. Mass demonstrations demanding war continue to be held, and are even more insistent than before. Spy-mania is rampant and patriotism has been worked up to the point of hysteria . . . the French legation here, tell me that they are prepared to bomb Bangkok if necessary.

The Far Eastern Department concluded that the two sides were 'well on the way to full hostilities'.[106] It mattered little to the Foreign Office officials that events were confused and responsibility could not be fully apportioned, for British objectives remained constant, to keep a neutral and friendly Thailand between Japan and Singapore. Thus, minuted Sterndale Bennett, 'in these days of jungle politics', an attempt to restrain Phibul 'would not achieve anything'. Cadogan, the Permanent Under-Secretary, agreed and Butler, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Cabinet Far Eastern Committee, summarized their views neatly: 'Stand back and see the dog fight but speak soothingly to your favourite dog.'[107]

The British Foreign Office continued to back their 'favourite dog' as fighting escalated on the border during November and December. This was in spite of Phibul's renewed hints of German support and firm evidence of Thai–Japanese collusion, albeit awkward and uncertain, over Indo-China. During November a confident Phibul informed the French Minister that he now took 'a very black view' of the future of the British Empire, for he had just received news from Berlin that an agreement had been reached by the Soviet Union with the Axis powers and Japan providing for a simultaneous assault on the British Empire. The Soviet Union was to attack Iran and India whilst Japan was to attack in the Far East; 'if there was going to be a reorganisation of Asia, Thailand obviously could not remain out of it'.[108] Meanwhile Craigie in Tokyo reported that his Thai counterpart confirmed Germany's interest in the Franco-Thai dispute. As if to underline this, Phibul made repeated references to Germany's advance into the Sudetenland and how this episode had vindicated the use of force.[109]

British officials were reassured during mid-December when intercepted Japanese communications became available offering a precise picture of the limited nature of Thai–Japanese co-operation.

This material confirmed their view that Thai and Japanese objectives would not be easily reconciled. It now emerged that throughout early November, Phibul and the Japanese in Bangkok had continued to discuss the 'lost territories' through the discreet use of an intermediary. Phibul had clearly based his policy upon a firm belief that a Japanese move into southern Indo-China was imminent and he stated that in this event the pitch of excitement in the Thai Army would make action unavoidable. Even without Japanese action Phibul believed that public expectations would require him to invade 'in March or April of next year at the latest'. Phibul stressed that if force was used to recover the 'lost territories' then 'Japanese co-operation would be necessary'. It was also made clear to the Japanese that Phibul's greatest fear was that 'Thailand would become the battleground of an Anglo-Japanese conflict' and therefore Phibul's aim was partly defensive. He hoped to avoid this danger by defining the spheres of influence through military alliance with Japan at this point. However, the Japanese remained noncommittal, adding that if Britain became involved militarily, Japan could not 'allow Thailand the "initiative" in such a dangerous operation'.[110]

Phibul was seeking Japanese co-operation more actively than Britain had suspected. Yet at the same time, as the Japanese recognized, Phibul was motivated as much by fear as by ambition. Thus the Thai–Japanese agreement that Phibul sought was aimed at contracting Thailand *out*, rather than *into*, a possible wider war in Asia, while at the same time securing Thai objectives in Indo-China. Not surprisingly, Japan's reaction to Phibul was unenthusiastic. Japanese objectives were the precise reverse. They sought to sustain co-operation with Vichy in Indo-China where they now had bases, while concluding an alliance with Thailand for the purposes of a wider war with Britain.[111]

A meeting of the inner Cabinet in Tokyo on 20 November 1940 to discuss Thailand confirmed that Britain's pro-Thai policy had vexed Japan. The Foreign Minister, Matsuoka, urged that Japan should now step in and offer to mediate to prevent Western meddling in the dispute, adding that his main objective was to protect Indo-China by moderating Thai demands. Matsuoka's fears concerning British 'meddling' were to prove prescient. However, Japanese prospects were not auspicious for Phibul had to be coerced into accepting their mediation by hints that awkwardness would result in Tokyo favouring Indo-China. Even so, progress was blocked by the French who initially refused to respond to

Japan's initiative, ironically claiming that Tokyo was blatantly biased in favour of the Thais.[112]

Thai–Japanese difficulties were confirmed by the fact that a face-to-face meeting between Phibul and the Japanese only occurred on 28 November 1940, when Thai–Indo-Chinese hostilities were already in progress. Japan had offered Phibul only 'a vague assurance of Japanese support for the restoration of Thailand's lost territories'. Phibul responded equally cautiously by enquiring whether Japan intended to offer French Indo-China guarantees of sovereignty 'which would jeopardise future claims by Thailand'. But they replied evasively, merely stating that Japan's plans for the reconstruction of East Asia 'would be sufficiently wide to allow of a "simple and natural" settlement of these matters'. Phibul accepted this and promised that in return for this Japanese understanding, the puppet regime in Manchukuo would be recognized in 'a week or two'. Phibul closed the conversation with a request that a Japanese naval officer he knew well, Captain Torigoe, be posted to Bangkok, 'in view of the likelihood of numerous consultations with Japanese Naval and Military Departments'. But again the dominant impression was of Phibul's fear of Japan and so Japanese diplomats urged Tokyo 'to give particular consideration to the Thais' if Japan moved against southern Indo-China.[113] Therefore while a Thai–Japanese understanding existed, it was clearly of an uncertain and tendentious nature. Thai co-operation could not be taken for granted.

Crosby was handed the above intelligence intercepts on 18 December while visiting Singapore for a regional policy meeting and expressed little surprise. Crosby had not expected Phibul to go as far as offering an agreement to Japan, but he felt vindicated in his argument that there were great tensions in the Thai–Japanese relationship that Britain might still exploit.[114] Crosby secured an hour-long interview with Phibul on 28 December, presenting himself as 'a suppliant and a friend of Thailand'. Crosby 'begged him' not to impair Thai independence or Anglo-Thai friendship in his talks with Japan. Phibul replied truthfully 'that he had not concluded and did not intend to conclude a military pact with Japan' and asked for this assurance to be conveyed to London. Crosby ignored this and instead emphasized that Japan was 'double-crossing both Thailand and France by making each party fight so that, when they were exhausted, she would intervene as arbitrator at her own price', adding that, in contrast to Japan, Britain did not seek Thai allegiance, only her neutrality. Phibul's

rejoinder was highly revealing; he stated that 'his bargain with Japan would not be a bad one if he could get support for Thailand's claims, . . . , in return for recognition of [Japanese] Manchukuo'.[115] London dismissed Phibul as 'unreliable', identifying 'lies' in his reassurances. While they conceded that he probably retained 'good intentions about Anglo-Thai relations', they doubted that Japan would allow Phibul to fulfil them.[116]

Consequently, by December 1940, secret communication intercepts had permitted the Far Eastern Department some detailed insight into the state of Thai–Japanese relations. Phibul's overtures were alarming, but they also contained clear evidence of near irreconcilable tensions between Thailand and Japan. This served to strengthen their faith in Crosby's prescription of competing with Japan for Thai sympathy with the aim of keeping a neutral Thailand between Japan and Singapore. In any case, Britain lacked the wherewithal to construct alternative policies. Accordingly, Britain chose to withhold these intercepts from the American State Department on the grounds that they were 'already sufficiently stiff-necked with the Thais'.[117] Reflecting on their policy towards Thailand in December 1940, even the members of the Far Eastern Committee, who knew its intricacies well, confessed that it was all 'very complicated and very puzzling'. Notwithstanding this, they maintained their course, meanwhile pressing for a change in Washington's unbending attitude towards Thailand.[118]

## *Western Failures and Japanese 'Arbitration', January–March 1941*

Throughout December and January Crosby did his utmost to convince Phibul that 'Japan was double-crossing Thailand' over Indo-China. However, the Thais imposed a number of defeats upon the French as fighting on the border worsened; thus the Thais could not be disillusioned. Direk insisted that 'when Japan spoke to the French about upholding their suzerainty over Indochina she was only laughing at them'.[119] This seemed to be confirmed by the fact that the recent Japanese offer of 'mediation' in the dispute was finally rejected by Vichy in early December.[120] However, to the surprise of the Far Eastern Department, unexpected opportunities for Britain to block Japanese attempts at mediation between Thailand and France were provided by developments at Singapore. Here, representatives of Decoux's Vichy regime in Indo-China were pressing for a *rapprochement* with

Britain, offering the possibility of Anglo-American rather than Japanese mediation.[121]

This British *rapprochement* with Vichy was facilitated through Singapore because of poor relations between Crosby and the Vichy diplomats in Bangkok.[122] Decoux's surprise initiative was largely motivated by the parlous economic state of Indo-China. Accordingly, Decoux dispatched a senior naval officer, Captain Jouan, to Singapore in search of a *modus vivendi* based upon trade and the continued 'independence' of Indo-China.[123] Britain formally undertook to cease hostile activity against Decoux's regime, including blockades and clandestine activities.[124] In practice the latter had already ceased for even Gaullists like Catroux had conceded that resistance would be 'playing the game of Japan' by inspiring her to further aggression.[125] Anthony Eden, the new British Foreign Secretary, had offered stern opposition to de Gaulle's repeated calls for action in Indo-China.[126] However, the British objective was not to bolster Decoux's regime, but to persuade him to accept Anglo-American mediation in the border dispute with Thailand before Japan intervened, imposing a high price on both sides.[127]

Britain's supposedly secret attempt to mediate between Thailand and Indo-China in the last week of December was quickly followed by a renewed Japanese offer. Decoux accepted Anglo-American mediation and scorned the Japanese, complaining that they continued to supply Thailand with military aircraft.[128] Vichy support had now been secured but, due to the pace of events, Britain had not yet even approached the United States concerning this supposed 'Anglo-American' initiative.[129] When approaching the State Department on 6 January 1941, British officials stressed that the Thais would be satisfied with a very limited frontier revision, while in contrast Japanese arbitration would involve larger upheavals and above all a Thai debt to Germany and Japan which would be repaid with bases.[130] Stanley Hornbeck expressed sympathy, but Sumner Welles and the Director of Far Eastern Affairs, Maxwell Hamilton, stuck to their principles and 'urged the French not to give up any territory under threat of force'. Welles went on to warn British officials that Thailand's success against Indo-China would lead automatically to Thai claims against British Malaya. In any case, he added, the British initiative appeared to have only short-term value for he was 'convinced that Japan intended to swallow up Thailand as well as Indochina'. Hull also took the opportunity to deliver another lecture to the Thai Minister in

Washington, Seni Pramoj, warning of the perils of dealing with Japan. Tokyo, he insisted, would pursue a 'course of lawlessness and conquest in her efforts to gain control of the entire Pacific area extending as far as India . . . in due course both Indochina and Thailand will be brought under the sovereignty of Japan'.[131]

British officials were nothing if not persistent. Ignoring their rebuff in Washington, they surreptitiously attempted to obtain American mediation at a lower level through Joseph Grew, the American Ambassador in Tokyo, who was known to favour the British policy of concessions to Thailand. Grew attempted to mediate but without success.[132] Decoux also made parallel appeals to the United States for mediation, but privately he doubted if nationalist sentiment in Thailand would permit Phibul to accept Anglo-American arbitration, even if he desired it.[133]

Lacking American support, the British Governor-General at Singapore, Shenton Thomas, pressed ahead with his own clumsy attempts at secret mediation in mid-January 1941. Crosby believed that this purely British initiative was worse than useless as, without American influence Vichy could not be persuaded to make realistic concessions to the Thais. Therefore, on 21 January he advised London and Singapore to 'stand aside and refrain from thrusting our hand into a hornets' nest'. But the Far Eastern Department was desperate to prevent Japanese arbitration and so rejected Crosby's advice in favour of the Thomas initiative, replying that 'the hornets' nest you mention is too close to our property to be ignored'.[134] Unfortunately, the 'secret' Thomas initiative was uncovered and so Japan enforced her own mediation on Vichy by the use of threats.[135]

In practice Japan had been on the brink of action since December 1940 when Decoux had finally rejected Japan's initial mediation offer. A clique of junior staff officers in Tokyo had condemned Matsuoka for his caution and urged the complete absorption of both Indo-China and Thailand. General Tojo Hideki, Minister for War, had vetoed these proposals, arguing that this course would probably mean war with both Britain *and the United States*, a contingency for which Japan was not yet prepared. Significantly, Tojo was deterred by what he perceived as an American *de facto* guarantee to South-East Asia which did not exist. Now, in mid-January, news of the Thomas initiative reached Tokyo from several sources, including Phibul, at a critical time in the formulation of Japanese policy towards South-East Asia. A

high-level conference was held on 19 January 1941 at which the military pressed for the absorption of Indo-China and a military pact with Thailand. The Thomas initiative reinforced their hand. Matsuoka only salvaged a compromise with the support of the Emperor: in the short term, Japan would simply enforce arbitration, while a military pact with Thailand remained a long-term objective. Nevertheless, the military were clearly becoming restive. Later in January, Matsuoka again restrained the military with help from the Emperor who reproved them for seeking to profit from the border dispute 'like a thief from a fire'.[136]

The Thomas initiative had therefore not only failed but had also backfired. On 22 January Japan 'turned on the heat' by revealing to Decoux that the Thai Prime Minister had kept Japan fully informed of Decoux's attempts to settle secretly through the Jouan mission with Shenton Thomas at Singapore. Phibul had clearly panicked and opted for Japanese arbitration against the wishes of other members of his Cabinet such as Direk. It was thus the Thomas initiative that had triggered Japanese action. Events were also spurred by a Franco-Thai naval confrontation that proved disastrous for the Thais. Decoux was told 'in violent terms' that Japan would not tolerate this and threatened to displace the Vichy administration. Decoux therefore capitulated at once.[137] A month later the British learnt that the Japanese had also been kept fully informed of Jouan's mission via the Japanese espionage service at Singapore, where British security was extremely poor.[138] In spite of this fiasco, Thomas continued to press for further ludicrous British mediation initiatives as late as 28 February 1941.[139]

Crosby found it convenient to blame the failure of these various arbitration initiatives soley on Washington. Meanwhile he sustained his argument for a sympathetic policy, despite Japanese arbitration, insisting that there remained profound Thai–Japanese differences to be exploited:

> If Japan and Thailand are going to divide up Indochina between them owing to the unwillingness of Washington to take steps to prevent such a thing, then I submit that we should make the best of a bad job by recognising frankly that, in the absence of the French, the Thais have a better claim than the Japanese to the left bank of the Mekong and by remaining on the friendliest possible terms with Thailand. . . . It is not necessary for us to share the view of Washington that Japan is going to swallow Thailand up completely.[140]

Therefore, Grant was not far from the truth when he suggested to Washington that Crosby had always lied about urging restraint upon the Thais and had given 'the Thais the "go ahead" sign to get all they can in Indochina'. Meanwhile, Grant continued, Crosby had always 'castigated' the French in Indo-China and would 'like to see the Thais push them all the way out even with Japanese assistance provided of course "British interests" in Thailand are fully protected'.[141]

There can be no doubt that Britain's pro-Thai policy continued to alarm Japan even as arbitration discussions began in Tokyo. There, the growing supply of Japanese arms to Thailand by the supposedly 'neutral' arbitrator was defended against French protests as an attempt 'to keep pace with Great Britain which was constantly trying to increase her hold over Thailand by supporting Thai territorial claims'.[142] Although mediation had offered Japan considerable advantages, Japanese officials considered that much of the Thai Cabinet remained pro-British in its orientation. Certainly Direk criticized Phibul and remained deeply suspicious of the Japanese guarantees of French sovereignty in Indo-China, given in 1940.[143] Nevertheless, other Thai ministers were intoxicated with excitement, expecting generous Japanese arbitration and were therefore in no mood for warnings.[144] Prince Wan gleefully informed the Francophile Grant, during the arbitration negotiations in Tokyo, that 'the French are going to be led to the slaughter pen'.[145] Grant now made grave statements about the Thai leaders having 'deliberately put their heads in the Japanese noose'.[146]

Notwithstanding their continued attempts to sustain Thai neutrality, Britain now considered, for the first time, the possibility of an attack by the ebullient Thais upon areas of Burma and Malaya.[147] As early as October 1940 Phibul had broadcast alarming speeches contrasting 'the white-skinned French rulers with the yellow-skinned native population over which they tyrannised'.[148] But Crosby had been quick to dismiss these outbursts as 'exclusively anti-French' and insisted that dreams of a 'Greater Thai Empire' stretching into Burma and Malaya were restricted to fringe extremists.[149] But by January 1941 even Crosby had conceded that the Thais, 'flushed with victory' over a European Army, would not 'prove a very agreeable neighbour' for Burma and Malaya.[150] On 22 January Hull had warned Britain that the Thai Minister in Washington had spoken to him of Thai claims in Malaya.[151] Therefore, by February Britain's policy of sympathy

for Thailand had the appearance of a policy of despair. Large numbers of Japanese diplomats arrived in Bangkok fuelling suspicions that an underground campaign had begun for a pro-Japanese government.[152] Crosby confessed that Phibul might well obtain his objectives through arbitration in Tokyo and consequently might have 'capitulated to the Japanese to a large degree . . . working with them secretly'. On 4 February 1941 Crosby wrote privately to Cadogan, the senior official in the Foreign Office, asking to be relieved, suggesting that the Thais would find a fresh man more aloof, not being 'bound by long ties of association, and in some cases affection'. Crosby was careful to suggest that Britain had been 'landed in this mess' due to the Americans, but he also felt he had overrated Phibul's circumspection in the face of Japanese power.[153] But if Crosby in Bangkok had lost faith in his policy of sympathy, his superiors remained remarkably firm devotees and noted that in the absence of an American military guarantee in the Far East, 'tact and friendliness are the only shots in our locker'. Indeed Crosby's latest convert was the new Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden. Ironically, Crosby's implied offer of resignation crossed a letter from Anthony Eden to Crosby which complimented him on his perseverance and the excellence of his policy.[154]

French officials were also dismayed by Thai confidence. During February the Thai Ambassador in Tokyo revealed to Craigie that Thai claims in Indo-China were now greatly expanded to the 'sustained indignation and amazement' of the French who had postponed the arbitration meetings.[155] French territorial losses during these negotiations were further compounded by the incompetence of Vichy in France, who rushed into public acceptance of the initial extravagant Thai claims. Craigie reported that the

> French here, including even the ambassador, are stupified at weakness and ineptitude shown by their government. They can only talk of the beating they will give the Thais (Siamese) as soon as they are free to. They have all along refused . . . any indemnity from Thailand (Siam) as they . . . wish to keep their hands free for the future.[156]

In the meantime it was the Thais who were administering the beatings and Phibul prematurely declared his past admiration of German *machtpolitik* to be fully vindicated. But Thai confidence was shattered when the Japanese, who wished to preserve good relations with Decoux in Indo-China, refused to meet Thai claims in full. The Thais were offered only parts of Laos along with small

areas of Battambang and Siem Reap in Cambodia (Maps 6.1–6.3). Phibul's dignity was partly salved by renaming the latter Phibul Province. The Thais were also required to pay France an indemnity in yen at exchange rates set by the Yokohama Specie Bank. Meanwhile, behind the scenes in Tokyo, Matsuoka continued to fight a rearguard action against the military who wished to dispense with negotiations and occupy all of Indo-China.[157]

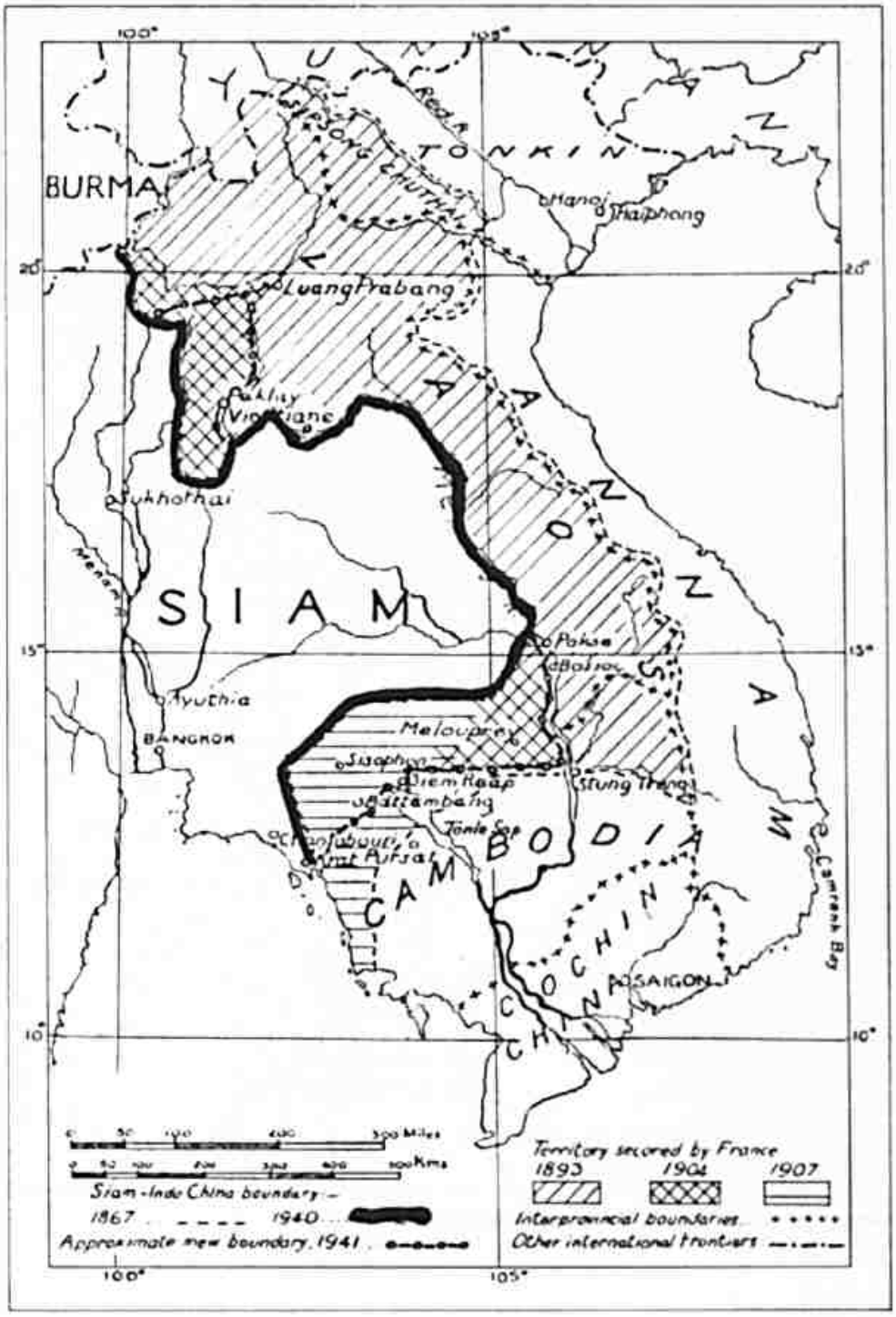
Thailand's disappointment at the hands of Japan during the Tokyo negotiations seemed to offer Britain only a limited reprieve. In the first few months of 1941, before Russia entered the war, Britain's overall strategic situation remained perilously weak. This was reflected in the behaviour of vacillating neutral states towards Britain such as Spain, Turkey, Thailand, and even Russia. Their increasing reluctance to co-operate with Britain served as a barometer of declining fortunes. In the long run, diplomacy was no substitute for power. Cadogan, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, recorded his frustration with neutral states in his diary during May, after a conversation with Eden:

> [Eden] keeps on feeling that there's something to be done—diplomatically.... Fact is that with our military weakness and the sensational ineptitude of our commanders, diplomacy is completely hamstrung.... You can't do anything nowadays with any country unless you can (a) threaten (b) bribe it ... you can juggle with words and jiggle with drafts as much as you like, and you will get nowhere.[158]

From January 1941, even before Cadogan had offered this accurate summation of Britain's relations with fence-sitting neutrals, officials were drawing up a variety of new policies to shore up the West's position in Thailand. These plans fell neatly into the categories of 'threat' and 'bribe'.

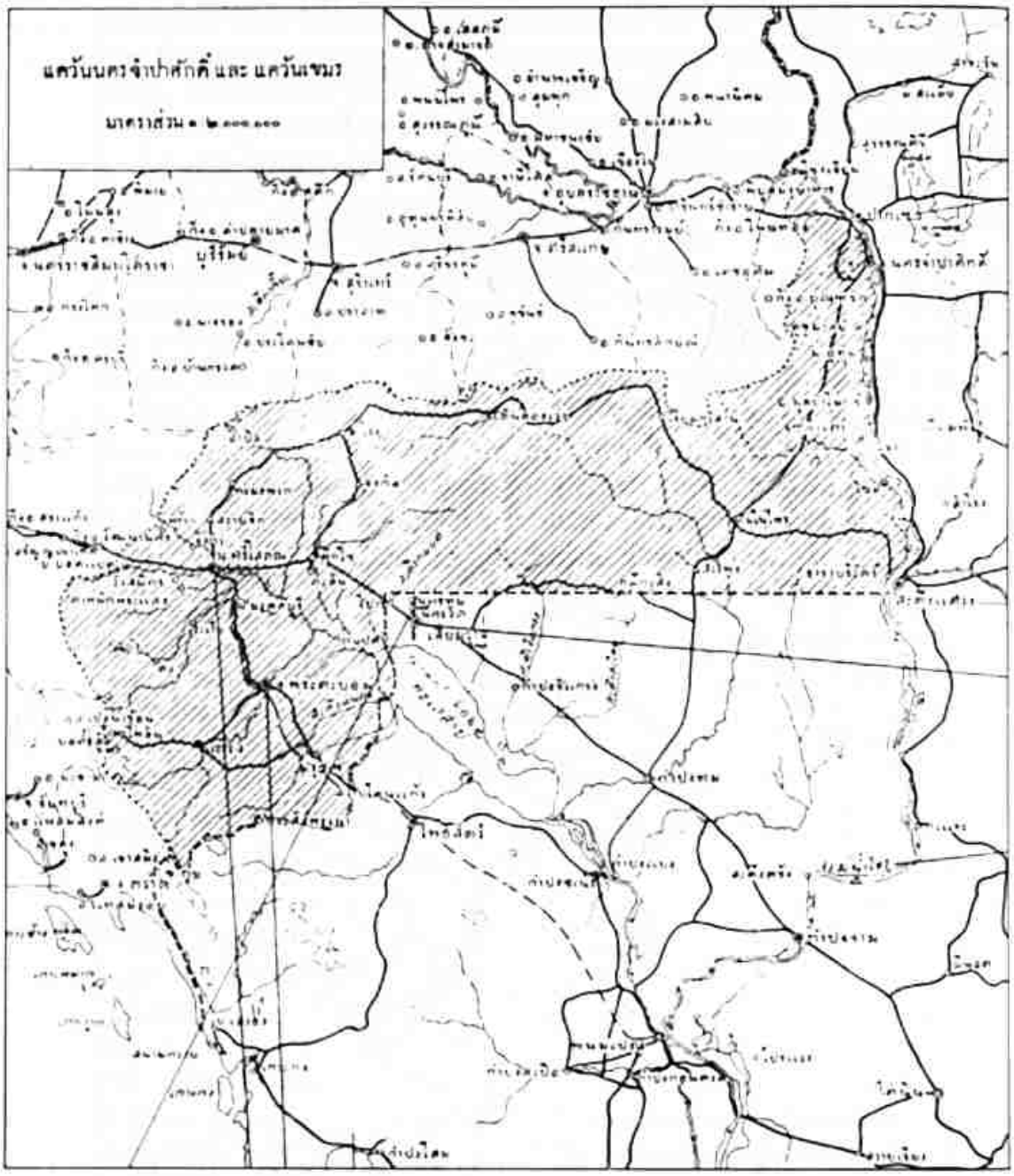
These two British options revealed much about the specific approach and concerns of the departments that developed them. The harassed British military preferred to cope with the problem of Thai vacillation by employing an element of threat. Military ideas had begun to develop in the context of emergency plans for the Far East, prepared in the wake of a war scare at the start of 1941.[159] The Foreign Office had also asked the COS specifically if Britain could afford to make any future Japanese incursion into Thailand a *casus belli*. But while readiness at Singapore had been reduced from 5 days to 24 hours during the fighting on the Thai–Indo-China border, the COS reaffirmed in February that they could not afford to resist a Japanese advance into Thailand.[160]

MAP 6.1
The Border between Thailand and Indo-China, 1867–1941



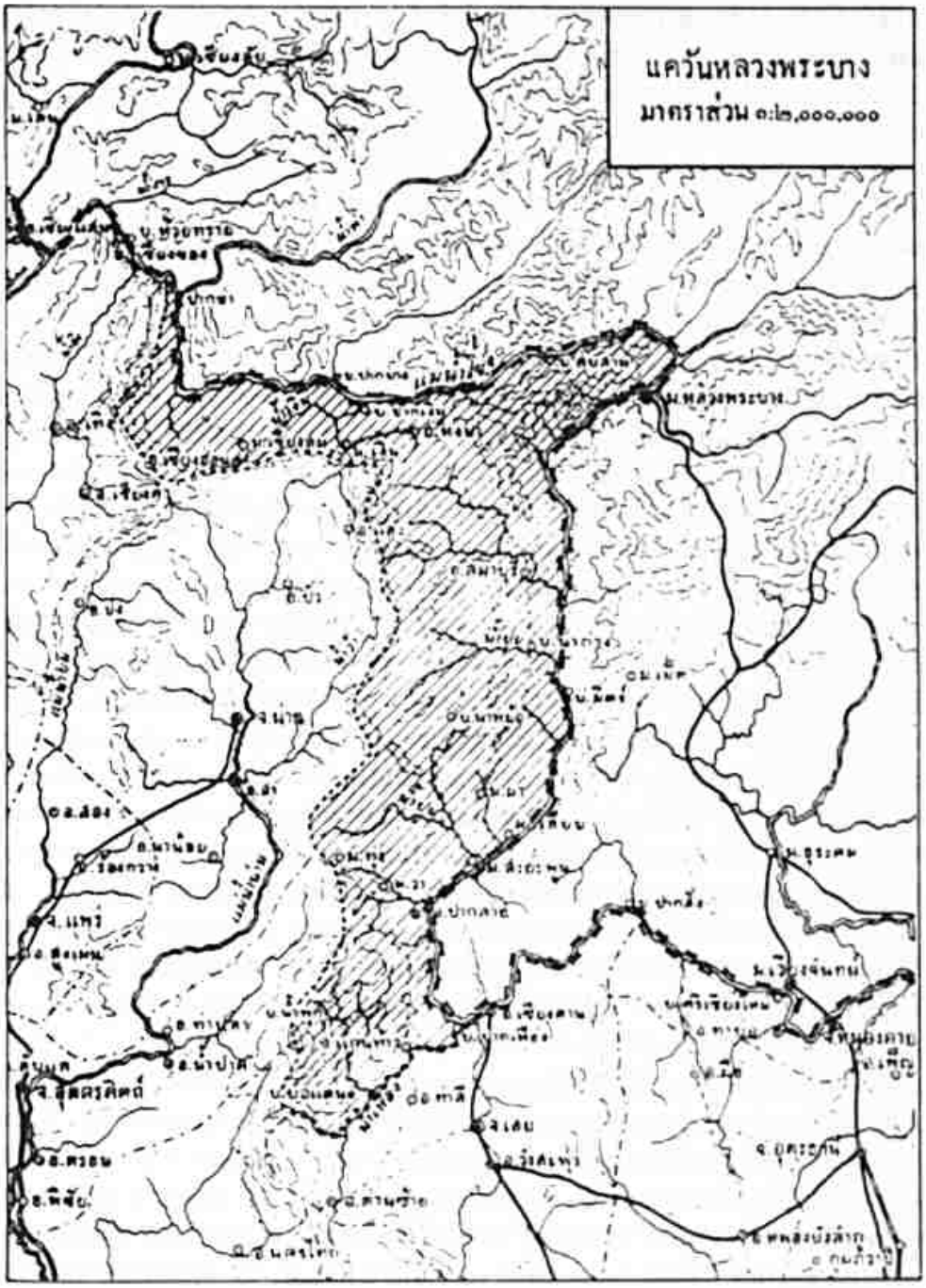

*Source*: Public Record Office, FO 371/35982.

MAP 6.2
Cambodia: Territory Transferred to Thailand, 1941



*Source*: India Office Library and Records, L/P&S/12/4081.

MAP 6.3
Laos: Territory Transferred to Thailand, 1941




*Source*: India Office Library and Records, L/P&S/12/4081.

During Anglo-Dutch–American staff talks in April 1941 there was talk of war against Japan if she advanced into Thailand beyond 100° E, but the firmness of this joint commitment was unclear. In any case, during earlier Anglo-American staff talks held in February 1941, the American military had indicated that they did not consider Malaya to be central to Britain's war effort.[161]

British officers participating in these various staff talks during early 1941 had been careful not to disclose recently drafted British contingency plans for military action against Thailand. British planners favoured a British pre-emptive occupation of southern Thailand to improve Malaya's northern defences, if necessary even before Japan had invaded Thailand. The records of British planning in Malaya have not survived; consequently, it is difficult to tell when such plans began to develop, but detailed papers entitled 'Occupation of Southern Thailand' were prepared in London as early as December 1940. The objective of such an occupation would be to secure airfields in southern Thailand and to seize coastal areas that could be easily defended against Japan. By February 1941 the new C-in-C Far East, Air Vice-Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, was debating with London how far Britain might advance into Thailand. Options included a point not far south of Bangkok.[162] By February 1941 planners in London and Singapore were working on a range of such operations which were given the collective code name Operation Etonian and later Operation Matador.[163] These contingency plans were linked to the growing activities of Special Operations Executive, Britain's clandestine sabotage organization, which was establishing itself at Singapore and whose efforts were focused upon the infiltration of southern Thailand.[164] These activities offered the COS residual threats with which to cope with the equivocating Thais.

Meanwhile, British diplomats were moving beyond a policy of sympathy towards a policy of 'bribe'. Recognizing that the Thai economy was increasingly suffering from wartime shortages of commodities such as oil, Crosby now hoped to exploit Britain's economic influence. This line would encounter continued American opposition for Grant now believed Thailand to be 'securely snared in Japan's trap', adding that Thailand was 'for all practical purposes a party to the Japanese program for East Asia and therefore allied with the Axis . . . they are pawns . . . and tomorrow will be the puppets of Japan . . . it is too late now'. He warned the State Department against Thai 'pretensions' to be well disposed to 'their British, American and other white friends' for, he asserted,

the 'Thai under the stimulation of Japanese influence are now race conscious'.[165] Grant's general analysis of Thai–Japanese relations was wrong, but Grant was right about race consciousness. The Thais had been 'utterly disappointed' at Japan's failure to give vigorous support to the claims of Thailand, a brother Asian state, against the European colonial state of Indo-China. This had come as a shock to the Thais and in Tokyo even the most pro-Japanese Thai officials now recognized that Japan had employed Thai claims in Indo-China 'for its own ends'.[166] Therefore, Thailand was not as yet committed to Japan.

## *Conclusion*

During late 1940 and early 1941, the debate amongst American, British, and French officials had turned largely upon the extent to which Thailand had committed herself to Japan. It is difficult to convey adequately the fog of rumour and deliberate deception within which these officials were required to make their assessments of Thai foreign policy and to prescribe their own policies. Undoubtedly, intercepted Japanese communications offered Britain some firm evidence of the state of Thai–Japanese relations. But this must be set against the general background of Britain's inadequate intelligence service in the Far East that depended partly upon dubious reports provided by the French.[167] One example serves to underline these difficulties. On 21 April 1941, the British Consul-General at Saigon conveyed a potentially significant piece of information from the French to the British Intelligence Staff at Singapore and thence to London. He reported that 'intercepted letter (just read by me) dated February 1st [1941] from Japanese Legation at Bangkok to Director of Economic Studies, Far East, Tokyo proves that the Japanese understanding with the Prime Minister Phibul to act as arbitrator [over Indo-China] was a well guarded secret since August 1940'. But at the same time the British Consul-General warned that 'in my opinion the French are searching for excuses for their own handling of the affair' and added that similar 'evidence' recently produced by French officials in Tokyo consisted entirely of forgeries.[168]

There can be no doubt that Phibul deliberately sought to exploit this atmosphere of confusion and uncertainty and by 1941 Crosby entertained few illusions about Phibul's reliability. On 13 February 1941, in the midst of the Japanese-sponsored arbitration negotiations in Tokyo, Phibul had offered Anthony Eden, the

British Foreign Secretary, the assurance that Thailand had no military agreements with Japan. This statement was accurate, but Crosby warned Eden that any Thai statements were 'undependable'. Phibul, he speculated, might not yet be unequivocably committed to Japan, but nor was he committed to anyone else. He continued, the 'Thai Prime Minister is most disconcerting. None of us know where we stand with him. I doubt whether he knows himself.'[169]

The abounding air of confusion surrounding Thai foreign policy offered plenty of room for British military or economic officials to formulate unsympathetic interpretations of Phibul's objectives, and to attack diplomatic policies of support for Thailand. Typically, on 3 February 1941, in the wake of Japan's arbitration initiative, Brooke-Popham, the C-in-C Far East, confessed:

> I feel that Josiah Crosby, our Minister at Bangkok, was, at any rate on this occasion, too much inclined to rely on his former knowledge of the Thais and the former friendship of the Thai Ministers for him. He didn't seem to realise the rapidity with which the situation was changing. One so often finds people who have been a long time in one place and who have a genuine affection for the people getting into a position of believing 'these people are my friends, they will never deceive me'.

But as Brooke-Popham well knew, such criticism sounded lame from someone who had supported the ignorant and blundering arbitration initiatives of Sir Shenton Thomas. Opposition to Crosby from economic, colonial, and military officials would mount during 1941, but for the meantime Brooke-Popham felt obliged to qualify his criticisms adding, 'I don't in the least wish to suggest that Josiah Crosby should be moved, in fact, I think it would be a great mistake to do so at the present time.'[170] Divergent interpretations therefore gave rise to differing British policies. Brooke-Popham's staff was busy with growing British infiltration of southern Thailand, in preparation for possible British occupation of this area. This was a contingency plan of which Crosby as yet had no knowledge.[171]

French and American officials, for quite contradictory reasons, shared Brooke-Popham's suspicions of Crosby, the Far Eastern Department, and the sympathetic policies they had pursued in Thailand.[172] However, these suspicions were of decreasing relevance. As wider international events carried Asia towards war during the second half of 1941, policy was slowly lifted from the hands of officials such as Crosby, Grant, and Decoux to be passed to the

more erratic direction of figures such as Churchill, Roosevelt, and their immediate circle.[173] Meanwhile, Phibul had not yet committed himself to Japan; therefore, during the Spring and early Summer of 1941, Crosby would be permitted one last display of 'sympathy' in an attempt to influence the course of Thai foreign policy.

1. K. Young (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, 1919–1965* (hereafter *Lockhart Diaries*), Vol. II, London: Macmillan, 1980, p. 56; D. Dilks, 'Allied Leadership in the Second World War: Churchill', *Survey*, I, 2 (1975): 21–2; D. Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937–1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation*, London: Europa, 1981, p. 104.

2. Churchill to Roosevelt, 15 May 1940, Lowenheim, *Churchill-Roosevelt Correspondence*, pp. 94–5; CS (40) 168, 'British Strategy in a Certain Eventuality', 25 May 1940, CAB 80/' ' PRO; memorandum of a conversation between Hull, Casey, and Lothian, 28 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 369–72.

3. Entry for 18 July 1940, Henry L. Stimson Diaries, Vol. 30, reel 6, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds; Hull to Grew, 22 June 1940, *FRUS*, 1931–41, II, pp. 86–7.

4. On the genesis of the Cabinet Far Eastern Committee, see P. Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, pp. 292–5. On R. A. Butler, see Young (ed.), *Lockhart Diaries*, p. 45. Roosevelt and Churchill were not conscious of Thailand's growing importance until early 1941. Typically, on 18 January 1941, Churchill enquired of Eden, somewhat belatedly, '. . . and why is Siam hidden under the name Thailand?', Churchill to Eden, 18 January 1941, in W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War: The Grand Alliance*, London: Cassell, 1950, p. 642. On economic questions, see Doll to Niemeyer, 17 May 1940, fol. 38, OV25/7 (670/2), BE.

5. Hull to Matthews, 9 September 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 104–5.

6. Reynolds, *Anglo-American Alliance*, pp. 105–12; R. Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–45*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 239–42. Orthodox views point to a gradually increasing pattern of verbal reassurance from late July 1941, capped by an explicit pledge in the first week of December 1941. However, F. W. Marks, has recently suggested that a guarantee was offered as early as Autumn 1940. However the evidence for this is thin. See, F. W. Marks, 'The Origins of FDR's Promise to Support Britain Militarily in the Far East—A New Look', *Pacific Historical Review*, 53, 3 (1984): 447–62; F. W. Marks, *Wind over Sand: The Diplomacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1988, pp. 88–95.

7. Reynolds, *Anglo-American Alliance*, pp. 105–12. See also Crosby to FO No. 374, 15 October 1940, F4728/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; GOC Malaya to WO No. 12643, 7 October 1940, Annex V to COS (40) 340th mtg., CAB 79/7, PRO.

8. Crosby to FO No. 307, 21 September 1940, F4949/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO; Roosevelt to Sumner Welles, 7 January 1938, Box 95, PSF, Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

9. Crosby to FO No. 132, 14 May 1940, F3268/3268/40, FO 371/24756,

PRO; Crosby to FO No. 184, 21 May 1940, F3268/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

10. J. Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, London: Hurst, 1991, pp. 143–5. The German Legation began withdrawing its funds from the Thai Commercial Bank, reportedly in fear of Anglo-French pre-emptive measures to secure Thailand against Japan, Crosby to FO No. 192, 3 July 1940, F3268/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

11. Lowe, *Pacific War*, p. 140; see also Ott (Tokyo) to German Foreign Ministry No. 594, 19 June 1940, *Documents on German Foreign Policy* (hereafter *DGFP*), Washington: Government Printing Office, 1956, Series D, Vol. IX, doc. 484, pp. 617–18. In June 1940 the Japanese DMI spoke plainly to Craigie and stated: 'With the collapse of France and Britain impotent in the Far East . . . the Japanese would earn the obloquy of their descendants, if they did not seize the opportunity. . . . There is now nothing to stop Japan.' Craigie cited in Grew (Tokyo) to SoS, 19 June 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 27.

12. Crosby to FO No. 192, 3 July 1940, F3268/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

13. Lowe, *Pacific War*, p. 144; J. Decoux, *A la barre de l'Indochine: Histoire de mon gouvernment generale* (hereafter *Histoire*), Paris: Plon, 1949, p. 66.

14. Reynolds, *Anglo-American Alliance*, pp. 134–5; Butler minute, 23 July 1940, F3635/193/61, FO 371/24708, PRO; Diary entries for 5 and 6 July 1940, D. Dilks (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan*, London: Cassell, 1971; P. Baudouin, *The Private Diaries of Paul Baudouin* (hereafter *Diaries*), London: Eyre Spottiswoode, 1948, p. 193.

15. Crosby to FO No. 233, 30 June 1940, F3690/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

16. Crosby to FO No. 200, 7 July 1940, F3268/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO. On the French concessions, see Murphy (Vichy) to SoS No. 255, 4 August 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 62–3.

17. Crosby to FO No. 245, 7 July 1940, F3268/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

18. Ibid.; Gage minute, 5 July 1940, F3268/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 7 July 1940, F3268/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

19. COS (40) 592, 'The Situation in the Far East in the Event of Japanese Intervention Against Us', 31 July 1940, CAB 80/15, PRO; WP (40) 302, CAB 66/10, PRO. See also GOC Malaya memorandum, 'Defence of Malaya', 13 April 1940, fol. 103A, WO 32/9366, PRO; J. Neidpath, *The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain's Eastern Empire, 1919–1941*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 172–4.

20. The report was taken from the mail room of the SS *Automedon* by a German raider and subsequently passed to the Japanese Navy in Tokyo. This episode can be followed in detail in J. W. Chapman (ed.), *The Price of Admiralty: The War Diary of the German Naval Attaché in Japan, 1939–1943*, Vols. II and III, Sussex: Saltire Press, 1984, pp. 560–1, 623.

21. Memorandum by Halifax, 24 June 1940, and Catroux to FO annexed to FCP (40) 2nd mtg., 21 June 1940, CAB 96/1, PRO; FO to Saigon, No. 16, 29 June 1940, F7405/7327/17, FO 371/24328, PRO; G. Catroux, *Deux actes du drame Indochinois*, Paris: Plon, 1959, p. 70. Cf. N. Tarling, 'The First Japanese Move into Indochina', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XXI, 1 (1990): 40.

22. C-in-C FE to COS No. 66, 16 December 1940, annexed to COS (40) 1047, 'Japanese Penetration of Indochina and Thailand', 17 December 1940,

CAB 80/24, PRO. On 'policy de banque', see also R. Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, London: Collins, 1964, p. 75; Matthews (Vichy) to SoS No. 658, 29 September 1940, 751G.94/178, RG 59, NARA.

23. A. Mackay Johnston, '"A Mess of Pottage": Vichy and the Mekong Affair', unpublished paper, Oxford, 1987, p. 3. On Anglophobia, see S. M. Osgood, 'Le mythe de "la perfide Albion" en France, 1919–40', *Cahiers d'Histoire*, 20, 1 (1975): 118–20.

24. C-in-C China to Admiralty No. 14542, 30 June 1940, F3526/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO; Naval Liaison Officer (Saigon) to Admiralty No. 109, 17 July 1940, F3526/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO; Gage memorandum, 23 July 1940, F3526/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO. See also J. E. Dreifort, 'Japan's Advance into Indochina, 1940: The French Response', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XIII, 2 (1982): 282, 285.

25. French Embassy (Washington) to State Department, 6 August 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 63–4. See also Wiesbaden to German Foreign Ministry No. 114, 8 August 1940, *DGFP*, Series D, Vol. X, No. 310, 439–40; Grew (Tokyo) to SoS No. 676, 9 August 1940, 751G.94/19, RG 59 NARA. Accordingly, on 20 August, Colonel Tamura, the senior military attaché in Bangkok, widely regarded as the Army's Thai expert, was recalled to Tokyo to report on the situation. However, Tamura advised Tokyo to proceed with caution in Thailand, emphasizing that, although there was a growing pro-Japanese faction in Bangkok, even they feared Japan's southward expansion to some extent; E. T. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand: 1928–1941', Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1967, pp. 289–90, 294, 296–8.

26. Dening minute, 6 August 1940, F3651/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO; Lothian (Washington) to FO No. 1620, 5 August 1940, F3651/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO; Gage minute, 6 August 1940, F3651/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO; Sterndale Bennett minute, 8 August 1940, F3651/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO. French autobiographical sources, albeit of uneven reliability, all claim that the eventual decision to capitulate to Japan was determined by the refusal of the United States to offer support. Baudouin, *Diaries*, pp. 169, 200; Decoux, *Histoire*, pp. 97–8, 102; Catroux, *Deux Actes*, pp. 54–5.

27. Britain had information suggesting that Decoux was resisting Japan on instructions from Germany in the hope of provoking a general conflagration in South-East Asia, further stretching Britain's military resources. Lothian (Washington) to FO No. 1674, 10 August 1940, F3765/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO; Gage minute, 19 August 1940, F3765/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO. See also Grant to SoS No. 58, 20 August 1940, 751G.94/34, RG 59, NARA.

28. Sterndale Bennett minute, 8 August 1940, F3865/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO; Dening minute, 6 August 1940, F3651/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO; Lothian (Washington) to FO No. 1620, 5 August 1940, F3651/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO; Gage minute, 6 August 1940, F3651/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO.

29. Crosby to FO No. 242, 6 August 1940, F3706/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO. See also Crosby to FO No. 239, 4 August 1940, F3706/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 243, 7 August 1940, F3706/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO. Crosby was somewhat reassured when Phibul pointed out that the leader of the mission to Tokyo was the pro-British Deputy Minister of Defence, Colonel Luang Prom Yothi, on this, see also Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 283.

30. Gage minute, 8 August 1940, F3706/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

31. Lothian (Washington) to FO No. 1796, 22 August 1940, F3706/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

32. Crosby to FO No. 239, 4 August 1940, F3706/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

33. FO to Crosby No. 56 (draft), late August 1940, F4011/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO. On the British intercept station at Darwin, see D. M. Horner, 'Special Intelligence in the South West Pacific Area in World War II', *Australian Outlook*, 32, 3 (1978): 310–27.

34. It is difficult to discern from this rare original decrypt, precisely what sort of Japanese communications were being broken by the British. Field to Head of M12, 25 August 1940, not foliated, WO 208/873, PRO.

35. Crosby to FO No. 272, 26 August 1940, F4011/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

36. Gage minute, 20 August 1940, F3894/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; *Daily Express*, 18 August 1940; Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 146; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 291.

37. Crosby to FO No. 264, 22 August 1940, F4002/326/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 266, 22 August 1940, F4002/326/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 327, 21 September 1940, F4342/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Grant to SoS No. 51, 15 August 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 74–5.

38. Grant to SoS, No. 74, 12 September 1940, *FRUS* 1940, IV, pp. 111–12; Crosby to FO No. 316, 16 September 1940, F4158/19/61, FO 371/24751, PRO.

39. Chauvel recalled the reception of the Thai Ambassador in his memoirs, 'et nous descendons tous les Louis XIV. Mai nous avons perdu Les grandes formes. Le pauvre Thailandais fut recu comme un chien. Le Mininstre lui demander ou à peu près, si son gouvernment était tombé sur la tête'. J. Chauvel, *Commentaire, Vol. I: De Vienne a Alger (1938–1944)*, Paris: Fayard, 1971, p. 243.

40. Crosby to FO No. 294, 10 September 1940, F4214/19/61, FO 371/24751, PRO.

41. This resistance was entirely regional, as Petain had ordered a surrender on 16 August, Decoux, *Histoire*, pp. 102, 114–20; Baudouin, *Diaries*, p. 250.

42. Crosby to FO No. 300, 4 September 1940, F4406/3429/61, FO 371/24720, PRO.

43. Haiphong to FO No. 1738, 4 September 1940, F4126/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO.

44. Dening minute, 2 September 1940, F4126/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO. See also, Halifax minute of a conversation with Dr Quo (Chinese Ambassador, London), 4 September 1940, F4163/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO.

45. JIC (40) 267, 'Probable Effects of Japan of an Extension of Far Eastern Hostilities to Indochina', 5 September 1940, F4164/3429/40, FO 371/24719, PRO. The JIC constituted Britain's highest level of intelligence co-ordination. See also JIC (40) 266, 'Situation in the Far East', 4 September 1940, F4164/3429/40, FO 371/24719, PRO and MI6 Report No. 83, 8 July 1940, not foliated, WO 208/873, PRO.

46. WP (40) 364 and COS (40) 730, F4264/3429/61, FO 371/24720, PRO; Halifax minute, 8 September 1940, F4264/3429/61, FO 371/24720, PRO; Washington to FO No. 2022, F4204/3429/61, FO 371/24719, PRO; Tarling, 'The First Japanese Move into Indochina', pp. 43–5.

47. Crosby to FO No. 307, 9 September 1940, F4207/3429/40, FO 371/24719, PRO.

48. Crosby to FO No. 313, 16 September 1940, F4277/3429/61, FO 371/24720, PRO. Cf. Decoux's accusations of British encouragement in Decoux, *Histoire*, p. 145.

49. Acting Secretary of State to Grant No. 37, 21 August 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 84.

50. Grant to SoS No. 64, 31 August 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 91.

51. Grant to SoS No. 73, 5 September 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 98–9. SoS to Grant No. 44, 5 September 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 101–2; SoS to Grant No. 46, 11 September 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 107–8.

52. Grant to SoS No. 73, 5 September 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 98–9.

53. Grant to SoS No. 79, 15 September 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 117–18; Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, Vol. II, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948, pp. 902–7.

54. Crosby to FO No. 311, 12 September 1940, F4281/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 324, 19 September 1940, F4281/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Matthews (Vichy) to SoS No. 544, 11 September 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 109–10.

55. Crosby to FO No. 311, 12 September 1940, F4281/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

56. Subsequently, the Japanese Consul at Haiphong was observed to be ostentatiously burning his archives to underline Japan's threat to embark on a full-scale invasion, Haiphong to FO No. 15, 18 September 1940, F4308/3429/61, FO 371/24720, PRO; Matthews (Vichy) to SoS No. 644, 26 September 1940, 751G.94/171, RG 59, NARA.

57. Sterndale Bennett minute, 22 September 1940, F4342/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; FO to Crosby No. 188, 25 September 1940, F4342/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Haiphong to FO No. 22, 24 September 1940, F4399/3429/61, FO 371/24756, PRO; Henderson (Haiphong) to FO, 21 September 1940, not foliated, WO 208/1219A, PRO.

58. Gage minute, 30 September 1940; F4467/3429/61, FO 371/24720, PRO. See also Matthews (Vichy) to SoS No. 658, 29 September 1940, 751G.94/178, RG 59 NARA; Baudouin, *Diaries*, pp. 249–53. For an alternative view, see J. Dreifort, 'Japan's Advance into Indochina, 1940: The French Response', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XIII, 2 (1982): 279–95.

59. Sterndale Bennett minute, 22 September 1940, F4342/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; FO to Crosby No. 188, 25 September 1940, F4342/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

60. Crosby to FO, Nos. 338–40, 28 September 1940, F4471/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 151.

61. Crosby to FO, Nos. 338–40, 28 September 1940, F4471/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

62. Ibid.; Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, pp. 152–5.

63. Grant to SoS No. 113, 11 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 117–19.

64. Grant to SoS No. 103, 4 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 164–6; Grant to SoS No. 145, 30 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 97.

65. J. C. Grew, *Turbulent Era*, Vol. II, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952, pp. 1228–9; D. N. Nutter, 'US Policy towards Japan, 1941', Ph.D. thesis, University of Columbia, 1976, pp. 40–51; entry for 4 October 1940, Henry L. Stimson diary,

Vol. 31, reel 6, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds; Kennedy to Hull No. 3325, 4 October 1940, 740.0011 EW/5845½, RG 59, NARA.

66. Nutter, 'US Policy towards Japan', pp. 70–9; Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, Vol. II, p. 920; Sayre to Roosevelt, 13 November 1940, 740.0011 PW/55½, RG 59, NARA; Roosevelt to Sayre, 26 December 1940, 740.0011 PW/55½, RG 59, NARA.

67. Ashley Clarke minute, 7 October 1940, F4342/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; FE (40) 2nd mtg., 9 October 1940, CAB 96/1, PRO. See also FO to Crosby No. 196 (draft), F4342/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Butler minute, n.d., F4342/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

68. Randall to Risdale, n.d., F4342/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Sterndale Bennett minute, 8 October 1940, F4342/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Randall minute n.d., F4486/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

69. Ashley Clarke minute, 25 October 1940, F4645/3426/61, FO 371/24720, PRO; Decoux, *Histoire*, p. 145.

70. Matthews (Vichy) to SoS No. 884, 4 November 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 200–1; Matthews (Vichy) to SoS No. 937, 11 November 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 205–6; N. Butler (Washington) to FO No. 2345, 18 October 1940, CAB 21/2026, PRO.

71. The resistance was led by General Martin, C-in-C of the French Army, GOC Malaya to WO No. 12548, 3 October 1940, F4636/3429/61, FO 371/24720, PRO; GOC Malaya to WO No. 12847, 16 October 1940, F4636/3429/61, FO 371/24720, PRO.

72. Sterndale Bennett minute, 6 October 1940, F4695/3429/61, FO 371/24721, PRO.

73. The Foreign Office were under no illusions about the degree of Vichy Anglophobia in French Indo-China. The British Consul at Haiphong reported in December 1940 that 'two police motor cars are detailed expressly, but not for my protection. They have a blacklist of French anglophiles, and Gestapo methods have commenced. Microphones in rooms and spies from several departments in the hotel, also German agents. Two friends, M. Cozaux, Inspector General of Colonies and Director of Finance, and his representative in Saigon are in military prisons, full charges not known but one is communication with the British', Consul Haiphong to FO No. 57, 7 December 1940, F5509/3429/61, FO 371/24721, PRO.

74. Crosby to FO No. 410, 2 November 1940, F4972/3429/61, FO 371/24721, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 7 November 1940, F4991/3429/61, FO 371/24721, PRO.

75. Crosby to FO No. 369, 11 October 1940, F4645/3426/61, FO 371/24720, PRO. Lepissier also informed Grant, Grant to SoS No. 115, 11 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 181. Rumours had circulated in Bangkok, Chapman (Bangkok) to SoS No. 32, 21 May 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 21.

76. Grant to SoS No. 118, 12 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 182; Grant to SoS No. 136, 21 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 189–90.

77. Crosby to No. 369, 11 October 1940, F4645/3429/61, FO 371/24720, PRO; Grant to SoS No. 115, 11 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 181; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 322–4.

78. Record of a conversation between Ribbentrop and Prayura, RM38, 11 November 1940, *DGFP*, Series D, Vol. XI, doc. 316, pp. 517–21; Record of a

conversation between Weizsäcker and Prayura, St.S. No. 876, 9 December 1940, *DGFP*, Series D, Vol. XI, doc. 484, pp. 831–2; Record of a conversation between Weizsäcker and Oshima, St.S. No. 878, 11 December 1940, *DGFP*, Series D, Vol. XI, doc. 495, pp. 845–6. However, a joint Wilhelmstrasse/OKW document of 4 September 1940 entitled 'colonial plans' detailed the allocation of Laos and Cambodia to Thailand, *DGFP*, Series D, Vol. XI, doc. 16, pp. 20–1.

79. Crosby's objective was to try and instil a degree of restraint in the Thais as drier weather approached that would facilitate military operations against the French, Crosby to FO No. 375, 15 October 1940, F4645/3426/61, FO 371/24720, PRO. See also Grant to SoS No. 118, 12 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 182. The idea of this particular combination of powers was circulating widely in the Far East at this time. The Chinese Foreign Minster informed an American diplomat that 'in seeking military facilities in French Indo-China, Japan's true object is to obtain bases from which Japanese forces may be despatched to Thailand to co-operate with troops of the latter country in an endeavour to invade Malaya and Singapore, [rather] than to attack China's southern provinces. Japan is acting at the insistence of Germany which aims before the American General Election is held to strike at Gibraltar through Spain and to inspire the seizure of the Suez Canal by Italy and the invasion of Singapore and Hong Kong by Thai–Japanese forces in order that Great Britain may be compelled to capitulate.' Johnson (Chungking) to SoS No. 501, 4 October 1940, 751G.94/202, RG 59, NARA.

80. Grant to SoS No. 117, 12 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 1981–2; Grant to SoS No. 133, 19 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 188.

81. Sterndale Bennett minute, 13 October 1940, F4645/3526/61, FO 371/24720, PRO.

82. Crosby to FO No. 364, 9 October 1940, F4625/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; GOC Malaya to WO No. 12753, 7 October 1940, F4625/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO. The mission was led by Colonel Karb Kunjara.

83. GOC Malaya to WO, 11 October 1940, CAB 21/1026, PRO. See also JIC (40) 320, 'Steps to Encourage Resistance as Japanese put pressure on the Thais', 15 October 1940, CAB 21/1026, PRO.

84. Crosby to FO No. 374, 15 October 1940, F4728/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; GOC Malaya to WO No. 12643, 7 October 1940, Annex V to COS (40) 340th mtg. (6) 8 October 1940, CAB 79/7, PRO.

85. Crosby to FO No. 389, 23 October 1940, F4854/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

86. JP (40) 498 (also COS (40) 789 (JP)) 30 September 1940, F4547/4547/40, FO 371/24757, PRO; Gage minute, 2 October 1940, F4547/4547/40, FO 371/24757, PRO.

87. This threat was facilitated by the world shortage of shipping developing in 1940, C-in-C China to Admiralty, 4 October 1940, F4588/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; FE (40) 10, memorandum by Waley (T) 'Thailand', 12 October 1940, CAB 96/1, PRO.

88. FE (40) 32, 'Economic Pressure on Thailand', 31 October 1940, CAB 96/1, PRO.

89. Crosby to FO No. 384, 21 October 1940, F4837/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

90. Phibul stated that 'a revolt of the native population in Indochina was imminent' and that 'Thailand would be called by her brethren across the border'.

In that case Thai public opinion 'would make it impossible for the Thai Government to ignore the call'. Crosby to FO No. 396, 29 October 1940, F4932/3429/61, FO 371/24721, PRO.

91. Gage minute, n.d., F4932/3429/61, FO 371/24721, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 4 November 1940, F4932/3429/61, FO 371/24721, PRO.

92. Sterndale Bennett minute, 4 November 1940, F4932/3429/61, FO 371/24721, PRO; Halifax minute, n.d. F4932/3429/61, FO 371/24721, PRO; Gage minute, F4932/3429/61, FO 371/24721, PRO.

93. Crosby to FO No. 436, 15 November 1940, F5151/116/40, FO 371/24752, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 29 November 1940, F5151/116/40, FO 371/24752, PRO.

94. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 337–41; Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 159.

95. Crosby to FO No. 409, 2 November 1940, F4931/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO; Crosby to FO, 28 October 1940, CAB 21/2026, PRO.

96. Crosby argued that 'it is not so much a question of his being new, as of his being temperamentally unfitted for his post. He is doctrinaire, vain and extremely jealous . . . he is even alienating his own community by bullying members of his own staff', Crosby to FO No. 424, 10 November 1940, F5064/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO.

97. Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs (TMFA) memorandum 'Nai Charta being Shot by French Indochinese Gendarmes', 9 October 1940, F3131/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO. See also TMFA memorandum 'Recent Incidents on the Thai–Indochina Frontier', 27 November 1940, F3131/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO.

98. Crosby to FO No. 459, 28 November 1940, F5345/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 469, 30 November 1940, F5731/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO.

99. FE (40) 5th mtg., 23 October 1940, CAB 21/1026, PRO.

100. FE (40) 6th mtg., 31 October 1940, CAB 96/1, PRO; N. Butler to FO No. 2611, 13 November 1940, CAB 21/1026, PRO. Hornbeck appears to have been well disposed towards British policies in Thailand and towards Britain generally, Sansom file, *passim*, Box 370, Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institute, Stanford, California.

101. Memorandum of a conversation between Hamilton and Butler, 18 November 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 213–14; Butler to FO, 25 December 1940 annexed to FE (40) 103, CAB 96/1, PRO.

102. Grant to SoS No. 148, 31 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 199–200.

103. Grant to SoS No. 158, 12 November 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 206. During December Grant complained with bitterness of the personal attacks upon him that had appeared in the *Bangkok Times* and by Reuters, adding, 'perhaps the Propaganda Bureau of the British Legation had a hand in it'. Grant to SoS No. 221, 27 December 1940, 741.92/13, RG 59, NARA.

104. Grant to SoS No. 221, 27 December 1940, 741.92/13, RG 59, NARA. See also Grant to SoS No. 1264, 3 December 1940, 792.9411/1 PSD, RG 59, NARA.

105. It should be noted that Dolbeare had been eclipsed by Thai advisers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was about to retire, Doll to Dolbeare, 19 November 1940, fol. 3, OV25/8 (670/3) BE. On the aircraft question, see also SoS to Grant No. 57, 10 October 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, p. 176.

106. Crosby to FO No. 473, 1 December 1940, F5731/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO; Gage minute, 1 December 1940, F5731/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO.

107. Sterndale Bennett minute, 2 December 1940, F5731/3268/40 FO 371/24757, PRO; Seymour minute, 2 December 1940, F5731/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO; Cadogan minute, 4 December 1940, F5731/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO; Butler minute, 3 December 1940, F5731/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO.

108. Crosby to FO No. 439, 17 November 1940, F5190/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO. Craigie in Tokyo was advancing similar ideas about a grand Axis scheme of conquest at this time, diary entry for 13 November 1940; Dilks (ed.), *Cadogan Diaries*.

109. Craigie to FO No. 2220A, 11 November 1940, F5085/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 325, 10 October 1940, F5001/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO.

110. FO to COIS No. 58, 15 December 1940, F5566/116/40, FO 371/24752, PRO; FO to COIS No. 59, 15 December 1940, F5566/116/40, FO 371/24752, PRO.

111. FO to COIS No. 59, 15 December 1940, F5566/116/40, FO 371/24752, PRO. From his position inside the Thai Government, Doll formed a similar picture of Thai hesitancy. He reported, 'There is one saving grace. The Siamese do not want to fall into the Japanese clutches. They mistrust them and dislike them and would like to keep them as far away as possible, if only circumstances would allow.' Doll to Niemeyer, 23 December 1940, fol. 41a/b, OV25/8 (670/3), BE.

112. Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, pp. 161–2; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 414–20.

113. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 414–20. Grant enjoyed good sources of information, Grant to SoS No. 177, 28 November 1940, 792.94/64, RG 59, NARA.

114. Crosby (Singapore) to FO not numbered, 18 December 1940, F5566/116/40, FO 371/24752, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 551, 29 December 1940, F5733/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO.

115. Crosby to FO No. 551, 29 December 1940, F5733/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO. Gage minute, 1 January 1941, F5566/116/40, FO 371/24752, PRO; Sterndale Bennett minute, 3 January 1941, F5566/116/40, FO 371/24752, PRO.

116. Crosby to FO No. 429, 13 November 1940, F5136/232/40, FO 371/24733, PRO.

117. Ibid., Gage minute, 1 January 1941, F5566/116/40, FO 371/24752, PRO. It appears that the United States had only limited independent signals intelligence capability in South-East Asia in 1940. See SRH 145 'Collection of Memoranda on Operations of Signal Intelligence Service Interpretations and Dissemination, 1942–5', RG 457, NARA, and SRH 029 'A Brief History of the Signal Intelligence Service', RG 457, NARA. At the same time the United States had intercepted similar material independently by late December 1940, reinforcing Hull's pessimism regarding Thailand.

118. FE (40) 71 Revise, 'Interim Progress Report', 17 December 1940, CAB 96/1, PRO.

119. Crosby to FO No. 506, 11 December 1940, F5489/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO. By 16 January 1941 the Thais had routed four French Divisions, Decoux, *Histoire*, pp. 122–49.

120. Murphy (Vichy) to SoS No. 1117, 11 December 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, IV, pp. 233–4.

121. Gage minute, 16 January 1941, F185/8/61, FO 371/27758, PRO. The Cabinet Far Eastern Committee had themselves been contemplating an approach to Vichy in Indo-China for some time, FE (40) 5th mtg., 23 October 1940, CAB 96/1, PRO.

122. During the fighting of December 1940, Crosby reported, 'There is no new French Minister at Bangkok. The last Minister has just been dismissed by Vichy and has been followed by M. Garreau, who has ... the absurd designation of "Ministre par interim".' Crosby to FO No. 498, F5457/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO. On Britain's relations with Vichy in Europe, see R. T. Thomas, *Britain and Vichy: The Dilemma of Anglo-French Relations in the Far East, 1940–42*, London: Macmillan, 1979.

123. Brief for Cadogan's meeting with de Gaulle, 6 January 1941, F5765/3529/61, FO 371/24722, PRO. In January 1941 British relations with de Gaulle in London had reached an all time low because of unfounded allegations of treachery levelled by Churchill at one of de Gaulle's senior commanders, General Muslier. Diary entries, 2 and 15 January 1941, Oliver Harvey Diaries, MSS 56397, British Museum, London.

124. Brief for Cadogan's meeting with de Gaulle, 6 January 1941, F5765/3529/61, FO 371/24722, PRO. C. Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East: The Official History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 74–5. Decoux's Anglophobe account barely mentions this matter, Decoux, *Histoire*, p. 141.

125. Catroux to de Schompre (Singapore), in Lampson (Cairo) to London No. 1810, 24 December 1940, F5739/3429/61, FO 371/24722, PRO, see also memorandum, 'Informal "Modus Vivendi" between HMG and Governor General of Indochina', 21 February 1941, CAB 21/2026, PRO.

126. Cadogan minute, 2 January 1941, F5765/3429/61, FO 371/24722, PRO; Eden minute, 2 January 1941, F5765/3429/61, FO 371/24722, PRO.

127. Ashley Clarke minute, 30 December 1940, F5765/3429/61, FO 371/24722, PRO. Relations between British and Vichy officials at Singapore were never really warm. Brooke-Popham described the Vichy representative at Singapore as 'a loquacious egotist' and the Vichy representative at Hong Kong as 'a low type of adventurer who has done six months in prison', Brooke-Popham to Ismay, 6 January 1941, DO/Ismay/3, V/1/4, Brooke-Popham Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London.

128. Ashley Clarke minute, 30 December 1940, F5765/3429/61, FO 371/24722, PRO. The British Secret Service had observed arms, including tanks, being loaded onto the SS Asahiya Maru at Yokohama bound for Bangkok during early January, MI6 Report, 11 January 1941, not foliated, WO 106/4474, PRO.

129. DO to Commonwealth Governments, 10 January 1941, F177/9/61, FO 371/27759, PRO; FO to N. Butler (Washington) No. 153, 8 January 1941, F100/9/61, FO 371/27759, PRO.

130. FO to N. Butler (Washington) No. 57, 4 January 1941, F79/5/40, FO 371/28108, PRO. See also British Embassy to State Department, 6 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 2–5.

131. N. Butler (Washington) to FO No. 97, 8 January 1941, F19/5/40, FO 371/28108, PRO. See also memorandum of a conversation between Welles and Butler, 7 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 6–7; memorandum of a conversation between Hull and Seni Pramoj, 13 January 1941, Siam (File 1940–8), Box 14, Sayre Papers, LC.

132. Grew (Tokyo) to SoS, No. 55–7, 12 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 14–15. See also Grew (Tokyo) to SoS No. 40–1, 9 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 9–10.

133. Garreau (Washington) to de Gaulle, n.d., F383/9/61, FO 371/27760, PRO; de Gaulle to Garreau (Washington) No. 109, 8 February 1941, F383/9/61, FO 371/27760, PRO.

134. Crosby to FO No. 45, 21 January 1941, fol. 5A, WO 208/1901, PRO; FO to Crosby No. 40, 25 January 1941, fol. 9C, WO 208/1901, PRO.

135. Governor Straits Settlements (Singapore) to CO not numbered, 19 January 1941, F306/5/40, FO 371/28108, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 131, 25 January 1941, F306/5/40, FO 371/28108, PRO; Leahy (Vichy) to SoS No. 91, 22 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 32–4.

136. Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, pp. 164, 171–2, 179; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 421–33, 462.

137. France understood that it was betrayal by the Thai Prime Minister that had resulted in Japanese arbitration, Craigie to FO No. 219, 12 February 1941, F839/5/40, FO 371/28109, PRO; Craigie to FO No. 157, 29 January 1941, F457/5/40, FO 371/28109, PRO. See also Leahy (Vichy) to SoS No. 97, 23 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, p. 38. Flood supports this, demonstrating that many Japanese were reluctant to arbitrate, for while they sought a Thai–Japanese alliance, they were also conscious of their contradictory guarantees given to French Indo-China the previous year. In particular, Matsuoka was 'basically in sympathy with the French position'; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 419–26, 435–7.

138. Governor to CO No. 85, 28 February 1941, F1490/5/40, FO 371/28110, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 72, 31 January 1941, F478/5/40, FO 371/28109, PRO. On the lax security at Singapore, see 'Security Measures in Malaya', 15 March 1941, fol. 22, WO 193/913, PRO.

139. Governor Straits Settlements (Singapore) to Colonial Secretary No. 85, 25 February 1941, WO 208/1901, PRO. Brooke-Popham to Ismay, 3 February 1941, DO/Ismay/4, V/1/5, Brooke-Popham Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London.

140. Chauvel was 'perplexed' by the idea that Crosby should back Asiatics against a European colony, Murphy (Vichy) to SoS No. 1150, 17 December 1940, *FRUS*, 1940, V, pp. 241–2.

141. Crosby to FO No. 32, 15 January 1941, F794/5/40, FO 371/28108, PRO; Grant continued 'he has not retreated from his old policy of giving the Thai the "go ahead" to get all they can in Indochina', Grant to SoS No. 169, 20 March 1941, 741.92/20, RG 59, NARA.

142. Conversation between Robin and Matsumiya reported in Craigie to FO No. 59, 14 January 1941, F794/5/40, FO 371/28108, PRO.

143. Crosby to FO No. 72, 31 January 1941, F478/5/40, FO 371/28109, PRO; Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', p. 441.

144. A Thai delegation left for Japan on 4 February led by Vanich whom Crosby pronounced to be '100 per cent Japanese', Crosby took the opportunity to denounce him as 'a dishonest crook', Crosby to FO No. 79, 5 February 1941, F541/5/40, FO 371/28109, PRO.

145. Grant to SoS No. 51, 29 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 47–8. See also Craigie to FO No. 174, 1 February 1941, F521/5/40, FO 371/28109, PRO.

146. Grant to SoS No. 48, 27 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 44–5.

147. During January the Far Eastern Department requested a report by the

Foreign Office Research Department. The document, prepared by Geoffrey Hudson, finally emerged as a report to the Cabinet Far Eastern Committee on 5 February 1941 entitled 'Thai National Aspirations and their possible use by Japan against Britain', FE (41) 36, fol. 1A, WO 208/1902, PRO.

148. Crosby to FO No. 409, 23 October 1940, F4854/3268/40, FO 371/24756, PRO.

149. Lecture by Luang Vichit Vadhakarn, printed in the *Bangkok Chronicle*, reported in Crosby to FO No. 345, 2 November 1940, F5324/3268/40, FO 371/24757, PRO. Vichit was an ardent Thai nationalist who was dearly hated by British officials for his ambitions against Malaya and Burma. After an especially vitriolic two-hour broadcast by Vichit in November 1940, Doll wrote that 'there is something to be said sometimes for a political assassination', Doll to Dolbeare, 19 November 1940, fol. 3, OV 25/8 (670/3), BE.

150. Crosby to FO No. 119, 8 January 1941, F83/9/61, FO 371/27759, PRO.

151. N. Butler (Washington) to FO No. 356, 22 January 1941, fol. 8A, WO 208/1901, PRO. The French insisted that the Thais broadcast to Indo-China in French at 7.00 p.m. every evening calling, 'on all to rebel not merely against the French but against all Europeans, advising the natives of Indochina to rid themselves of whites, even by individual assassination. The same wireless station attacks all the European inhabitants of Asia with intense bitterness.' This, however, may have been French hyperbole designed to turn the British against the Thais, or may equally have been a Japanese broadcast wrongly attributed to Bangkok, Consul in French establishments, India to Under-Secretary of State to Government of India, External Department, 16 January 1941 (PZ.1929/41), L/P&S/12/493, IOLR.

152. On Japanese fifth column activities, see Grant to SoS No. 3, 4 January 1941, 792.94/71, RG 59, NARA.

153. Crosby to FO No. 53, 25 January 1941, F396/5/40, FO 371/28109, PRO.

154. Crosby to Cadogan, 4 February 1941, F1502/1502/40, FO 371/28153, PRO; Eden minute, F396/5/40, FO 371/28109, PRO; Eden to Crosby, 2 February 1941, F396/5/40, FO 371/28109, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 30 January 1941, F1502/1502/40, FO 371/28109, PRO.

155. Craigie to FO No. 243, 14 February 1941, F931/5/40, FO 371/28109, PRO, Consul-General Tangier No. 7 Saving, 10 February 1941, F1134/5/40, FO 371/28110, PRO.

156. Craigie to FO No. 382, F1675/5/40, FO 371/28110, PRO. Subsequently the French Ambassador, Robin 'sardonically warned Prince Varnivaidya [Wan] to keep Battambang carefully as it was unlikely to remain Thai (Siamese) territory for very long', Craigie to FO No. 447, 15 March 1941, F1965/210/40, FO 371/28121, PRO.

157. Seymour minute, 11 March 1941, F1564/5/40, FO 371/28110, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 62, 6 March 1941, F3369/5/40, FO 371/28110, PRO. On the lengthy arbitration negotiations in Tokyo, see Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand', pp. 456–501.

158. Diary entry for 30 May 1941, Dilks (ed.), *Cadogan Diaries*.

159. The war scare seems to have been partly due to information obtained by British Naval Intelligence, British Embassy (Washington) to State Department, 7 February 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 51–2.

160. Ashley Clarke minute, 29 January 1940, F598/9/61, FO 371/27760, PRO; Craigie to FO No. 184, 3 February 1941, F540/9/61, FO 371/27760, PRO; Sterndale Bennett minute, 7 February 1941, F540/9/61, FO 371/27760, PRO.

161. Lowe, *Pacific War*, pp. 194–6, 205.

162. Three possible objectives were considered, a limited advance as far as Songkhla (line A); to advance as far as Bandon, some way up the Kra peninsula (line B); or to advance to Chumpon, a little to the south of Bangkok (line C). Brooke-Popham considered he had not have the necessary military force to advance beyond line A, only some 150 miles into Thai territory. However, the preferred option was to advance to line C, much further north. Director of Plans, memorandum of tactical appreciation 'Occupation of Southern Thailand', 10 December 1940, AIR 20/2113, PRO; Brooke-Popham to WO No. x3188, 16 February 1941, AIR 20/2113, PRO. See also Ashley Clarke minute, 18 January 1941, F261/210/40, FO 371/28120, PRO; COS (41) 34, 'The Far East: Japanese Intervention in Thailand', 14 January 1941, CAB 80/24, PRO. For a detailed analysis of the planning for Operation Matador, see Ong Chit Chung, 'Operation Matador and the Outbreak of the War in the Far East', Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1985.

163. Ong Chit Chung, 'Operation Matador', pp. 230–96. An early version of Operation Etonian appeared as Directive No. 3, GHQ FE/838/JP, 24 January 1941, and was conveyed to London in a letter by the GOC Malaya of 12 February 1941, AIR 23/1865, PRO.

164. Craigie, true to his unorthodox style, warned of overconcentration on Singapore and the neglect of Burma, insisting, 'The great danger appears to be British and American opinion falling into a kind of Maginot Line psychology as regards Singapore. Meanwhile, Japanese preparations elsewhere may be rendering its value negligible . . .', Craigie to FO No. 184, 3 February 1931, CAB 21/1025, PRO. The growth of the activities of the Special Operations Executive at Singapore are too complex to be explored adequately within the frame of this study. However, organizational development at Singapore during 1940–1 can be followed in file WO 193/605, PRO, while SOE planning for Thailand is outlined in WO 193/915, PRO. These activities accelerated with the arrival of a new SOE Far Eastern Director in April 1941, Ismay to Brooke-Popham, 9 April 1941, V/1/9, Brooke-Popham Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London.

165. Grant to SoS No. 166, 19 March 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 113–14.

166. Grew (Tokyo) to SoS No. 5463, 24 March 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 116–18; Wivat to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 9 May 1941, fol. 16, K Kh 0301.1.37/103, TNA.

167. The British Secret Service even passed on untranslated French reports, see for example Steveni (MI6) to MI2c and MI3a, CX.374000/I/318, 25 January 1941, not foliated, WO 208/1219A, PRO.

168. Consul-General Saigon to COIS, Singapore, No. 62, 21 April 1941, not foliated, WO 208/1901, PRO. Craigie to COIS, Singapore, No. 191, 16 April 1941, not foliated, WO 208/646, PRO.

169. Phibul to Eden conveyed in Crosby to FO, 13 February 1941, annexed to FE (40) 8th mtg., 20 February 1941, CAB 96/2, PRO. See also Grant to SoS No. 647, 11 February 1941, 740.00.11 PW/89, RG 59, NARA.

170. Brooke-Popham to Ismay, 3 February 1941, DO/Ismay/4, V/i/5, Brooke-Popham Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London.

171. Brooke-Popham also relied for information upon Andrew Gilchrist the head of propaganda at the Bangkok embassy who regularly visited Singapore; A. Gilchrist, 'Diplomacy and Disaster: Thailand and the British Empire in 1941', *Asian Affairs XIII* (Old Series), 69, 3 (1982): 258.

172. Crosby's policies puzzled the French above all because they felt his

concessions threatened the myth of European invincibility. In contrast their prescriptions suggested that Britain, the United States, and France should 'stick together' for in their view it was 'a question in the Far East of the prestige of the white race', Matthews (Vichy) to SoS No. 1197, 30 December 1940, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 249–50. Cf. Leahy (Vichy) to SoS No. 97, 23 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, p. 38; General X [Jules Buhrer], *Aux Heures tragiques de l'Empire*, Paris: Fayard, 1947, pp. 262–5.

173. In February 1941, at a lunch with Harry Hopkins, Cadogan, and other senior officials, Eden expressed a fear that bases on the west coast of Thailand could be employed by Japan to cut off the sea route around the Cape of Good Hope. He believed this idea was being urged on Japan by Germany, Hopkins to Hull and Roosevelt No. 493, 8 February 1941, *FRUS*, V, 1941, p. 69.

# 7

# 'The Key to the South': Thailand and the Outbreak of the Pacific War, 1941–1942

> There appears to be two schools of thought about Siam; first that the Siamese are dirty dogs and let us down badly in 1941 and betrayed us to their friends, the Japanese—it would be a good idea to rub their noses in the dirt and perhaps seize some of their territory. The second view is that the Siamese are a noble race, and that it was wicked of us not to defend them against the beastly Japs in 1941. . . .[1]

THIS passage was written on 27 March 1945 by Major Andrew Gilchrist, a Foreign Office official serving with the Special Operations Executive. It neatly demonstrates the manner in which the wartime debate within the various Allied bureaucracies responsible for Thailand's post-war status appeared to be dominated by the circumstances of Thailand's rapid capitulation to Japan in December 1941. Subsequently, diverse interpretations of these unhappy events were employed by Britain to legitimize her wartime plans to re-establish a degree of control over Thailand, and also by the United States to justify her attempts to thwart perceived British aggrandizement in South-East Asia.[2] Yet despite the clear importance of the events of 1941 for Thailand's relations with the Allies, her place in the outbreak of the Pacific War is not yet fully understood.

This analysis of the outbreak of war in 1941 does not seek to focus upon Thai foreign policy. Instead it seeks to explore British and American attempts to manoeuvre Thailand in accordance with their own objectives in Asia. During the approach of war, Japan undoubtedly set the pace of diplomatic events, while Britain, the United States, and Thailand all laboured under a variety of political or strategic handicaps.[3] In their attempts to slow the

Japanese advance, they were all required to pursue highly opportunist, extemporary, and often deliberately self-contradictory policies. Therefore, the only significant difference in the nature of the diplomacy pursued by these three powers was that the Thais proved themselves by far the most adept in the exercise of fine judgement. During the slow descent to war, Phibul, the Thai Premier, was careful to establish at each crucial stage the precise degree of support available from the Western Powers and consequently the resulting amount of accommodation required with Japan. In this sense British and American policies contributed strongly to the overall strategic matrix within which Phibul formulated his foreign policy.[4]

An examination of British and American policies towards Thailand also throws valuable light upon Anglo-American relations in Asia, for as in the case of other fence-sitting neutrals, such as Turkey and Francoist Spain, Thailand brought out the divergent aspects of Allied policies to a peculiar degree. While Britain's strategic debility during 1941 led her to attempt to bolster Thailand as a last bulwark between Japan and Singapore, the United States, anxious to occupy the moral high ground against domestic isolationist pressures, condemned Thailand for her previous collaboration with Japan in dismembering Indo-China during late 1940. Meanwhile, Britain remained wholly dependent upon the United States to underwrite both the material support and finally the dubious strategic assurances offered to Thailand during 1941. Certainly, British and American policies, both before and immediately after 8 December 1941, had little to do with the much-debated infelicities of Phibul's foreign policy and everything to do with the wider interests and concerns of Britain and the United States in South-East Asia. Thailand's strategic significance within British policy increased as Japan advanced by stages into Indo-China during 1940 and 1941. Britain had been unable to meet this contingency since the 1920s and now looked despairingly to the United States to defend her interests. Meanwhile, Britain's military inadequacy dictated a policy of extreme expediency in Asia, the object of which was to avoid direct confrontation with Japan at all costs. At the heart of British policy in South-East Asia during 1941 was the search for an American guarantee of support, not only in case of a Japanese attack upon Singapore, but also as a means to bolster Thailand as a peacetime impediment to Japan's preparations for an advance into South-East Asia.

How far had this search for an American guarantee progressed

by March 1941? Different answers could be discerned in various quarters of Washington. By December 1940, Roosevelt seems to have been privately convinced that South-East Asia was critical to the British war effort against Germany, but characteristically chose to remain silent. The United States Navy were still convinced that they were spread too thin to extend cover to South-East Asia and said so vehemently during comprehensive Anglo-American staff talks in Washington between January and March 1941. The British delegation, led by the irascible Admiral Bellairs, were nevertheless determined to lecture their counterparts with vigour on the virtues of Singapore, despite having being explicitly warned against such tactics by Churchill. After weeks of argument, the Americans not only retained their Atlantic priorities but even asserted that Japan had no long-term strategic aims in India or Australasia. Understandably, they were not prepared to divide their Pacific fleet in order to reinforce Singapore which they regarded as notoriously weak. The final meeting of these talks was attended by three pro-British members of Roosevelt's inner circle: Henry L. Stimson, the Secretary for War; Frank Knox, Secretary for the Navy; and General Donovan, Roosevelt's future intelligence co-ordinator along with senior State Department officials. Nevertheless, Singapore remained an acrimonious sticking point. On hearing of all this Churchill was appalled: 'I very much deplore Admiral Bellairs spreading himself in this way, and using such extreme arguments. . . . What has been the use of all this battling? Anyone could have seen that the United States would not base a battle fleet at Singapore and divide its [Pacific] naval forces.' Admiral Bellairs was retired shortly thereafter. Meanwhile Churchill's aversion to browbeating the Americans reflected his understanding that, at another level, matters in Washington were progressing satisfactorily.[5]

The change of mood was detectable as early as 14 February 1941 when, in conversation with the Japanese ambassador, Roosevelt went out of his way to emphasize his 'very serious concern' over South-East Asia. This was now echoed by Hull who, albeit a recent convert, now asserted that 'no-one was more convinced than himself of the supreme importance of Singapore' and claimed to be 'constantly pressing this on the President'. Even Sumner Welles, perhaps the least sympathetic to British requirements, had softened his attitude. In March 1941, to Britain's surprise, Hull offered to confront Japan with anything short of unqualified threats over South-East Asia. Japanese diplomats, speaking with Lord Halifax,

the British ambassador in Washington, confirmed Hull's new interest in Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies. Of much more significance for policy-makers in both Washington and London, American commentators had begun to equate the interests of the two countries in the Pacific. On 2 March 1941 the *New York Times* asserted: 'To the United States, and to the future position of the American in the Orient, the fate of Singapore means the fate of the Philippines. Without Singapore, the Philippines become[s] merely another group of islands in a Japanese sea.'[6]

However, American public opinion remained overwhelmingly isolationist. Therefore, Roosevelt's policy towards South-East Asia now revolved around intractable political questions. Prior to 7 December 1941, the dominant problem appeared to be how to react to a Japanese attack on South-East Asia, rather than upon the United States. Roosevelt faced the awkward problem of how to persuade Congress to go to war with Japan to save the British Empire in Asia. Writing in 1948, Robert E. Sherwood explained: 'Even the killing of American sailors by Germans in the North Atlantic had apparently failed to set off any sparks of belligerence in the American soul.' Consequently, he asked 'How much will to battle would be stimulated by the news that the Japanese were establishing a beach-head at Khota Baru on the Gulf of Siam?'[7] If, for political reasons, Roosevelt could not go to war for Singapore, then *a fortiori* he could not go to war for Thailand. Moreover, the Indo-China border crisis had resulted in Thailand being tarred by the United States with the same ideological brush as the Axis Powers.

Nevertheless, British diplomats continued to perceive themselves as bidding openly against Japan for the favours of Phibul's increasingly self-confident nationalist regime. Crosby's remorselessly logical appreciation of the realities of Britain's weak position in South-East Asia, and of Phibul's infatuation with *machtpolitik* as practised by Germany and Italy, was combined with a self-confessed personal attachment to the Thais. Therefore an exceptionally sympathetic prescription for Britain's Thai policy emanated from Bangkok. The regular staff of the British Legation, the Western advisers, and a number of pro-British Thai Cabinet ministers, such as Direk, at times operated together in favour of Thailand in order to modify the policy emanating from Washington and London. This was at great cost to the credibility of Crosby in some parts of Whitehall. The extent to which this co-operation blurred the boundaries of British and Thai loyalties is well

illustrated by the remarks of Willys R. Peck, the newly arrived American Minister in Bangkok, in October 1941. While Peck accepted and supported the policy prescription of Doll and Crosby on its own merits, he nevertheless found it 'hard to say whether these men are more devoted to Thai or to British interests'.[8]

Most officials in London did not share Crosby's perspective. Despite the dramatic reversals suffered by the Western Powers in China during the 1930s, some of those in the Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office came to share Crosby's clear understanding of Britain's weak position in Thailand only slowly and with reluctance. Moreover, officials outside the Far Eastern Department still laboured under the illusion that Thailand remained the near British satrapy of the 1920s, and in consequence was a 'loyal' state that might be ordered about. Yet, against all the odds, Crosby's regional perspective remained influential within both British and eventually American policy towards Thailand during 1941, albeit with a little help from the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden.

## *The Repercussions of the Franco-Thai Border Crisis*

In early 1941 both Britain and the United States were reassessing the balance of power in South-East Asia subsequent to the dramatic events of the past twelve months. In the Far Eastern Department in London there were residual fears that Japanese connivance at Thailand's seizure of her 'lost provinces' in Indo-China had been purchased from the Japanese in return for the promise of bases in Thailand. However, Crosby's interpretation of immediate Japanese objectives as economic proved more accurate and on 2 January 1941 he reported to Eden that Thai–Japanese economic negotiations were underway which he suspected would move Thailand towards the East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.[9] On 1 February 1941, in a letter to Eden, Crosby reinforced his argument that although the Thais were under strong Japanese pressure for an alliance and were 'on the brink of leaving the neutral fold', there was, nevertheless, no possibility of Thailand becoming 'even temporarily, one hundred per cent pro-Japanese'. While the Thai Prime Minister was admittedly 'indecisive' and 'fickle', he still desired a British presence in South-East Asia to balance the crushing embrace of the Japanese. It is significant that Crosby held neither the Thais nor the Japanese responsible for the recent Thai–Japanese

*rapprochement* over the Indo-China border question. On the contrary, he blamed the recalcitrance of the Western Powers and remained convinced that American mediation could have forestalled Japanese intervention.[10] He therefore complained bitterly to Eden of inaction by the American Secretary of State, Cordell Hull. Moreover, in Crosby's opinion, Grant had 'antagonised the Thais thoroughly' and they spoke of him with 'detestation'.[11] So strong were Grant's feelings that in December 1941, shortly after he had been abruptly removed by the State Department, he wrote to Roosevelt urging him not to forget Thailand's incursion into Indo-China during 1940. He informed Roosevelt that 'the Thai skirts are not very clean' and insisted that after the war Thailand's 'lost provinces' in Indo-China should be returned to France. Grant also reiterated his fervent belief that Crosby had given the Thais 'the green light' to attack Indo-China in 1940, while merely paying 'lip service' to Hull's policy of maintaining the *status quo.*[12]

Conversely, Crosby and his staff had been working hard for Grant's removal for over a year. In late 1940 Crosby's compatriot, William Doll, the Financial Adviser, denounced Grant to Frederic Dolbeare (who had recently resigned as Foreign Affairs Adviser) as an impediment to both British and American interests in Thailand:

> He is doctrinaire, didactic, egotistic and conceited: he critisises Lord Halifax [the British Ambassador in Washington] and he preaches, sermonizes and generally holds forth to the Siamese in a 'cassant' manner . . . his value as a mouthpiece of American views is largely gone . . . he is not the most popular of persons even in his own Legation: I should imagine he could be most inconsiderate and snotty. Why should this extra affliction come in our time, O Lord? . . . American stock in [Thai] Governmental circles is right down to rubbish prices.[13]

This most confidential letter rapidly found its way into the files of the State Department. The campaign against Grant gathered pace during 1941.

Crosby was correct in believing that significant differences remained between Thailand and Japan, and that these could be exploited. The Thais were particularly disappointed at the outcome of the Japanese-sponsored arbitration of the border dispute between France and Thailand in Tokyo. The Japanese desired the continued co-operation of the Vichy French regime in Indo-China, consequently the Thais only received a quarter of the 300,000 square miles which they had claimed in Laos and

Cambodia. Yet Crosby was not aware of the reason for the failure of the Thai–Japanese *rapprochement*. The Thais had been so obsessed with obtaining their irredentist desiderata in Indo-China that, during February and March 1941, it was Thailand who pressed Japan for a military alliance, rather than vice versa, albeit only as a means to obtaining specific territorial objectives. Japan fully understood the price of such an alliance with Thailand and, because she still found value in her relationship with the Vichy regime in Indo-China, she had refused to pay.[14] Crosby was therefore right about the non-existence of a formal Thai–Japanese alliance, but for the wrong reasons.

Crosby was also mistaken regarding Thai ambitions in Malaya and Burma. Admittedly he had warned the Foreign Office during January 1941 that if Thailand's foray into Indo-China proved successful, extreme Thai irredentists 'might in that case turn their attention to ourselves and claim from us some of the Malay states'. Yet Crosby did not interpret this as a serious threat and he attributed such ambitions to a radical minority.[15] But on 9 February Crosby's sympathetic view of Thai nationalist ambitions was radically revised. The Governor of Burma informed Crosby that he had the strongest evidence that the Thai Premier, the Japanese Minister, and military and naval attachés in Bangkok had been meeting together with Burmese nationalists in Thailand to plan uprisings in Burma. In reality one of these 'Burmese nationalists' conspiring with Phibul and the Japanese was in fact a secret agent of the Government of Burma. He reported that 'the Thai Prime Minister was deeply implicated in these schemes' and that a plan to smuggle arms to nationalists in Burma was part of a wider Japanese proposal put to Phibul whereby

> Thailand should assist Japan in setting up an independent Burma under the scheme of 'co-prosperity' and in establishing joint Thai–Japanese condominium over Malaya. As a reward for her co-operation Thailand would recover sovereignty over the State of Kedah which she transferred to us in 1909, and she would also receive Penang. At the same time Burma would cede to her Tavoy and Mergui. . . .

The agent of the Government of Burma was now *en route* to Tokyo to take part in further discussions with the Japanese. These revelations caused excitement in Washington as well as London since Halifax was instructed to brief Hull on the subject immediately.[16]

Trouble in Burma, coming on top of the news of Japanese

arbitration in the Thai–Indo-China border dispute, now seemed to offer Crosby good reason to question both his overall strategy of sympathy towards Thailand, and indeed his personal efficacy as Minister. Ironically, and unbeknown to Crosby, Japanese diplomats were simultaneously in a parallel state of depression about their own lack of headway in Bangkok. Not only had Tokyo's troubled arbitration over the lost provinces damaged their standing with Phibul, they found Crosby's benign approach, combined with the economic influence of Malaya, an awkward combination to counter. In February the Japanese naval attaché, who was close to Phibul, lamented:

> It is common knowledge that conditions in Thailand do not permit optimism. Important above all are relations with Great Britain. Seventy per cent of Thailand's trade is with the Sterling Bloc and British economic pressure might cause a financial panic. Thus it might bring the downfall of the Phibun [Phibul] regime and the pro-Japanese clique. For this reason we should give increased aid to Thailand and show strength.

The dominant accounts of Thai–Japanese political relations during this period not only indicate Crosby's continued influence, but also underline his fairly accurate assessment of relations between Bangkok and Tokyo.

Nevertheless, the events of early 1941 had delivered hard lessons in realism to both Phibul and Crosby. Phibul had discovered that the Japanese would abide by the hitherto poorly advertised maxim of 'Asia for the French' for as long as it suited their purposes. Equally, it had now been made clear to Crosby that Thailand was playing both sides of the fence. Nothing would weigh in the balance with Phibul once he was convinced that Japan would expel Britain from South-East Asia to Thailand's benefit and he was now covering himself against all eventualities in an uncertain world. For the moment Phibul retained 'a foot in each camp' but he had 'all but gone over to the Japanese side'. Crosby now argued that Phibul must be convinced of Britain's ability to deal with Japan and that this could only be done with American help; therefore, he insisted, 'It is of vital importance to us that America should now show her teeth.'[17]

By 1 March 1941, both Crosby and the Far Eastern Department were agreed that three factors now dominated Thai foreign policy: firstly, a 'conviction that Japan is all powerful in the Far East', secondly, a 'belief that the United States will not go to war for Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies'; and thirdly, a 'desire to

see us preserve our position as a counterpoint to Japan'. However, while the weakness of Britain's position in mainland South-East Asia was not disputed by the Far Eastern Department, Crosby would yet have difficulty persuading officials in London of the degree of accommodation with Phibul that this dictated.

In any case, it was increasingly clear that Britain's ability to influence the Thais without the support of the United States was limited. On 27 February 1941, Crosby admitted to Phibul that in the event of a Japanese advance against Singapore, Britain would have to resist Japan on Thai soil. Phibul assured Britain that the Thais would destroy all Thai military equipment and installations. However, the important point which Phibul repeatedly emphasized was that he could not resist the present Japanese pressure for an informal alliance or an understanding without a declaration of support from Britain and the United States. This frank exchange of views was important for it persuaded the Cabinet Far Eastern Committee to approach the United States immediately for a declaration of support for Thai neutrality.[18] Given the inability of Britain to offer Thailand a guarantee of security, the consensus in the Foreign Office was that 'the next move is up to the United States'.[19]

## *The Western Response: 'A Modicum of Bribe'*

During the Spring of 1941 it became clear that Britain faced the increasing political and economic penetration of Thailand by Japan. Detailed Thai–Japanese economic negotiations were underway as part of Japan's price for her limited co-operation regarding the Indo-China border. Japan also obtained an assurance from Thailand that no political, military, or economic treaty prejudicial to Japanese interests would be concluded with another power. Crosby requested a similar assurance for Britain but was informed that it had been given to Japan as a strict quid pro quo for her mediation in Indo-China. No Japanese military bases had been established in Thailand, but this was offset by heavy Japanese use of the Thai naval base at Sattahib to 'police' the Franco-Thai armistice during the arbitration negotiations and permission for Japan to open a consulate in the strategically sensitive town of Songkhla, on the Kra Isthmus. While superficially alarming, the Thai–Japanese economic negotiations were not wholly to Britain's disadvantage, for Japan's rapacious requirements reinforced Thai dissatisfaction at the amount of territory that Japan had allocated

to her in Indo-China and in consequence threw into relief the venality of Japan's own interests in Asia. In April, Tamura, the Japanese military attaché in Bangkok, reported that Phibul remained sore over the border issue. This provided the West with an unforeseen opportunity to sustain Thailand's state of armed neutrality as an impediment to Japan's southward advance.[20]

The possibility of inflicting economic punishment upon Thailand to deter her from co-operation with Japan had been examined at length and rejected by the Cabinet Far Eastern Committee during the Franco-Thai border crisis.[21] During February, Crosby proposed an alternative British policy of positive economic support for Thailand. This was designed to exploit what he discerned as the central characteristics of Thailand's foreign policy, namely, 'a reluctance to reach irrevocable decisions and an unwillingness to take sides until they are sure they have spotted the winner'.[22] A focus for this proposal appeared on 25 March, when Direk, Thailand's Deputy Foreign Minister, confessed to Crosby that Thailand was 'desperately short of oil'. This was in part due to the global wartime shortage of oil, but had been exacerbated by an acrimonious disagreement over oil monopolies which had culminated in a cessation of trading in 1939. Further problems were caused by a world shortage of shipping due to the war in the Atlantic. To Crosby this represented a unique opportunity to gain purchase upon Thai foreign policy and he put a case to London for a generous supply of oil. Predictably, the view of the Far Eastern Department in London was that oil could not be supplied without full American support.[23]

Crosby's arguments dominated the instructions sent by the Foreign Office to Lord Halifax, Britain's Ambassador in Washington. He was to inform the State Department that the current Thai–Japanese economic negotiations marked 'an important stage in the extension of Japanese influence' and that the battle to retain Thai neutrality seemed to be primarily an economic one. Economic assistance to Thailand thus offered an opportunity whereby the strategically significant Kra Isthmus, linking Thailand to Malaya, could be protected and Japan's source of raw materials impeded by offering the Thais an incentive to stay neutral. Oil and loans would be supplied in return for a Thai assurance that their tin and rubber would not be given to Japan. For Britain, this initiative also formed part of a wider battle to persuade Washington of the strategic significance of Singapore. They explained to Halifax, 'We are making a real effort to hold

our position in a country whose vital geographic and strategic position would not appear to have been fully appreciated by the US Government. I hope you will bring all your guns to bear.' Foreign Office fears were not wholly justified. Grew, the American Ambassador in Tokyo, had written to Hull only four days before that, as a result of the border crisis, 'Japan is now in a position . . . through its increased influence in both Indochina and Thailand, to acquire complete dominance in these areas whose importance to the defence of Singapore and British Malaya cannot be overestimated'. Nevertheless, at the highest level in Washington, South-East Asia still seems to have been viewed by some as important only in terms of its raw materials and as a route for supplies to China via the Burma Road.[24] Consequently in Washington, Halifax was careful to stress the economic rather than the political and strategic objectives of this initiative.[25]

Yet in London, the Far Eastern Department was not as yet fully convinced of Crosby's arguments which it had put with such conviction to Washington. Viewing Japan's onslaught primarily in terms of a regional imbalance of military power that the United States refused to redress, it could see little hope of bolstering Thailand against Japan simply with economic assistance. Sterndale Bennett, Head of the Far Eastern Department, insisted that Britain must be quite clear about the balance of sympathy or coercion towards Thailand and stressed his preference for an element of coercion.[26] Ashley Clarke, Sterndale Bennett's deputy, agreed and minuted, 'We propose that the carrot should be dangled before the Thai donkey first, but that the stick should be visible out of the corner of the donkey's eye.'[27] Therefore, they accepted Crosby's policy of 'carrot' reluctantly at first and only because, as Crosby consistently pointed out, the British 'stick' was in noticeably short supply east of Suez.

The American Minister, Hugh Grant, was rigidly opposed to supplies to Thailand of any sort. Grant was convinced that Thailand was co-operating with Japan with unrestrained enthusiasm and had himself previously advised against American arms supplies.[28] His interpretation of events continued to revolve around the Franco-Thai border crisis and, consequently, he argued that Thai claims that the shortage of oil was forcing them to turn to Japan for supplies was merely a search for *post facto* justification for the Thai–Japanese collusion. Grant also complained of 'very subtle and effective' anti-American propaganda by the Thai Director-General of Publicity, Nai Vilas Ostananda, and by the British-

owned *Bangkok Times*.[29] Grant was acutely aware of Thailand's attempt to link Thai concessions to Japan with the lack of an American strategic guarantee and concluded, with some justification, that the Thai politicians and British diplomats were 'deliberately making the United States a scapegoat'.[30]

In spite of Grant's hostile analysis, Britain persuaded the State Department to guarantee normal oil supplies to Thailand if they could not be obtained elsewhere. This was offered with reluctance for in Hull's opinion the Thais were all but allied to Japan and therefore 'past praying for'. Ashley Clarke was displeased and believed that the United States had failed to meet the British point that this offer was strictly quid pro quo and would be 'subject to certain definite assurances designed to keep Thailand from selling herself body and soul to the Japanese'.[31] The Cabinet Far Eastern Committee discussed the American position the following day and concluded that 'we cannot afford to take a view at once so pessimistic and detached as Mr Hull . . . we are bound to make another effort to retrieve what we can from the ashes of Japanese mediation'. Therefore Halifax was told to approach Hull once more.[32]

Halifax's task was difficult and consequently he effected a joint *démarche* with the Australian Ambassador in Washington, Richard Casey. Yet at their meeting on 22 April, Hull insisted that 'Japan had her claws so deeply into Thailand as to make it doubtful whether that position could be restored'. Halifax replied that Britain shared his pessimistic outlook, but nevertheless, such was the extreme strategic importance of Thailand in relation to the Singapore naval base that one last effort had to be made. Hull's attitude remained negative and he forecast that they 'should shortly see some military, economic and political partnership between Japan and Thailand'.[33] Therefore, in London, Eden had to accept this initial offer of American material support for British policy as sufficient, agreeing that oil was now to be offered to Thailand.[34]

Only in early May, as Phibul renewed his appeals for oil, did the divergence between Crosby and London departments over how the supplies of oil were to be employed become clear.[35] For Crosby, the very fact that Thailand should become dependent on Britain rather than Japan for oil was a diplomatic victory and sufficient in itself. Crosby's attempts to undermine Thai–Japanese economic negotiations represented a diplomatic rather than an economic exercise. In London the picture was more complex.

The British Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW), responsible for the economic conduct of the war, was set against aid to Thailand. The British oil companies would not assist due to pique over past confrontations with the Thais and Halifax reported that the American oil companies would only participate if the West was restored to its former *de facto* monopoly position in the Thai oil market. Therefore London and Washington demanded as their price the reinstatement of the oil companies, whom, they insisted, had previously been 'victimised' by Thai economic nationalism.[36]

Sympathy was equally sparse in Washington. On 8 May Grant had roundly denounced to the State Department what he considered to be Crosby's 'carefully planned campaign', designed 'to keep us in the state of a benevolent Santa Claus towards Thailand'. Grant's missives were initially effective for the next day, when Nevile Butler, the British Minister in Washington, tackled Stanley Hornbeck, the State Department's political adviser on the Far East, on Washington's 'stand-offish' attitude over aid to Thailand, he replied by blaming Japanese pre-eminence there on Crosby's 'encouragement' of the Thais during the border dispute. Butler insisted that Thailand had no wish to come under Japanese control and that the key factor was simply that Japan could offer much in the way of rewards and penalties. However, Hornbeck replied that by the very virtue of this, the Japanese 'had the inside track', and also dismissed Britain's attempts to hold Thailand as hopeless, adding that if the British 'wished to go into such a speculative venture, why should not the speculation be theirs, leaving us out of it?'[37] Clearly, his interest in Thailand was limited to raw materials, while Hull remained keen on using aid as a lever to restore the Standard Vacuum Oil Company to its former position in the Thai oil market. Therefore the British Embassy began to stress the economic dimension unduly in fresh representations to the State Department.[38]

London and Washington had still to appreciate the overwhelming strength of the Thai position. Direk, the Deputy Foreign Minister, now informed Crosby that the Japanese had offered to supply Thailand with all her oil requirements in exchange for her full output of rubber, which would not be re-exported from Japan. Direk pointed out that Phibul was ready to accept this offer, and in a confident mood, he 'renewed with some bitterness the reproach . . . that we threaten Thailand with economic sanctions if she draws too closely to Japan but that we have declined to promise her military assistance if she resists Japanese aggression'.

Compromises were subsequently discussed. Phibul rejected any reinstatement of the oil companies and emphasized his fear of an imminent Japanese *coup d'etat* by the pro-Japanese faction.[39] While the Thais were undoubtedly under severe pressure from Japan, they had succeeded expertly in transferring the burden of decision to the British Legation and thence to London. During June tortuous negotiations continued during which the Foreign Office refused to accept the figures provided by the Thais and Crosby berated the Foreign Office for the negotiating objectives he had been set and for their 'suspicious and nagging attitude'. Meanwhile, Phibul deliberately misinformed Crosby that he had already 'caved in' to Japan and had promised her 63 per cent of Thai rubber production amounting to 30,000 tons. Britain would have to accept 37 per cent of Thai rubber or 18,000 tons in return for British oil. Tin was to be left on the open market. Crosby believed negotiations had reached an impasse but the Far Eastern Department continued to press for better terms.[40] On 17 June, disillusioned with the attitude of both London and Phibul, Crosby sent a telegram to London articulating in no uncertain terms the differences between himself and London. This telegram was not the first to carry the veiled threat of resignation:

> I am far from trusting the Thais the whole way but they are not the bunch of crooks the FO seem to think they are. . . .
>
> I have an uneasy feeling that you people in Downing Street live in an ivory tower as regards Thailand and that you fail to realise our colossal loss of prestige in this country as a result of the collapse of France in nearby Indo-china and of the unfavourable course of the war for Britain. Instead of upbraiding Thailand for giving too much to Japan we should be thankful that, with our star almost below the horizon, she still turns to us as much as she does.
>
> This is plain speaking but I must get it off my conscience. I am playing a lone hand here. The French have been vilifying me for months past and the United States Minister is working against me. If I find myself out of tune with my own Foreign Office there remains no alternative but to beg leave to retire from the unequal conflict and to lay down an impossible task. For your private information I am feeling the physical and nervous strain badly and a few more querulous telegrams about oil will finish me.[41]

This dramatic telegram drew Anthony Eden's attention who weighed in heavily in support of Crosby. The Foreign Secretary asked, 'What is all this about? Why are we dropping bombshells

on poor Sir J Crosby?' Sterndale Bennett replied defensively that it was 'uncomfortably hot in Bangkok' and outlined why Crosby and the Far Eastern Department were in dispute. He explained the importance of remaining in line with the United States, the MEW, and the oil companies. He also pointed to the cumulative strain of which Crosby had spoken of in private correspondence.[42] Yet Eden rejected Sterndale Bennett's protestations and moved decisively to support Crosby's contention that, while dependent on Britain for oil, Thailand 'will not willingly estrange herself from us'. Eden minuted enthusiastically upon Crosby's latest dispatch, 'Is this not right? Are we not doing so?'[43]

The Foreign Office now turned to support Crosby against the other Whitehall departments. They pressed the Treasury on the question of loans to Thailand and Sir Otto Niemeyer, now Governor of the Bank of England, confessed that there was 'something to be said for a modicum of bribe'. The MEW was also informed that while its economic reservations were accepted, 'oil is, however, our chief instrument of policy in Thailand', and that therefore, 'on political grounds half measures are no good'. John Troutbeck of the defeated MEW protested vehemently:

> I would like to put it on record that the MEW are extremely doubtful whether anything—even a saving of time—will in fact be gained by a policy of giving the Thais everything for nothing, i.e. giving them all the oil and no doubt jute, they need while they gaily send all their rubber and tin to Japan . . . if an armed bandit puts a revolver to your head, you are not influenced by hopes of an inheritance from an invalid uncle.[44]

However, Crosby, cast in the role of Thailand's 'invalid uncle', had secured the final word regarding British material support for Thailand.

Over the last few months Crosby had been unduly hard on the Foreign Office. Firstly, both the Foreign Office and the Service departments were continuing the process of persuading Washington of the importance of Singapore. This was underlined by a joint British–American–Dutch staff conference hosted at Singapore in April. The agenda was dominated by the British who recommended military action if Japan moved into strategically sensitive areas of Thailand. While Washington rejected this idea on resource grounds, most American military personnel had now accepted the value of South-East Asia with continued resistance coming only from General Marshall. Japan was impressed by this show of Western alignment and subsequent American missions to

Singapore sought to catch the public eye, arriving ostentatiously in aircraft painted with oversized stars and stripes for the benefit of the photographers.[45]

Secondly, and more importantly, London had kept up unremitting pressure in Washington throughout May and June in support of a policy about which they had doubts. Sufficient, if not enthusiastic, American support had been obtained, despite the die-hard resistance of Grant.[46] Crosby was also unaware that London had joined him in working hard for Grant's removal from Bangkok. On the evening of 16 June 1941 in Washington, Halifax 'spoke quite frankly' with Welles, the American Under-Secretary of State, concerning Grant and believed that Welles 'had himself the same feeling'. Eden had already made it clear to Washington that poor relations between Crosby and Grant were the only obstacle to the free exchange of British and American intelligence in the Far East. Pressure from Eden for Grant's dismissal was timely for it coincided with dire reports from senior American figures in the Far East. Francis B. Sayre, the American High Commissioner in the Philippines, warned that 'the Grant situation' was 'very bad'. Interestingly, Sayre, who had been out of sympathy with Bangkok during the 1930s, now took Crosby's line:

> The Thai Government officials are not pro-Japanese but they fear Japan and may have to give way to Japanese pressures if America and Great Britain do not lend them support. At such a juncture it seems imperative that the American Minister in Bangkok should be a man of wisdom and tact, who maintains the thorough respect of the Thai officials, the British Minister and the American community. . . . Mr Grant has emphatically failed in all of these respects and should be promptly replaced if we are to save the situation in Bangkok.

Concerted pressure from Eden and Sayre could not be ignored and on 4 August 1941 the State Department requested permission from the Thai Government to replace Grant with Willys R. Peck, a professional diplomat from the Division of Far Eastern Affairs.[47]

Halifax was less frank with the Americans on other matters. In June he reported that he was pressing Sumner Welles as strongly as he could on oil for Thailand but confessed that he had not yet dared to inform Welles of Phibul's limited economic concessions to Japan. Welles remained under the mistaken impression that Britain and the United States would receive *all* Thailand's tin and

rubber. The United States continued to make it clear to the Thais that American support was strictly quid pro quo and therefore purely 'a cold blooded arrangement'.[48]

However, Crosby's major diplomatic victory was scored against Japan whose Finance Ministry had been attempting since 1940 to improve Japan's position against the possibility of Western economic sanctions, as well as advance Japanese economic control. Since May 1941 a Japanese financial delegation, headed by Mr Ono, had also been pressing the Thais for an agreement permitting Japan access to Thailand's important rubber and tin resources, placing the tical within the yen bloc and amounting to *de facto* recognition of the Japan's East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere. Their long-term aim was to put Ono in the place of William Doll, the British Financial adviser to Pridi, the Thai Minister of Finance. Despite a clear duplicity on the part of Phibul during the negotiations, the British and American economic guarantees of oil and loans were significant in allowing Thailand to steer a middle course during the Japanese economic–diplomatic offensive of the Spring and Summer of 1941. A further American decision of late June to grant Thailand US$3 million in credits and another US$3 million in loans was instrumental in persuading Phibul to leave Thai tin on the open market.[49] Furthermore, Western economic support had a direct impact upon Thailand's political relations with Japan. Although Japan had gained access to some of Thailand's tin and rubber, by early August the Thais had made it clear to Tokyo that they would only sell their tin and rubber to Japan in return for gold or oil, of which Japan was extremely short. These were quite impossible terms for Japan, given that she was finding it difficult to obtain sterling for purchases in Bangkok and from July 1941 she had also to contend with the American decision to freeze Japanese assets.[50]

Moreover, in July, Pridi discovered that Ono had attempted to bypass him by approaching the pro-Japanese Minister for Economic Affairs, an offence that further hardened his attitude on Thai credit to Japan.[51] Earlier in the year Ono had obtained a 10,000,000 baht loan from the Siamese Bank Federation but this loan was exhausted within months and Japan demanded a further loan of 25,000,000 baht. Doll and Pridi now offered Japan only the most unattractive terms again requiring repayment in gold.[52] Pridi's demand for gold contained the strongest element of irony, for during the past ten years he had developed a reputation as a most radical economic thinker who had fought a long and

increasingly successful battle to escape the conservative 'sound money' principles of his British Adviser, William Doll and of the Governor of the Bank of England. On receiving Pridi's final terms, Ono 'went livid' and within ninety minutes a bitter complaint was delivered to Phibul. This insisted that Pridi

> was a partisan of gold and hard currencies and an old fashioned conservative financier and was an 'intransigent' Minister (textually) with whom it would be quite impossible to harmonise Japanese ideals: and finally that Japan could not compromise on Mr Ono's plan for the reconstruction of Thai finance, whereby the Yen and the Tical would be freely interchangeable and the Yen admitted to the currency reserve.[53]

On 21 August Ono received a stiff rebuttal from Phibul, who remarked to Pridi, 'Quite right. No gold, no ticals.' The subsequent Thai–Japanese financial agreement was a pale shadow of Japanese expectations.[54]

Consequently, Crosby's policy had not only given Thailand the economic and political wherewithal to continue to sit on the fence and to defy the shifting strategic balance of the region, but had given the pro-Japanese faction within the Thai Cabinet pause for thought. Japanese diplomats were also rattled by Crosby's activities. Yet all recognized that Thailand's diplomatic prevarication was without military substance and had its limits. As Doll explained to the British Treasury in London: 'Pradit's [Pridi's] courage is admirable and amazing. But in the end what can little Thailand do with tens of thousand's of Japanese bayonets only 200 miles from Bangkok? Present [Japanese] demands constitute the initial stages in the murder of yet another small but essentially friendly nation.'[55]

## *Political Assurances and Military Alternatives*

Western economic assistance had inflicted a severe tactical defeat upon Japan's penetration of Thailand. However, this did little to change the overall strategic framework in the Far East, as Japan demonstrated by making specific political and military demands upon Thailand during July and August 1941 (Map 7.1). This coincided with a dramatic Japanese advance into southern Indo-China during the last days of July. Strategic air bases were occupied close to the Thai border and within range of Singapore. Japan also took over the naval bases at Saigon and Camranh Bay. Indeed, on 2 July, at the Imperial Conference in Tokyo that had

MAP 7.1
The Japanese Position in Asia, August 1941


*Source*: Copyright © 1941/1942 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

taken these decisions, some had advocated extending the military action to Thailand in order to eliminate what Tokyo viewed as British intrigue in Bangkok. Others believed this would trigger a war with Britain for which Japan was not yet ready. The consequence of Japan's actions was a marked increase in the pace of

events in Washington and London. Japan's advance into Indo-China, combined with Germany's attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, gave the impression that a European war was about to develop into global conflict. Accordingly, the activities of Crosby, Grant, and even the Far Eastern Department in London, however frenetic, became of less significance as South-East Asian questions increasingly found their way up to the highest level.

In fact, since early July, Britain and the United States had been in possession of secret information from signal intercepts revealing Japan's intention to seize 'points d'appui' in Indo-China. Sumner Welles had shown Halifax a variety of MAGIC material indicating this on 10 July. Clearly Japan's next intention was not, as some had supposed, to move against Russia in support of Germany's recent attack in the West.[56] By 19 July, Japan's impending move into Indo-China was an open secret and American diplomats discussed the matter in Berlin and at Vichy, where both Darlan and Petain stressed their intention to do nothing.[57] Addressing the British Cabinet, Eden asserted that a prompt display of determination was now needed to prevent Japan creeping to Singapore. Yet in the absence of United States support, the British options for such a display were laughable. The Cabinet discussed cancelling the Anglo-Japanese Trade Treaty, while holding the closure of the Japanese Consulate at Singapore in reserve for more dire circumstances. On 20 July Eden questioned whether Britain dare even follow the American oil embargo imposed on Japan without an American guarantee to Britain in the Far East. An anguished Eden informed the Cabinet that Britain had to follow the embargo; it was a calculated risk. Churchill alone remained confident that Japan would not yet risk an attack, not least because he believed, erroneously, that the United States would soon join the war.[58]

Curiously, despite access to intercepts of Japanese communications, there was less alarm in Washington. On 21 July 1941, Eden complained to Churchill that 'President Roosevelt still holds the idea that the Japanese are unlikely to do anything drastic in Indochina and that we can afford to wait and deal with them later'. Eden therefore wrote to Roosevelt, underlining Japanese plans for a move into southern Indo-China, and urging that 'the best prevention is fear on the part of the Japanese of immediate war with the United States if they go too far'. But no further American action was forthcoming in July.[59] Eden's concern at American 'inaction' underlined the divergent strategic priorities of London and Washington. As far as Roosevelt was concerned, the oil embargo

against Japan on 26 July constituted decisive action. Certainly the Japanese shared this view for on 25 July 1941 military staff at the Japanese embassy in Washington asserted that the embargo would soon drive Japan towards Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies. What concerned Eden was the nature of Roosevelt's action which temporarily increased the possibility of a war in South-East Asia between Japan and the European powers only. Eden and the Cabinet desired a more concrete guarantee of their own exposed position, while Washington considered that the effect of the embargo would be a Japanese climb-down.[60]

In Thailand tension continued to mount. In the third week of July Thai military officers informed Crosby that the Japanese Minister had presented Phibul with a series of demands 'with the object of assuring the success of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere'. Thai anxiety was redoubled by the fear that the American freeze imposed upon Japanese assets and oil supplies might trigger a further Japanese southward advance.[61] Phibul himself confessed to Crosby on 30 July that the Japanese were making both military and economic demands quite incompatible with Thailand's neutral status and Doll noted that Phibul was now 'jumpy as a cat'.[62] Phibul, once more taking care to pass the burden of decision to London, then asked Crosby to put a critical question before Anthony Eden on his behalf. If Japan violated Thai territory on the pretext of 'protecting' Thailand against Britain, what would Eden advise him to do? Crosby informed Eden that Phibul 'is bent upon forcing the issue with us'. Crosby was unsure how far Phibul would go but subsequently discovered that Thailand had already recognized the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo.[63] Thereafter, Eden sent a minute to Churchill arguing for a joint Anglo-American–Dutch warning to Japan. Eden added, 'The next probable victim is Thailand whose Government has already appealed to us to know what help we can give. We cannot reply until we know the attitude of the United States.' Therefore, on 2 August Halifax in Washington had a conversation with Hull to emphasize that in the absence of Anglo-American counter action, 'we must expect that the Thais will not only fall completely into Japanese economic camp but be persuaded to grant bases in Thai territory as well'.[64]

While Japan's advance into Indo-China had considerable impact upon policy-making in Washington, nevertheless the reports of Halifax were not encouraging. Halifax had already been sounding out Sumner Welles and the President on the question of support

for Thailand and as a result Hull and Welles had discussed the strategic significance of Thailand on 31 July, whereupon Hull clearly reiterated his pessimistic attitude: 'I haven't any faith in the Siamese at all and I think the whole crowd is in the clutches of the Japanese. They just use the British or anybody in their effort to handle the Japanese more satisfactorily.' Nevertheless, Hull called for a careful re-examination of the Thai position because of its implications for the strategic situation of China:

> I want to know for certain whether they really would stand up and, if they do, I would be disposed to give them the same help as we give China. . . . I think that should be gone into from the bottom to see what can be salvaged out of the original betrayal of everybody by the Siamese to Japan. The point is there is sufficient community of interests, although it differs in degree, to justify salvaging what we can because, if the Japs move into Thailand, they thereby gain access to the Burma Road. . . . They would have access then down the peninsula to Singapore although they tell me it is very rough terrain to get over. At any rate you see the point. It might seriously effect the Chinese angle of the Japanese Far Eastern situation. That doesn't mean we have to take the lead.

Nevertheless, Hull and Welles remained 'unenthusiastic', an attitude that was reinforced by their reading of MAGIC communication intercepts.[65]

Quite apart from Hull's distrust of Thailand, American support was increasingly subsumed in larger Far Eastern issues on which Roosevelt and Hull had every reason to be cautious. They also shared the concern of the American JCS regarding the relatively slow pace of rearmament in the United States. Consequently, Roosevelt simply told Halifax that he was considering expressing his concern to Japan regarding her ambitions in Thailand. Subsequently, he extended his proposal for the 'neutralisation' of Indo-China to Thailand. When Halifax put Britain's request for a declaration in support of Thailand, Welles replied that he 'could not imagine any such declaration would be of any use'.[66] Phibul continued to press for an answer from Eden, but London now awaited the outcome of Roosevelt's procrastinating neutralization proposal, which the Japanese had effectively rejected by 7 August. Japan's further advance into Indo-China in late July had raised Thailand as a vital strategic issue in London, but not in Washington. On 12 August Ashley Clarke minuted despondently of the Thai question: 'Americans minimise the issue and talk of big issues, but Thailand is the key to the South.'[67]

In the absence of American support, Eden now approached the

Cabinet for unilateral British assistance to the Thais, who he considered to be resisting Japanese pressure, but the Cabinet merely instructed him to consult the United States once more. In the Cabinet Defence Committee, chaired in Churchill's absence by the Deputy Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, a parallel debate was in progress, due to pressure from an alarmed Australian Government, to declare the violation of Thai sovereignty by Japan a matter of *casus belli*. This was rejected as quite unacceptable to the United States and awkward for Britain if Japan only occupied northern Siam. Preference was expressed for a warning to Japan indicating that action against Thailand would lead to strong retaliatory measures that might end in war but they were divided as to whether Britain could afford to warn Japan alone without the United States. Therefore, on 8 August Attlee sent a telegram to Churchill, who was meeting Roosevelt on the ill-fated HMS *Prince of Wales* at Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, suggesting that he approach Roosevelt on the question of Thailand.[68]

Off Newfoundland the following day, Cadogan, the Foreign Office Permanent Under-Secretary, raised the issue of Thailand with Welles and Roosevelt. Welles argued that although American economic sanctions had made it generally clear to Japan that any attempt to dominate the Pacific would make war inevitable, the United States wished to delay the 'showdown' as long as possible. However, Roosevelt was more cautious and 'did not wish Britain to make even an occupation of Thailand a casus belli'.[69] Churchill continued to take an increased interest in Thailand during August, pressing Eden for more information. Australia in particular had pressed Churchill hard to obtain from Roosevelt a concrete guarantee of American intervention in the event of an attack on the Netherlands East Indies. Given that this was not forthcoming, London gave the Dominions a surprisingly optimistic summary of the Atlantic meeting, asserting that while Roosevelt would only give Japan a warning 'there was no doubt that in practice we could count on United States support if as the result of Japanese aggression we became involved in a war with Japan'. But privately, London was less hopeful, noting with dismay that Hull succeeded in watering down to insignificance Roosevelt's promised warning to Japan. Therefore between the Placentia Bay meeting and early November, the wider issue of Roosevelt's inability to commit himself to the armed support of Britain in Asia dominated the strategic matrix within which the Thai question was fixed.[70]

Eden's long-awaited reaction to Phibul's original question

appears to have been influenced, less by the inconclusive debates in Cabinet Defence Committee and the mid-Atlantic discussions, and more by a perceptive paper on the Thai question sent to him by the Australian High Commissioner in London, S. M. Bruce on 9 August. This reflected the concern of the Australian Government at the danger of sanctions against Japan before a specific American guarantee had been offered. It outlined the four options available in the absence of American support: to do nothing; to warn Japan without the security of an American guarantee but in the sure knowledge that United States would come in; to issue no warning but to pre-emptively occupy southern Thailand once a Japanese advance had begun; or to occupy southern Thailand immediately making war inevitable without United States support. Bruce argued persuasively for the second option and Eden replied, 'I am in full agreement with what you write.' Therefore Eden decided against pre-emptive action against Thailand and instead delivered a stiff warning to Japan about Thailand in the House of Commons.[71]

In Bangkok, Crosby was correct in his conviction that 'Thailand would not come down off the fence until she has spotted the winner'. The entry of the Soviet Union into the war on 22 June 1941 had not made this exercise in fine judgement any easier for the Thais. Phibul therefore stepped up his frantic exercise in hedging between Britain and Japan. This manifested itself in three ways. Firstly, on 10 August Phibul thanked Eden for his tough warning to Japan in the House of Commons and requested a number of British anti-Japanese broadcasts from Penang, Rangoon, and Manila, in the Thai language.[72] In giving his instructions for the contents of these broadcasts, Phibul revealed his increasing disillusionment with the Japanese behaviour over the 'lost territories' in Indo-China. Phibul wished 'in particular to bring out the duplicity of the Japanese in themselves occupying . . . territories in Indochina which they had previously denied to Thailand on the grounds that such territories must in justice be kept by France'.[73] Secondly, Phibul dispatched a military mission led by Thawee Chullasap to Singapore to attempt to open military discussions with Air Vice-Marshal Brooke-Popham, the British C-in-C Far East concerning the joint defence of Thailand. However, Brooke-Popham offered them cold comfort, merely emphasizing that 'so long as Britain held the Singapore, Thailand could rely upon regaining her independence ultimately'. Brooke-Popham reported that the Thais were 'disappointed'.

Finally, during a bizarre episode in late August, Phibul appointed three pro-Japanese deputy Foreign Ministers.[74] Then shortly after, seemingly at Crosby's suggestion he named the openly pro-British Direk as full Foreign Secretary.

Yet these events in Bangkok were of decreasing significance. In Washington, diplomats were preoccupied with direct but ultimately fruitless American–Japanese negotiations. Meanwhile in London there was an increasing feeling that Western diplomacy with Japan was now the preserve of the Americans. British diplomats, observing these discussions from afar, now encountered a hiatus. Eden explained to Churchill that everyone was awaiting the result of fighting between Germany and the Soviet Union and as a result 'the Japs are hesitating'; in any case, he added, 'while the American conversations continue I do not think there is any further action we can take'. This was true of diplomacy, but as will be seen, Britain's military and secret service chiefs were accelerating their activities.[75]

In London, unknown to Crosby, robust alternatives were being prepared amongst the various Whitehall departments against a possible Japanese occupation of Thailand or a Thai–Japanese alliance. These took two forms: firstly, covert infiltration into Thailand by the British clandestine sabotage organization, the Special Operations Executive (SOE); secondly the plans that Britain had been developing since at least 1940, and discussed by Eden and Bruce in August, for a pre-emptive military operation code-named Matador. This was designed to occupy and hold southern Thailand early, in the face of a Japanese southward advance. SOE in Asia had been expanded under the cover of the Political Warfare Executive at Singapore in 1941 and was directed by Valentine St Killery. SOE operations in Thailand were spurred by Phibul's response to Crosby's complaint that Japanese undercover operations had reached massive proportions. Phibul replied that he was powerless to prevent this and therefore he would have no objection to similar visits by British officers in plain clothes. Subsequently, southern Thailand was flooded with obvious military figures attempting to masquerade as tourists. An element of farce was added when parties of British and Japanese agents found themselves staying in the same hotels.[76]

SOE infiltration into Thailand was first approved at ministerial level at a meeting chaired by R. A. Butler in the Foreign Office on 8 May 1941. Victor Cavendish-Bentinck, Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), was present and expressed the view

that he did not want SOE to attempt 'anything too grandiose' in the Far East, but that what was attempted should be targeted at Thailand. He outlined three possible activities: political infiltration to offer support to the Thais against a Japanese *coup d'etat*; military infiltration to provide a fifth column to support a British invasion; and finally sabotage duties. Sterndale Bennett agreed with SOE that all this should be co-ordinated on the spot between SOE, Crosby, and Brooke-Popham at Singapore. Prior to the meeting, SOE had decided to press for local co-ordination 'to stop the Foreign Office getting too windy' when they finally came to conduct covert operations.[77]

Killery's SOE organization at Singapore undertook preparations for all the above-mentioned activities before December 1941. The official history of SOE in the Far East has suggested that Killery's objectives in Thailand were military and that his main obstacle was lack of co-operation on the part of Brooke-Popham. In fact Killery's largest objectives were quasi-political and his main obstacle was Sir Josiah Crosby.[78] Killery came closest to launching major operations in Thailand during early August 1941 when rumours of a possible Japanese *coup d'etat* prompted SOE to prepare a counter-coup. Killery travelled to Bangkok to discuss with Crosby the possibility 'of assisting establishment of a government other than the present one and more willing to resist Japanese pressure'. Crosby was reluctant to contemplate disturbing the delicate diplomatic and military balance of South-East Asia with amateur saboteurs and only considered a *coup d'etat* possible if the pro-British elements in Thailand were also offered military guarantees against Japan.[79] Crosby knew that he had imposed impossible conditions upon SOE. Ludicrously however, Killery remained convinced that he could carry out a full-scale *coup d'etat* in Thailand without provoking a Japanese invasion and so attempted to obtain sanction for his schemes via SOE Headquarters in London. Gladwyn Jebb, a senior SOE official in London, subsequently contacted Cadogan to request the names of those Thai leaders most disposed to resist the Japanese.[80] The Far Eastern Department were thus informed of Killery's intentions. They rejected SOE's initiative as ridiculous and were puzzled that guidance had not been obtained from Crosby on the spot. If Killery had been hoping to circumvent Crosby he had failed, for the Foreign Office replied that 'the idea of a *coup d'etat* is off and is unlikely to be revived'.[81]

Subsequently Crosby wrote to the Foreign Office complaining that SOE failed to grasp the delicacy of political conditions in

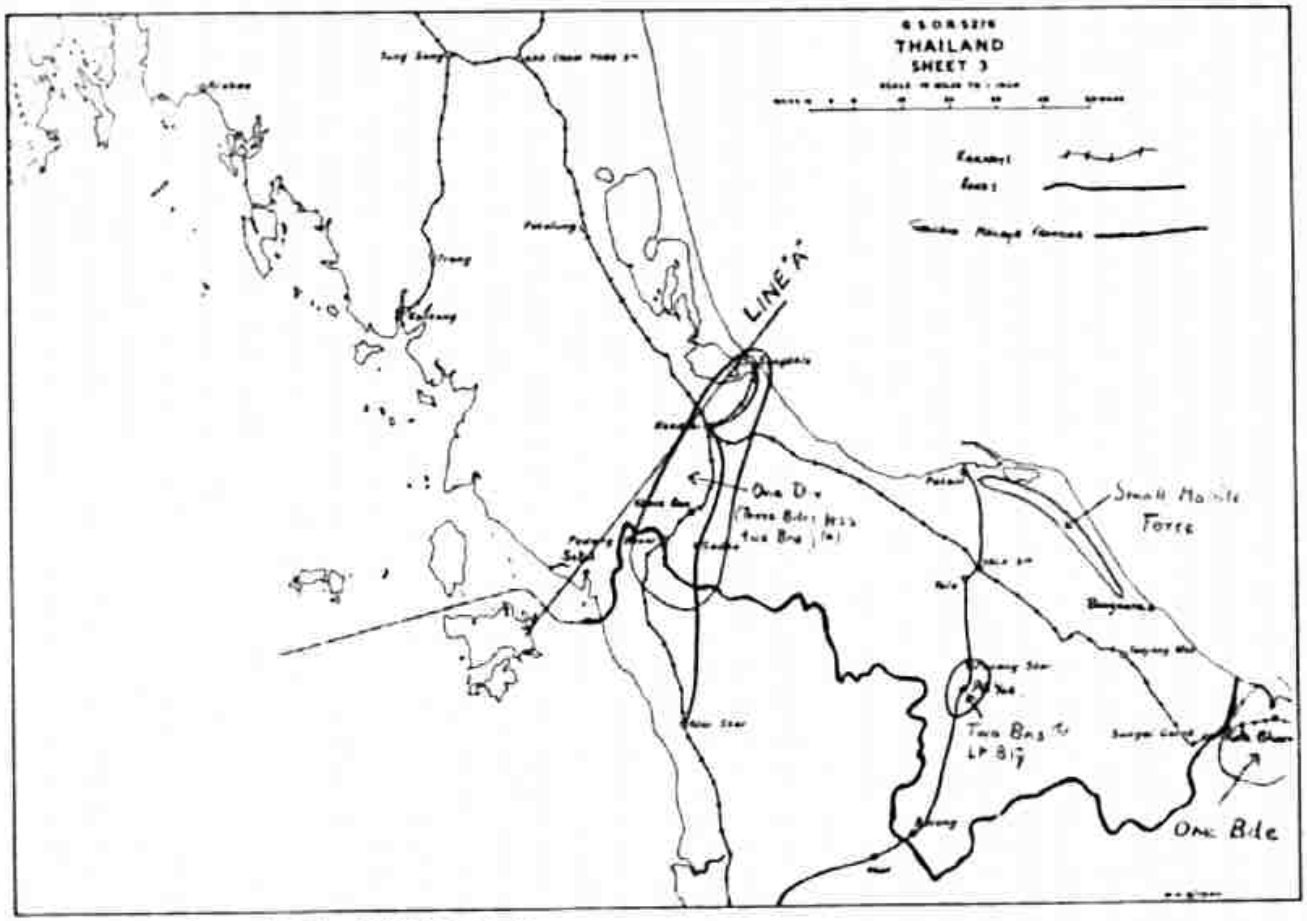
South-East Asia and that he was worried by the 'reckless and irresponsible amateurs serving under Killery'. Animosity erupted again in October when Crosby accused SOE of distributing covert and offensive propaganda in Bangkok.[82] In London Anthony Eden was apoplectic and sprung once more to Crosby's defence: 'I have had more than enough of this sort of thing. . . . I must know about this organisation that makes our ambassador's life a misery and vitiates my policy, and they must come under direct Foreign Office control. The present situation is intolerable.'[83] SOE were equally unhappy with Crosby. Colonel Gordon Grimsdale, Director of Military Intelligence at Brooke-Popham's Singapore intelligence centre, the Far Eastern Combined Bureau, later complained that 'about a week before the war Brokham [Brooke-Popham] sent me to Bangkok to try and persuade that dreadful old man Crosby to try and do something to help win the war by allowing Killery to start work in Siam. It was quite hopeless.'[84]

The second British alternative to a guarantee of military support to the Thais was 'Operation Etonian', later called 'Operation Matador', a contingency plan against Thailand developed in 1940 (Map 7.2). Matador was a pre-emptive operation designed to occupy southern Thailand at one of three possible lines on the Kra Isthmus, thus denying essential airbases and communications to the Japanese as well as providing Malaya with a defensible frontier. The most probable line of occupation was at Songkhla, some 150 miles north of Malaya. For the Chiefs of Staff and especially the Admiralty, who were extremely reluctant to offer Thailand a guarantee without full American military support, Matador offered an affordable means of halting a Japanese advance. Yet the wider problems of British debility in the Far East could not be circumvented so easily, for as the Chiefs of Staff recognized, if Matador provoked a Japanese attack before Britain had obtained a guarantee of American support, it would defeat its own objective. This problem was debated throughout 1941.[85]

During July and early August 1941, when Eden was pressing for some form of British guarantee for Thailand, the Chiefs of Staff were actively considering the implementation of Matador. This was against the background of a JIC paper entitled 'Japan's Next Move', discussing the repercussions of Japan's advance into southern Indo-China. This concluded that

Japan's next move will be against Thailand, with the main objective of establishing herself in the Kra Isthmus. In order to take advantage of the

MAP 7.2
British Planning for Operation Etonian/Matador, 1940–1941




*Source*: Public Record Office, WO 106/2529.

present favourable opportunity, Japan is likely to move into Thailand in the near future: such a move would be swift and sudden, and we shall receive only very short notice.

On 8 August the Chiefs of Staff resolved to take Matador to the Cabinet Defence Committee who debated the operation at length but inconclusively. Oliver Harvey, Eden's Private Secretary, recorded in his diary the same day that this was an especially awkward issue and advised Eden to discuss it with Churchill on his return from meeting Roosevelt at Placentia Bay.[86]

Matador had strong support from other quarters, including the Colonial Office. The Colonial Office had never shared Crosby's relaxed attitude towards Thai irredentist claims on British and French territories and had recently gone to the trouble of preparing a secret monograph not only refuting Thai claims to the Northern Malay States, but also implicitly advancing Malaya's claims to southern Thailand. The Colonial Office was quick to designate E.V.G. Day, of the Malayan Civil Service and the Resident at Perlis, as the British 'administrator' for southern Thailand in case Operation Matador was launched.[87] Brooke-Popham was more sceptical about the value of Matador but decided that Crosby should not be informed so that afterwards Crosby could 'state with perfect sincerity that he was ignorant of the plans'. Thereafter, Brooke-Popham, in plain clothes, briefly joined the clandestine parties conducting reconnaissance in southern Thailand. The debate in London over Matador continued sporadically into the autumn. However, the central problem with Matador was the reaction of American public opinion to what might appear as British aggrandizement. Britain had already witnessed hostile American reactions to similar Thai adventures in Indo-China during late 1940. Therefore, on 24 November 1941 the Chiefs of Staff decided to forbid Brooke-Popham to carry out Matador without instructions from London.[88]

## *Churchill, Roosevelt, and the Outbreak of War*

Only Japan followed an unambigious policy towards Thailand during the latter part of 1941. In September and October Japan upgraded her legation in Bangkok to an embassy, at the same time appointing to the post of Counsellor, Saito Ototsugi, the Director of the Bureau of the South Seas at the Japanese Foreign Office, who was closely associated with the southward expansion

lobby within Japan. Subsequent overt pressure for a military alliance was combined with covert preparations in Thailand by Japanese officers in plain clothes for an advance on Singapore. The British Far Eastern Security Service concluded that Japan's entire espionage network in South-East Asia was controlled from Bangkok. In September the arrest of several Japanese for hoarding arms in Bangkok made headlines in the Thai press and the Thai Minister of Defence confessed to Crosby that he now assessed the chances of an imminent Japanese invasion as 'fifty–fifty'.[89] As in their advance into French Indo-China, Japan was expected to make use of German expertise in fifth column activities in their move through Thailand to Singapore. During the latter half of 1941 the innocuous German Ambassador, Dr Wilhelm Thomas, was replaced by the notorious Ernst Wendler. Wendler had recently been ejected from his post in Bolivia for attempting a Nazi inspired military *coup d'etat* against the government and Crosby attempted, unsuccessfully, to persuade the Thais to refuse the German appointment on the grounds of his past record.[90]

On a wider stage, in mid-October the collapse of Prince Konoye's relatively moderate government in Tokyo was greeted with dismay by Eden. He reflected that Russian defeats on the Eastern Front at the hands of Germany 'must mentally be having their effect on the Japanese appetite'. But he confessed to Churchill that as yet he remained unsure as to whether Japan would join Germany against Russia, or move south towards Singapore. Churchill disagreed, asserting that long-term Japanese intentions could now be detected from the movement of 'strong reinforcements towards Siam'.[91] Curiously, neither remarked upon the growing pressure upon Japan to move south in order to secure an improved oil supply.

The Thais received some comfort from the arrival of the new American Minister, Willys R. Peck, in September 1941. Peck moved quickly to support Britain's contention that the 'dominant feeling toward Japan among officials and the people is still one of distrust and fear' and that the Thai Cabinet now regretted their irredentist adventure in Indo-China. Peck informed the State Department that the Thai Government was now officially espousing neutrality and the defence of Thailand against aggression from any quarter. Peck therefore reversed past American hostility and agreed with Crosby's contention that Thai neutrality was still a potential impediment to Japan that might be reinforced with a supply of credit, goods, and weapons rather than concrete military

guarantees. As a result some American aviation fuel was supplied to Thailand during October. The following month he arranged for almost US$1 million dollars to be paid to Thailand in compensation for the undelivered aircraft purchased by Thailand in 1940. But Peck's actions, however gratifying, were of little consequence for the focus of policy-making remained London and Washington.[92]

As Japanese ambitions became more transparent, relations between the Thais and the Japanese deteriorated. Crosby reported that even some of the most pro-Japanese members of the Thai Cabinet had taken the extraordinary step of visiting him and were 'very oily and conciliatory'. By mid-October the Thais claimed to be preparing for an imminent Japanese invasion and in this respect Phibul now sent Crosby a highly secret message. Warning that he would disavow his initiative if it was leaked, Phibul firstly requested British arms and a military adviser, secondly and more importantly, he requested British advice as to what he should do in the event of a Japanese attack. These requests were not merely for strategic guidance but represented firstly, an attempt to balance his concessions to Japan, and secondly, an attempt to involve Britain in responsibility for Thailand's decision either to resist, surrender, or co-operate, in the face of a Japanese advance through Thailand to Singapore.[93] The importance of this message was clearly understood in London. Halifax was ordered to place Phibul's message before Hull, but the latter dismissed it as 'manifest undue alarm'. This reflected the balance of opinion within the State Department where Hornbeck now advocated extending a military guarantee to Thailand, but was blocked by Hamilton, Head of the Far Eastern Division.[94]

Therefore, in October, the question of British support for Thailand continued to revolve around what could be done without an American guarantee to support Britain in any resulting conflict with Japan. The answer was clearly very little. Nevertheless the question was put, once more, to the Chiefs of Staff. They replied that while Britain still lacked the wherewithal to guarantee all of Thailand against Japan, an offer of assistance in the defence of the Kra Isthmus only might be made. Some, like Cadogan, were pleased that Crosby now did not have to return to Phibul empty-handed, but the transparency of British strategic interest in this 'offer of assistance' was fully appreciated by Eden who decided to suspend it until it could be combined with the news of the arrival of two British capital ships recently dispatched to Singapore. The

British might have derived some comfort from the fact that in Tokyo, Phibul was considered to be an equally ticklish customer. At an Imperial Conference on 5 November, Hara, the President of the Privy Council, expressed his anxiety to avoid appearing to coerce Thailand during any future advance. Tojo agreed but was extremely loathe to reveal Japanese intentions to Phibul until the last moment, because of Phibul's unpredictability. The Emperor's worries about the propriety of Japanese behaviour towards Thailand added another complicating factor. Phibul kept the Japanese guessing and therefore Japan decided to press hard for closer military relations only 'just prior to the use of force'. At a further conference on 12 November Japan decided to offer Thailand sections of Burma and Malaya to compensate her for the unpleasantness she was about to suffer.[95]

In Washington as well as Tokyo, early November constituted a critical turning-point in thinking on South-East Asia. This was partly because the United States was breaking some, but not all, Japanese communications through signals intelligence. As early as the last week of October the mood in Washington had begun to change, with Harry Hopkins, one of Roosevelt's closest advisers, declaring himself 'all for' getting into war. Others moved towards the same conclusion as they noted the pessimistic tone of Japanese messages back to Tokyo during the Hull–Nomura conversations of November. One particularly ominous Japanese communication read:

> Well relations between Japan and the United States have reached the edge . . . this is our last effort. . . . It is to be hoped earnestly that looking forward to what may come at the end—at the last day of Japanese–American negotiations—the Government of America will think ever so soberly how much better it would be to make peace with us.

Hull now concluded that it was inconsistent to support the British Empire against Germany but not in Asia, adding that it was 'obvious that war could not break out between Japan and one of the major English-speaking nations without the other becoming involved'. A sea change in attitude was also detectable amongst the American military. In October the United States Navy was still resisting the idea of commitments in South-East Asia, but by early November the key figures of General Marshall and Admiral Stark were convinced of the value of fighting for Singapore and Malaya. Stimson, the Secretary for War, captured this crystallizing consensus, noting that it looked as if they were 'getting into war

pretty fast and everybody is pretty sound about it'. However, Britain did not detect this until the last days of November and continued to prepare to fight alone.[96]

The increasing pace was also detected in Bangkok and so during November fierce arguments broke out in the Thai Cabinet. Crosby, who was himself severely exercised by strain, considered that Phibul was 'becoming hysterical over the Japanese question' and viewed his condition with 'alarm'. On 10 November Crosby reported that according to most secret sources, Phibul had been presented with a final Japanese ultimatum for military co-operation.[97] Crosby attempted to counter this with Eden's transparent offer to assist in the defence of the Kra Isthmus which Phibul received, 'badly and with suspicion', just as Eden had predicted. A 'bitterly disappointed' Phibul ended an interview with Crosby on 10 November by making a frank statement that in the light of the British position 'he would do all in his power to avoid war with Japan and would only fight her if he must'. This remark was in stark contradiction to his publicy declared policy of resisting any incursion into Thailand 'to the last drop of blood'. 'This', Crosby observed, 'is ominous.' The Thai Prime Minister was now wracked by indecision, but nevertheless he had forced Britain to reveal precisely the extent to which she would commit herself to the defence of Thailand, even to the extent of offering Phibul what was effectively an Anglo-Thai version of Britain's contingency plan, Operation Matador. Crosby concluded morosely,

> from now onwards we shall have to sing pretty low in this country. . . . I do not see much room for successful diplomacy, and I trust that His Majesty's Government will not look to me for results that I am powerless to furnish . . . our position can be maintained by nothing short of a secret military agreement. . . . Since we are not prepared to go so far as that, we must resign ourselves to the rapid growth of Japanese influence here.[98]

In London, Whitehall's military and economic departments were not in the mood for laments. Even Foreign Office officials admitted that they were 'ashamed' of Crosby's latest message. The Directorate of Military Intelligence went further and pressed for Crosby's dismissal. They stated, 'To call his report defeatist would be to use a mild expression. It is the outpouring of a mind distressed and obsessed to the point of capitulation.' But Eden continued to back Crosby against the military, and even against his critics in the Far Eastern Department. Recognizing that Crosby was under extreme pressure, he wrote at once to Churchill asking

permission to give Crosby sensitive information about developments in London and Washington. Both Crosby, and also Craigie in Tokyo, he continued, should have this 'because it will give them confidence and encouragement in dealing with the Japanese' especially if the Hull–Nomura conversations break down.[99] By 26 November these conversations had indeed reached an impasse.

Yet in Thailand the standing British advice to Phibul, to resist a Japanese advance to the last, appeared patently ridiculous both to Crosby and to his American colleague, Peck. Consequently, Phibul was preaching to the converted when he regaled Crosby with the unfortunate precedents of Greece and Norway as small British allies lost in the struggle against Germany. Phibul insisted that the United States and Britain were responsible for Thailand's present plight because they had not initially stood up to Japan in Manchuria during the 1930s. In his subsequent telegram of 1 December Crosby remonstrated with the Foreign Office over the

> illogical nature of our attitude towards Thailand. We have welcomed assurance from Thai Government that they will resist Japanese aggression and we have all along encouraged them to do so. This being so I find it embarrassing to have to say to them: 'we cannot give you aircraft because any we could spare would not be enough to enable you to avert the defeat which inevitably awaits you'. If that is our position, if we believe (as we do) that the Thai opposition to Japan will soon be overcome, would it not be franker for us to advise Thailand to put up no physical resistance at all, and in the interests of her population, to play the role of Denmark. . . ?[100]

Peck sent a similar but less emotional message to Washington on 3 December, arguing that they should tell the Thais honestly of the level of support they could expect against Japan, to allow them to 'plan intelligently' and to decide whether to resist to the last in the hope of an Anglo-American victory.[101] Phibul and Direk made repeated appeals to London and Washington for a guarantee of support in the first week of December.[102]

The British Chiefs of Staff now asked their Joint Planning Staff to review the question of assistance to Thailand. But the Joint Planners again opposed any support to Thailand without an American guarantee and even recommended that Britain withdraw her offer of Anglo-Thai co-operation on the Kra Isthmus in favour of conducting Operation Matador against Thailand.[103] Australia was also demanding that Thailand should be compelled to state what she would do in event of war.[104] However, even the

Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Office still could not agree whether an American guarantee of support was essential before carrying out Operation Matador. Finally, Eden and Churchill discussed Matador on the evening of 29 November and instructed Halifax to seek guidance from Roosevelt.[105] Two days later Churchill revealed the fundamental nature of his reservations about Operation Matador to the Australian High Commissioner: '... to anticipate the Japanese on the [Kra] Peninsula, if the Japanese had not attacked Thailand elsewhere, would give a handle to the isolationists in the United States to maintain that we were the aggressors thus weakening our claim to support if the Japanese attack Thailand.' The Chiefs of Staff agreed that the Japanese seizure of the Kra Isthmus 'would be serious but not too serious' in comparison to the possible political damage in the United States.[106] Therefore Matador would not be authorized until Japan had violated Thai territory.

Yet in Washington events were now unfolding on a far wider stage. Since early November there had been growing confidence in Roosevelt's Cabinet that the country would now support them if they entered the war. This attitude was now advertised outside Roosevelt's immediate circle with increasing freedom. Roosevelt agreed with Halifax and Hopkins that the time had come for contingency planning, explaining that his mind was particularly exercised by the recent arrival of Japanese reinforcements in Indo-China, adding wryly that 'they were not going there for the benefit of their health'. On 24 November he told Churchill that 'we must all be prepared for real trouble, possibly soon'. Two days later he warned Sayre in the Philippines to expect an impending attack in South-East Asia adding, 'Advance against Thailand is most probable.'

Thailand and the Kra Isthmus occupied a central place in Roosevelt's thinking in the week preceding war. On 28 November firm intelligence was received that a Japanese expeditionary force was leaving Shanghai and heading south. Stimson records in his diary that he took this to the White House in the early hours of the morning and found that the President had already been woken by Donovan, his intelligence co-ordinator. Roosevelt 'branched out into an analysis of the situation as he sat on the bed'. At noon Roosevelt met with his 'War Cabinet', including Stimson, Knox, Hull, and the military chiefs, Stark and Marshall. Roosevelt read 'aloud' the latest intelligence report which suggested five possible Japanese objectives: reinforcing Indo-China or attacking the

Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, or the Netherlands East Indies. Roosevelt then added that, in his opinion, 'there was one more' likely objective: 'It might, by attacking the Kra Isthmus, develop into an attack on Rangoon, which lies only a short distance beyond the Kra Isthmus and the taking of which by the Japanese would effectually [*sic*] stop the Burma Road at its beginning.' Stimson considered this 'a very good suggestion'. Roosevelt's emphasis upon southern Thailand was accepted by the entire Cabinet whose attitude was now decided: 'It was now the opinion of everyone' that a Japanese landing in southern Thailand or Malaya would be 'a terrific blow' to Britain, the Netherlands, and the United States and it 'was the consensus of everybody that this must not be allowed'. Therefore, 'it was agreed that if the Japanese got into the Isthmus of Kra, the British would fight. It was also agreed that if the British fought, we would have to fight.'[107]

The State Department still remained far more cautious, for when Halifax again pressed Hull for a declaration that violation of Thai sovereignty would amount to *casus belli*, this was rejected.[108] Halifax had very much better luck at a lunch with Roosevelt on the same day. The President then indicated, in a relaxed and casual manner, that if Japan attacked Britain, the United States would be involved in war with Japan within a few days. They went on to discuss 'Operation Matador' and Roosevelt, while voicing reservations, added unambiguously that 'we must clearly do what strategical necessity dictated anyhow'. Roosevelt then suggested that Britain should

> give Thailand undertaking that if they resisted Japanese attack or infiltration we would respect and guarantee for the future their full sovereignty and independence. For constitutional reasons the US could not guarantee, but such an undertaking on our part would be wholeheartedly supported by the United States.[109]

On 3 December when Roosevelt's general guarantee to Britain against Japan was carefully discussed in the Cabinet Defence Committee, there was near disbelief and Halifax was asked to confirm it. The Cabinet was less happy with Roosevelt's proposed British undertaking to Thailand and it was agreed that, in Eden's words, Roosevelt was asking too much of the Thais 'to adopt the heroic course of partial extinction in order to ensure their ultimate independence'. Roosevelt's offer to Thailand was merely the same posthumous award for gallantry that the British had been offering Thailand to little effect for the last six months. Instead, the

Cabinet desired a public Anglo-American warning to Japan that the violation of Thailand would be considered a *casus belli*.[110] Yet in London the sense of urgency was still not great. Churchill believed the Thai issue to be a waste of time and pointed out to Eden on 2 December that 'an attack on the Kra Isthmus would not be helpful to Japan for several months'.[111]

On 3 December Roosevelt had further discussions with Halifax about a general joint warning to Japan. Roosevelt also gave his unequivocal support to Operation Matador, remarking, 'I have no doubt in this case you can count on the armed support of United States.' However, it appears that Roosevelt still did not fully understand that under Matador, Britain might invade Thai territory before Japan.[112] On 4 December the Cabinet met and delegated to Brooke-Popham the authority to launch Matador if Malaya was threatened. More importantly, they decided that Britain should now offer a full military guarantee to Thailand. American support for this guarantee was now sought and Halifax was required to seek permission from Roosevelt for a formal Anglo-American assurance to Phibul 'that in the event of attack by Japan we will both help them to the best of our ability'. Halifax was also to make clear that Matador was a pre-emptive operation.[113]

A maddening series of events then took place. Roosevelt approved an assurance of support to Phibul on 5 December, but hours later Welles telephoned the British Embassy to say that Roosevelt had asked for this to be delayed while the President considered the text of a message he intended to send to the Japanese Emperor. Halifax now took matters into his own hands and informed London that Roosevelt's request for a delay was 'most annoying. Nevertheless in view of the urgency of situation revealed in Bangkok . . . I do not think you need hesitate about giving assurance to Thailand . . . since United States' attitude to a Japanese invasion of Thailand is, in my opinion, now sufficiently clear.'[114] On the same day, Friday 5 December, Phibul told Crosby that Japan had been due to attack on 3 December, but that the attack had been postponed for a few days. Phibul repeated his appeal for a declaration of support for Thailand. London replied that a draft guarantee of Anglo-American intervention was in preparation, but was delayed in Washington.[115]

At 8.45 p.m. on Saturday, 6 December, Halifax was instructed to inform Roosevelt that Churchill, now confident of American support for Britain against Japan intended to send the following undertaking to Phibul: 'There is a possibility of an imminent

Japanese invasion of your country. If you are attacked, defend yourself. We shall come to your aid with the utmost of our power, and will safe-guard the independence of your country.'[116] It has been argued that Roosevelt wished to go even further in extending a guarantee to Thailand. In fact the reverse was true.[117] Recognizing that Thai resistance was primarily in British interests, Roosevelt questioned the amount of immediate aid that could practically be supplied to Thailand, and therefore baulked at Churchill's overgenerous and potentially misleading promise. Roosevelt was not prepared to support Churchill's wording and instead told Halifax that he was himself about to offer Phibul his previous formula merely asserting 'that, whatever might happen during the war, the United States and Great Britain would aim at the complete restoration of Thai sovereignty, unless the Thais aided the Japanese'. Richard Casey, the Australian Minister in Washington, attributed Roosevelt's hesitation over a guarantee to Thailand to pressure from the State Department regarding the constitutional difficulty of an American President giving such an undertaking.[118]

In any case, the most dramatic events now overtook Roosevelt's own more cautious formulation. On the same day, Saturday, 6 December, Cadogan telephoned Eden to convey an intelligence report of a Japanese 'armada' moving around Cambodia point into the Gulf of Siam. An official on the Japanese desk at Britain's code-breaking centre, Bletchley Park, noted in his diary that Churchill was telephoning them all the time for news of its final objective. Cadogan also noted that 'PM has approved a message to the Thai Prime Minister'.[119] But this message had to be delayed to take account of the prevarication of Roosevelt. Halifax had only been able to inform Churchill of Roosevelt's objections to an unconditional guarantee for Thailand on the Saturday evening. Thus it was noon on Sunday 7 December when Churchill wrote to Eden and the Chiefs of Staff giving final instructions for a less generous message to Phibul, now tailored to accommodate Roosevelt. Churchill wrote, 'Halifax telegrams . . . are very satisfactory. My draft to the Siamese PM . . . should be amended as suggested by the President. . . . Pray redraft and scramble to me before sending.'

Sunday lunchtime in London corresponded to the early hours of the morning in Hawaii and even as Churchill sent this message, Japanese dive bombers were already in the air *en route* to Pearl

Harbor. The carefully redrafted message from Churchill to Phibul was ambiguous and assured him that 'we shall regard an attack on Thailand as an attack upon ourselves', but offered no immediate defence assistance.[120] This was sent on the afternoon of 7 December, arriving in Bangkok in the night of the 7–8 December and therefore too late by a matter of hours.[121] For on the morning of 8 December a tearful Direk explained to Crosby that the Japanese Minister had delivered an ultimatum just before eleven o'clock the previous evening, allowing the Thais only two hours to reply. In the absence of the Prime Minister, Direk had refused to give an immediate reply and the Japanese had attacked. Phibul had returned to Bangkok on the morning of Monday, 8 December, to order an end to the spontaneous and sporadic resistance offered by the Thai armed forces. Only then was he greeted by Churchill's tardy but carefully worded missive.[122]

The significance of these events, influencing as they did Thailand's status with the Allies for years to come, is redoubled when we consider carefully how they have been misrepresented. Both Churchill at the time and subsequently, Sir Lwellyn Woodward, the official historian of British foreign policy, offered most misleading accounts of this message. On Monday, 8 December 1941, with the events still fresh in his mind, Churchill told the House of Commons: 'Just before Japan had gone to war, I had sent the Siamese Prime Minister the following message. It was sent off on Sunday, early in the morning.' But this was not the case. At lunchtime, Churchill was calling for a redraft which was sent on Sunday afternoon. Meanwhile, Woodward ironically entitles the relevant section of his official history 'Anglo-American support for Thailand'. Here he states, quite erroneously, that Churchill's message was sent on the night of 6–7 December and that the Japanese ultimatum, delivered on the evening of 7 December, was 'the sequel to this message'. This remarkable reversal of chronology contrives to suggest that Bangkok capitulated to Japan despite a prior offer of Anglo-American support. Regrettably, accounts written more recently have continued to follow this erroneous official line.[123]

Meanwhile, what of events in Bangkok? The Japanese ultimatum of the night of 7 December had offered Thailand a variety of options. These included a range of offensive and defensive alliances in return for which Thailand might receive further Thai lost territories in Indo-China, Malaya, and Burma. They also included

variations whereby Thailand would allow the passage of Japanese troops to Malaya in return for a guarantee of Thailand's independence only. On 8 December an agreement was signed whereby the Thais undertook not to hinder Japanese troop movements and by which Thai independence was assured.[124]

Churchill's guarantee to Thailand, supported by the United States, had not only failed but also backfired. Crosby subsequently reported that Churchill's words exhorting the Thai Prime Minister 'to be of good heart' had been delivered to an 'exasperated' Phibul on the morning of 8 December while the Thai Cabinet was actually in session debating the various options put to them by the Japanese the previous evening. Its curious timing served only to convince sections of the Thai Cabinet that Britain had sought to trick Thailand into sacrificing herself in the defence of Singapore. Phibul 'went so far in his resentment as to see in them—or to profess to see in them—a trap to induce Siam to engage the common enemy single-handed'.

After the Japanese advance of 1940 into French Indo-China, Ashley Clarke of the Far Eastern Department had commented that the French were convinced that Britain was determined to defend South-East Asia to the last Frenchman. Anglo-American policy during late 1941 had convinced Thailand that Britain now intended to defend South-East Asia to the last Thai. This was expressed in a Thai Government communiqué issued a few months later:

> Before December 8th last the British Prime Minister sent a message to the Siamese Premier asking Siam to put up a defence against the Japanese, thinking that the Siamese would be stupid enough to follow the lead of the poor Australians and Indians. Winston Churchill was keenly disappointed when the Siamese refused to walk into such a trap—to be killed in order that Britain should survive. It was indeed well that the Siamese as a race had refused to walk in the wake of the poor colonial people and so avoided the fate of being slaves to their white masters.[125]

1. Gilchrist (SOE) to Brain, Very Secret and Personal, 27 March 1945, F2145/738/40, FO 371/46560, PRO.

2. On British wartime policy towards Thailand from the Foreign Office perspective, see N. Tarling, 'Atonement before Absolution: British Policy towards Thailand during World War II', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 66, 1 (1978): 22–65, and 'Rice and Reconciliation: The Anglo-Thai Peace Negotiations of 1945', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 66, 2 (1978): 59–112.

3. For general accounts, see P. Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977; D. Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937–1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation*, London: Europa, 1981.

4. On Thai foreign policy during this period, see Charivat Santaputra, *Thai Foreign Policy, 1932–1946*, Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1987, pp. 266–84; N. Brailey, *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore: A Frustrated Asian Revolution*, Boulder: Westview, 1986, pp. 84–103; J. Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, London: Hurst, 1991, pp. 179–258.

5. Reynolds, *Anglo-American Alliance*, pp. 222–3; D. Nutter, 'US Policy towards Japan, 1941', Ph.D. thesis, University of Columbia, 1976, pp. 120–41; Churchill to First Sea Lord, N192/1, 12 February 1941, PREM 3 489/4; Annex 1, 'Relative Importance of the Middle East and Far East Theatres', 31 January 1941, BUS (j) (41) 6, CAB 101/4, PRO.

6. Memorandum by Hull, 14 February 1941, *FRUS*, 1931–41, II, pp. 387–9; Washington to FO, 10 February 1941, F1042/000/61, FO 371/27887, PRO; Halifax to FO No. 974, 28 February 1941, F1478/000/61, FO 371/27888, PRO; Halifax to FO No. 984, 5 March 1941, F1627/000/61, FO 371/27888, PRO; *New York Times*, 2 March 1941.

7. R. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History*, New York: Harper & Bros., 1948, p. 430.

8. Brooke-Popham to Ismay, 3 February 1941, DO/Ismay/4, V/I/5, Brooke-Popham Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London; Peck to State Department No. 465, 4 October 1941, 792.94/156, RG 59, NARA. See also the account given by Crosby's assistant in A. Gilchrist, 'Diplomacy and Disaster: Thailand and the British Empire in 1941', *Asian Affairs XIII* (Old Series), 69, 3 (1982): 249.

9. Crosby to FO No. 2, 2 June 1941, F597/210/40, FO 371/28120, PRO.

10. Crosby to FO No. 38, 1 February 1941, F1208/210/40, FO 371/28120, PRO; Grew to SoS Nos. 40–1, 9 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 9–10. Several requests were made for American mediation; see Butler memorandum to SD, 22 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 28–30.

11. Crosby to FO No. 183, 17 July 1941, F7683/114/40, FO 371/28117, PRO.

12. Grant to Roosevelt, 3 December 1941, 740.0011 PW/1006, RG 59, NARA. See also Grant to SoS No. 169, 20 March 1941, 741.92/20, PW/1006, RG 59, NARA, and Grant to SoS No. 371, 28 July 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 236–7.

13. Doll to Dolbeare (Most Confidential), 19 November 1940, 892.00/217, RG 59, NARA.

14. Nagaoka Shijiro, 'The Drive into Southern Indochina and Thailand', in J. M. Morley (ed.), *The Fateful Choice: Japan's Advance into South-East Asia, 1939–1941*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, p. 234.

15. Crosby to FO No. 19, 8 January 1941, F83/9/61, FO 371/27759, PRO.

16. Crosby to FO No. 89, 10 February 1941, F710/210/40, FO 371/28120, PRO. This may have U On Pe, a secret police agent referred to in Crosby to Governor of Burma, 21 June 1939, 28/39/39, not foliated, WO 106/5591, PRO. During May 1941 Crosby reported that the Hsip Hsawg Pawna area of Burma was 'in a state of great excitement' as they believed they were about to be taken over by the Thais, Crosby to FO No. 127, 19 May 1941, F5007/2264/40, FO 371/28154, PRO. British Embassy to SD, 10 February 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 70–1.

17. Crosby to FO No. 42, 10 February 1941, F2021/210/40, FO 371/28120, PRO; E. B. Reynolds, 'Ambivalent Allies: Japan and Thailand, 1941–1945', Ph.D. thesis, University of Hawaii, 1988. Reynold's study constitutes the definitive account of Japanese policy and Thailand during the approach of war.

18. Ashley Clarke minute, 1 March 1941, F1174/246/40, FO 371/28131, PRO.

19. Ashley Clarke minute, 13 February 1941, FO 371/28120, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 86, 9 February 1941, F707/246/40, FO 371/28131, PRO.

20. Crosby to FO Nos. 199 and 200, 18 March 1941, F2121/210/40, FO 371/28121, PRO; Leahy to SoS No. 131, 30 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, p. 49; Leahy to SoS No. 158, 5 February 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 57–8; British Embassy to SD, 10 February 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 70–1. On dissatisfaction with Japanese mediation, see E. T. Flood, 'Japan's Relations with Thailand: 1928–1941', Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1967, pp. 568–70, 586–9.

21. FE (40) 10 'Thailand', memorandum by Treasury, 12 October 1940, CAB 96/1, PRO; FE (40) 32 'Economic Pressure on Thailand', note by secretariat, 31 October 1941, CAB 96/1, PRO. On the Cabinet Far Eastern Committee, see Lowe, *Pacific War*, pp. 292–4.

22. Crosby to FO No. 121, 21 February 1941, F1153/246/40, FO 371/28131, PRO; Direk Jayanama, *Siam and World War II*, Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1978, pp. 44–5.

23. Crosby to FO No. 213, 25 March 1941, F2426/1281/40, FO 371/28140, PRO. Andrew Gilchrist, who was running Crosby's propaganda bureau, recalled in September 1941 that six months previously a senior Thai Prince had remarked to him, 'Why try to bribe the newspapers when you can bribe the Prime Minister himself—with oil', Gilchrist memorandum enclosed in Crosby to Sterndale Bennett, 15 September 1941, not foliated, FO 837/995, PRO.

24. FO to Halifax Nos. 1692 and 1693, 28 March 1941, F2390/246/40, FO 371/28131, PRO; Grew to Washington No. 5463, 24 March 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 117–19; Laughlin Currie memorandum, 'The Importance of Singapore to the Defence of the British Isles, the British Empire and the United States', 23 April 1941, China File, Box 37, PSF, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

25. Memorandum of a conversation between Hull and Halifax, 8 April 1941, and aide memoires A and B, 8 April 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 120–4.

26. Sterndale Bennett minute, 8 April 1941, F1451/438/40, FO 371/28135, PRO.

27. Ashley Clarke minute, 20 April 1941, F2390/246/40, FO 371/28131, PRO.

28. Including fighter planes that had already been paid for, Direk, *Siam and World War II*, p. 42.

29. Grant to SoS, 21 May 1941, 711.92/18, RG 59, NARA; 'US Economic Pressure Hits Thailand', article by Nai Vilas Ostananda in *Bangkok Chronicle*, 15 May 1941.

30. Grant to SoS No. 286, 26 May 1941, 711.92/16, RG 59, NARA.

31. Halifax to FO No. 1685, 16 April 1941, F3075/885/40, FO 371/28138, PRO; FE (41) 13th mtg., 17 April 1941, CAB 96/3, PRO. See also memorandum of a conversation between Halifax and Hull, 18 April 1941, Folder 214, Container 58, Hull Papers (microfilm copy), Cambridge University Library.

32. FE (41) 59, 'Policy towards Thailand (Siam)', 22 April 1941, CAB 96/3, PRO; Halifax to Hull, 23 April 1941, Folder 144, Container 49, Hull Papers (microfilm copy), Cambridge University Library. Eden had arranged for this to be

'reinforced' by a conversation in London between R. A. Butler and the American Minister, Vinant to SoS No. 1578, 21 April 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 133–4.

33. Halifax minute, 22 April 1941, FO 115/3447, PRO; Halifax to FO No. 1769, 23 April 1941, FO 837/997, PRO; memorandum of a conversation between Halifax, Casey, and Hull, 22 April 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 136–7.

34. Butler minute, 30 April 1941 and Eden minute, 1 May 1941, F3509/246/40, FO 371/28132, PRO; FE (41) 15th mtg., 1 May 1941, CAB 96/3, PRO. Britain remained unsure of the extent of American support well into May, see Halifax to Hull, 6 May 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 142–3.

35. Crosby to FO No. 273, 1 May 1941, F3588/1281/40, FO 371/28140, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 287, 7 May 1941, F3854/1281/40, FO 371/28140, PRO.

36. Petroleum Department to Ashley Clarke, 9 May 1941, F3652/1281/40, FO 371/28140, PRO; FO to Crosby No. 200, 10 May 1941, F3854/1281/40, FO 371/28140, PRO; FO to Crosby No. 209, 17 May 1941, F4001/1281/40, FO 371/28141, PRO; Halifax to FO No. 2213, 17 May 1941, F4161/1281/40, FO 371/28141, PRO.

37. Grant to SoS No. 262, 8 May 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 146–7; memorandum of a conversation between Hornbeck and N. Butler, 9 May 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 148–9.

38. Memorandum of a conversation between Hornbeck, Hiss, and Walden (Standard Vacuum Oil Co.), 14 May 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 152–3; Hull to Grant No. 62, 31 May 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 163; memorandum of conversation between Hull, Butler, and Hall, 3 June 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 165–6.

39. Crosby to FO No. 328, 21 May 1941, F4323/1281/40, FO 371/28140, PRO; memorandum by Major Mansell MI2e, 'Possible Coup d'Etat in Thailand', 13 May 1941, fol. 92, WO 106/4474, PRO.

40. Crosby to FO No. 356, 3 June 1941, F4735/1281/40, FO 371/28142, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 358, 4 June 1941, F4735/1281/40, FO 371/28142, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 360, 4 June 1941, F4844/1281/40, FO 371/28142, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 393, 17 June 1941, F5342/1281/40, FO 371/28142, PRO. The Bank of England greeted the Thai terms over tin and rubber with 'disgust and disappointment', F. H. minute, 24 June 1941, fol. 102, OV 25/8 (670/3), BE.

41. Crosby to FO No. 394, 17 June 1941, F5342/1281/40, FO 371/28142, PRO; Direk, *Siam and World War II*, p. 49.

42. Anthony Eden minute, n.d., F5342/1281/40, FO 371/28142, PRO; Sterndale Bennett minute, 19 June 1941, F5342/1281/40, FO 371/28142, PRO.

43. Eden minute, n.d., on Crosby to FO No. 498, 25 July 1941, F6759/438/40, FO 371/28135, PRO.

44. Sterndale Bennett to Bridgeman, Petroleum Department, 16 July 1941, F6707/1281/40, FO 371/28144, PRO; Niemeyer to Waley, Treasury, 25 July 1941, F6903/1281/40, FO 371/28144, PRO; Troutbeck (MEW) to Sterndale Bennett, 2 August 1941, T33/65/2, F7351/1281/40, FO 371/28145, PRO.

45. Nutter, 'US Policy towards Japan', pp. 209–17. On the American missions, see also Plates 13–14.

46. Memorandum of a meeting between Hall, Thorold, Acheson, and Feis, 23 June 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 185–6; Grant to SoS No. 202, 4 June 1941, 711.92/19, RG 59, NARA; Grant to SoS No. 320, 27 June 1941, 711.92/20, RG 59, NARA. According to the Foreign Office, Britain had intercepted letters from Grant to the American oil companies insisting that British proposals were part

of a scheme 'to do US companies down', Gage minute, 19 August 1941, F7805/1281/40, FO 371/28145, PRO.

47. Halifax to FO No. 2000, 17 June 1941, F5321/1281/40, CAB 122/1030, PRO. On intelligence, see Eden to Halifax No. 3246, 12 June 1941, F5321/1281/40, CAB 122/1030, PRO. Direk, *Siam and World War II*, p. 54; Sayre to Shaw (SD), 2 July 1941, Siam File (1930–9), Sayre Papers, LC.

48. Halifax to FO No. 2000, 17 June 1941, F5321/1281/40, CAB 122/1030, PRO; Welles to Grant No. 76, 12 July 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 205–6; memorandum of a conversation between Peck and Seni Pramoj, 26 July 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 226–7.

49. Crosby to FO No. 433, 30 June 1941, F5774/1281/40, CAB 122/1030, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 487, 20 July 1941, F6509/1281/40, CAB 122/1030, PRO; Yamamura Katsumi, 'The Role of the Japanese Finance Ministry', in D. Borg and S. Okamoto, *Pearl Harbour as History: Japanese American Relations, 1931–1941*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1973, p. 301.

50. Crosby to FO No. 527, 5 August 1941, F7316/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO; Doll to Waley (Treasury) No. 590, 20 August 1941, T35/9/33, FO 837/997, PRO; Grant to SoS No. 367, 26 July 1941, 792.92/133, RG 59, NARA; Reynolds, 'Ambivalent Allies', pp. 196–222.

51. Crosby to FO No. 449, 4 July 1941, F6108/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 521, 2 August 1941, F7207/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO. See also Grant to SoS No. 367, 26 July 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 233–4. On Japanese objectives after 1941, see, W. L. Swan, 'Thai–Japan Monetary Relations at the Start of the Pacific War', *Modern Asian Studies*, 23, 2 (1989): 313–47.

52. Crosby to FO No. 391, 17 June 1941, F5317/210/40, FO 371/28122, PRO.

53. Doll to Waley (Treasury) No. 590, 20 August 1941, T35/9/33, FO 837/997, PRO; Doll to Niemeyer (Bank of England), 2 August 1941, F7175/32/40, FO 371/28113, PRO. Direk, *Siam and World War II*, p. 45. See also Grant to SoS No. 369, 27 July 1941, 792.94/134, RG 59, NARA.

54. Doll to Waley (Treasury), No. 592, 21 August 1941, F8132/210/40, FO 371/28124, PRO; Doll to Waley (Treasury), No. 612, 27 August 1941, F8545/210/40, FO 837/977, PRO. The Thai Ambassador in Tokyo gave the American Ambassador a similar version of the Thai–Japanese negotiations, see Grew to SoS no. 1479, 18 September 1941, 792.94/147, RG 59, NARA. Cf. Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 198.

55. Reynolds, 'Ambivalent Allies', pp. 202–6; Doll to Waley No. 590, 20 August 1941, T35/9/33, FO 837/997, PRO.

56. Imperial Conference Records, 2 June 1941, in N. Ike (ed.) *Japan's Decision for War: Record of the 1941 Policy Conferences*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967, pp. 53–5; WP (41) 154, Memorandum by Foreign Secretary, 6 July 1941, CAB 66/19, PRO; D. Dilks (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan*, London: Cassell, 1971, p. 392.

57. Halifax to FO No. 3393, 19 July 1941, F6473/9/61, FO 371/1/27763, PRO; Ike (ed.), *Japan's Decision for War*, p. 50. A Vichy official frankly expressed French policy at the end of July: 'If the Japanese win or keep out of the war we may be able to save something by co-operating with them now, if the Allies are victorious we feel confident that the United States will see that we get our colony back again', Leahy to SoS No. 966, 1 August 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 244–5.

58. WC 66 (41) 4, 7 July 1941, CAB 65/19, PRO; WP (41) 172, Memorandum

by Foreign Secretary, 'Japanese Plans in Indochina', 20 July 1941, CAB 66/19, PRO; 72 (41) 8 Concl., 21 July 1941, CAB 66/19, PRO; Churchill to Eden, 16 July 1941, M745/1, AP/20/664, Avon Papers, BUL; Lowe, *Pacific War*, p. 238.

59. Eden to Churchill, 21 July 1941, PM 41/72, AP20/8/509, Avon Papers, BUL; Eden to Halifax, 22 July 1941, AP20/8/507A, Avon Papers, BUL.

60. Welles memorandum, 24 July 1941, *FRUS*, 1931–41, II, pp. 527–30; Ballantine memorandum, 25 July 1941, *FRUS*, 1931–41, II, pp. 530–2; Nutter, 'US Policy towards Japan', pp. 259–66.

61. Crosby to FO No. 512, 30 July 1941, F7027/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO. These Japanese demands were reported as: (1) Thailand to sign no treaty with any third party which might possibly harm the 'East Asiatic Prosperity Sphere'; (2) the recognition of Manchokuo [*sic*]; (3) cessation of relations with Russia; (4) military co-operation and an exchange of specialists and the formation of a joint military organization; (5) the recognition of Indo-China as part of the 'safety area of the Prosperity Sphere' and as such to be protected by Thai and Japanese troops; the seaboard of Annam and Cambodia to be under Japanese protection.

62. FO to Halifax No. 4363, 1 August 1941, F6812/438/40, FO 371/28135, PRO; Halifax to Welles, 2 August 1941, FO 115/3447. See also Major Steveni (M16) to M12c/e, 2 July 1941, CX Report 27301/2/286, not foliated, WO 208/873, PRO. Craigie reported similar terms from Japanese naval sources in Tokyo, see Craigie to FO No. 1524, 24 August 1941, F8372/210/40, FO 371/28124, PRO. See also Doll to Niemeyer, 2 July 1941, fol. 105, OV 25/8 (670/3), BE.

63. Crosby to FO No. 520, 2 August 1941, F7206/1281/40, FO 371/28123, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 622, 1 September 1941, F8782/210/40, FO 371/28125, PRO; Swan, 'Thai–Japanese Relations', pp. 270–93.

64. Minute by Eden, 2 August 1941, F7072/1299/23, FO 371/29793, PRO, quoted in Lowe, *Pacific War*, p. 241; FO to Crosby No. 343, 1 August 1941, F7027/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO; FO to Halifax No. 4380, 2 August 1941, F7027/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO.

65. Memorandum by Peck, 30 July 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, p. 240; record of a conversation between Hull and Welles at Sulphur Springs, 31 July 1941, 740.0011 PW/426, RG 59, NARA; Halifax to FO No. 3583, 30 July 1941, F7090/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO.

66. Halifax to FO No. 3614, 31 July 1941, F7171/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO; Halifax to FO No. 3683, 4 August 1941, F7301/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO; memorandum of a conversation between Hull and Halifax, 9 August 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 268–9. The author is most grateful to E. Bruce Reynolds for drawing some of these issues to his attention.

67. Crosby to FO No. 525, 5 August 1941, F7315/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO; Halifax to FO No. 3726, 7 August 1941, F7491/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO; WP (41) 202, 20 August 1941, CAB 66/18, PRO. See also C. Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, Vol. II, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948, p. 1014. Ashley Clarke minute, 12 August 1941, F7581/210/40, FO 371/28124, PRO.

68. DO (41) 56th mtg. (3), 8 August 1941, CAB 69/2, PRO; R. J. Bell, *Unequal Allies: Australian–American Relations and the Pacific War*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977, p. 23; Attlee to Churchill, Abbey 23, 8 August 1941, WP (41) 203, CAB 66/18, PRO.

69. Memorandum of a conversation between Welles and Cadogan, 9 August 1941, 740.0011 E/W 14007$^{1}/_{2}$, RG 59, NARA. Cadogan raised the

matter of Thailand with Welles again on 11 August but found him 'rather sticky', diary entry for 11 August 1941, in Dilks (ed.), *Cadogan Diaries*. The Thais continued to press for assurances in Washington during early August, memorandum of a conversation between Peck and Seni Pramoj, 14 August 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 271–2.

70. Churchill wrote to Eden: 'Give me in a few lines the reasons which led to Siam calling itself Thailand. What are the historic merits of these two names?' Churchill to Eden, 27 August 1941, M833/1, AP/20/8/673, Avon Papers, BUL. Sterndale Bennett to Dominions, 2 September 1941, F846/000/61, FO 371/27893, PRO.

71. Memorandum by Bruce, 9 August 1941, F7695/210/40, FO 371/28124, PRO. Eden to Bruce, 11 August 1941, F7695/210/40, FO 371/28124, PRO. See also Bruce to Menzies, No 635, 8 August 1941, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937–49* (hereafter *DAFP*), Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs, 1982, V, document 38, pp. 65–7.

72. Crosby to FO No. 544, 10 August 1941, F7622/210/40, FO 371/28124, PRO.

73. Crosby to FO No. 212, 23 August 1941, F6437/210/40, FO 371/28123, PRO. Direk, *Siam and World War II*, pp. 166–87.

74. C-in-C FE to FO, 4 August 1941, F7221/7221/40, FO 371/28158, PRO. See also Brooke-Popham to Ismay, 20 August 1941, DO/Ismay/11, V/1/16, Brooke-Popham Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London. Crosby to FO No. 593, 21 August 1941, F8253/90/40, FO 371/28157, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 605, 26 August 1941, F8464/90/40, FO 371/28157, PRO; Gage minute, 27 August 1941, and Seymour minute, 29 August 1941, F8464/90/40, FO 371/28157, PRO; Swan, 'Thai-Japanese Relations', p. 272.

75. Eden to Churchill, PM 41/109, 12 September 1941, AP 20/8/347, Avon Papers, BUL.

76. Col. Scott (MO10) minute, 1 April 1941, not foliated, WO 106/4474, PRO; C. Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East: The Official History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 70.

77. FE (41) 16th mtg., 'Infiltration—Thailand', 13 May 1941, CAB 96/2, PRO. Col. Scott MO10 to Colonel Sugden MO1 [SOE], 19 June 1941, fol. 37a, WO 193/915, PRO.

78. Cruickshank, *SOE in the Far East*, pp. 70–4; R. Gough, *SOE Singapore, 1941–1942*, London: William Kimber, 1985, pp. 38–40, 55.

79. Killery to SO.2 [SOE London] No. 506/7, 30 July 1941, F7487/246/40, FO 371/28134, PRO. SOE initially consisted of two sections—SO.1, responsible for unattributable (black) propaganda, and SO.2, responsible for sabotage and subversive operations.

80. Jebb to Cadogan, SC/26/43/69, 7 August 1941, F7487/246/40, FO 371/28134, PRO.

81. Gage minute, 12 August 1941, F7487/246/40, FO 371/28134, PRO; Sterndale Bennett to Jebb, 17 August 1941, F7487/246/40, FO 371/28134, PRO. SOE seems to have been generally enamoured of *coups d'etat* at this time, for Adolfe Berle entered in his diary a few months later that 'a British military attaché showed up with a plan to organise a revolution in Argentina—about the most disastrous thing anyone could have thought of at the moment', diary entry for

6 January 1942, Adolfe Berle Diary, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

82. Crosby to FO No. 774, 31 October 1941, F11629/210/40, FO 371/28126, PRO.

83. Eden minute, 5 November 1941, F11629/210/40, FO 371/28126, PRO.

84. Grimsdale to Ismay, 8 March 1942, Ismay/IV/Gri/la, Ismay Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London. Acting on intelligence from Brigadier Sir Stuart Menzies, Director of the Secret Intelligence Service (M16), SOE were also debriefing General Catroux, the Free French ex-Governor General of Indo-China, in preparation for a demolition operation at Camranh Bay. See minute by R. H. Barry, a senior SOE staff officer of MOI (SP) [SOE] and also sketch map by Catroux, fos. 51a–51d, WO 193/603, PRO.

85. JP (41) 1, 'Far East', 1 January 1941, CAB 79/8, PRO; 'Operation Etonian Without Prior Occupation of Thailand by Japan', memorandum, 9 May 1941, not foliated, AIR 23/1865, PRO. For a superb study of Operation Matador, see Ong Chit Chung, 'Operation Matador and the Outbreak of the War in the Far East', Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1985.

86. JIC (41) 309, 'Japan's Next Move', 2 August 1941, CAB 79/13, PRO; COS (41) 276th mtg. (6), 5 August 1941, CAB 79/13, PRO; Mallaby (DMO) to Sterndale Bennett, 18 September 1941, fol. 5a, WO 106/2506, PRO; DO (41) 55th and 56th mtgs., CAB 69/2, PRO; diary entry for 8 August 1941, Oliver Harvey Diary, MSS, 56398, British Museum.

87. Colonial Office Secret Monograph, *Relations between Thailand and the Southern States of the Malay Peninsula*, by Dr W. Lineham, MCS, Singapore, 1941, CO 537/7335, PRO. Only thirty-five copies of this secret reference work were printed. Col. F. C. Scott to Gent (Colonial Office), 1 September 1941, fol. 3a, WO 106/2502, PRO.

88. Brooke-Popham to WO, 28 August 1941, fol. la, WO 106/2506, PRO. Between 10 June and 23 October 1941, thirty-six British officers had made clandestine visits to Thailand in parties of three and four, Brooke-Popham to Crosby, 27 October 1941, not foliated, WO 193/869, PRO; COS (41) 396th mtg. (5), 24 November 1941, CAB 79/15, PRO. On Brooke-Popham's covert visit to Thailand, see Gilchrist, 'Diplomacy and Disaster', p. 249.

89. Crosby to Sterndale Bennett, 11 September 1941, F10295/246/40, FO 371/28134, PRO; Note by G.II, MI2c, 11 September 1941, F10295/246/40, FO 371/28134, PRO; Far Eastern Security Service Report No. 5401, 'Japanese Penetration of Thailand', November 1941, not foliated, WO 208/1915, PRO.

90. FO to Crosby No. 468, 8 October 1941, F10505/114/40, FO 371/28118, PRO. For details of Wendler's activities in Bolivia, see FO 371/25792 *passim*. Crosby to FO No. 806, 12 November 1941, F12300/114/40, FO 371/28118, PRO. It has been suggested that Wendler was the victim of deliberate Anglo-American provocation in Bolivia, see H. M. Hyde, *The Quiet Canadian*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962, pp. 140–4.

91. Eden to Churchill, 16 October 1941, PM 41/142, AP/20/8/580, Avon Papers, BUL; Churchill to Eden minute, 16 October 1941, PM 41/142, AP/20/8/580, Avon Papers, BUL.

92. Peck to SoS No. 465, 4 October 1941, 792.94/156, RG 59, NARA; Division of Far Eastern Affairs memorandum, 10 October 1941, 792.94/156, RG 59, NARA; Chapman to Hull, 21 October 1941, 892.00/23, RG 59, NARA.

93. Crosby to FO No. 684, 24 September 1941, F9929/210/40, FO 371/28125, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 725, 15 October 1941, F10827/210/40, FO 371/28125, PRO. In fact Phibul had ordered the Thai military to prepare secretly to repel invasions by both Britain and Japan; Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 204.

94. British Embassy to DS (2 parts), 25 October 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 325–9. B. Berle and T. Jacobs (eds.), *Navigating the Rapids: From the Papers of Adolf A. Berle*, New York: Harcourt Brace Javonovich, 1973, p. 379.

95. Price (Secretary to COS), to Seymour, 18 October 1941; minutes by Ashley Clarke, 19 September 1941; Sterndale Bennett and Seymour, 20 September 1941; Cadogan, 21 September 1941, F10967/210/40, FO 371/28126, PRO. Sterndale Bennett minute, 13 November 1941, F11876/210/40, FO 371/28126, PRO. Churchill decided to send the ships against the advice of the Admiralty, DC(0) (41) 65/1 and 66/1, 17 and 20 October 1941, CAB 69/3 and CAB 69/8, PRO. On Tojo, see the passages in Ike, *Japan's Decision for War*, pp. 211, 235, and 242–3; the best account is in Reynolds, 'Ambivalent Allies', pp. 233–5.

96. The United States was primarily working on diplomatic rather than military or naval signals. Nutter, 'US Policy towards Japan', pp. 311–30; intercepted Japanese messages, November 1941, Folder 311, Container 75, Hull Papers (microfilm copy), Cambridge University Library; entry for 9 November 1941, Henry L. Stimson Diary, 36, 13, reel 7, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds. On American decryption, see D. Kahn, 'The Intelligence Failure of Pearl Harbor', *Foreign Affairs*, 70, 5 (1991/2): 142–8.

97. Crosby to FO No. 803, 12 November 1941, F12159/210/40, FO 371/28126, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 798, 10 November 1941, F12040/210/40, FO 371/28125, PRO. Vanich was one of the leaders of the pro-Japanese faction in the Thai Cabinet and co-operated closely with personnel at the Japanese Embassy; Swan, 'Thai–Japanese Relations', p. 276.

98. Crosby to FO No. 831, 20 November 1941, F12608/9789/40, FO 371/28126, PRO; K. Landon, 'Thai Non-Resistance: A Footnote in History', *Far Eastern Survey* (November 1944): 222–3.

99. Lt.-Col. Mackinzie (Director M12) to DDMI (I), 23 November 1941, fol. 85, WO 193/917, PRO; Eden to Churchill, 21 November 1941, PM 41/162, AP20/8/601, Avon Papers, BUL.

100. Crosby to FO No. 870, 1 December 1941, F13164/9789/40, FO 371/28163, PRO.

101. Peck to SoS No. 520, 15 November 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 342–3; Peck to SoS No. 547, 3 December 1941, 740.0011 PW/611, RG 59, NARA.

102. Peck to SoS No. 550, 4 December 1941, 740.0011 PW/673, RG 59, NARA; Peck to SoS No. 551, 5 December 1941, 740.001 PW/687, RG 59, NARA.

103. Crosby to FO No. 870, 1 December 1941, F13164/9789/40, FO 371/28126, PRO. See also diary entry for 1 December 1941, in Dilks (ed.), *Cadogan Diaries*.

104. Curtin to Cranborne (DO) No. 762, 30 November 1941, *DAFP*, V, document 142, pp. 247–8. Sterndale Bennett minute, 1 December 1941, F13289/9789/40, FO 371/28163, PRO.

105. Diary entry for 29 November 1941, Oliver Harvey Diary, MSS 56398, British Museum.

106. Bruce to Curtin No. 113, 1 December 1941, *DAFP*, V, document 149,

p. 265; see also Bruce to Curtin No. 112, 1 December 1941, *DAFP*, V, document 264, pp. 254–5.

107. R. Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 307–9; Roosevelt to Churchill, 24 November 1941, 711.94/2741, RG 59, NARA; entry for 28 November 1941, Henry L. Stimson diary, 36, 57, reel 7, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds. This change of attitude in Washington was clearly detected by Halifax who was confident of the support of Hull, Stimson, and Knox, see Halifax to FO No. 5493, 30 November 1941, F13001/83/23, FO 371/27913, PRO. See also Halifax to FO No. 5474, 29 November 1941, F12992/86/23, FO 371/27913, PRO.

108. Halifax to FO No. 5496, F13303/9789/40, FO 371/28163, PRO.

109. Halifax to FO No. 5519, 1 December 1941, F13114/83/23, FO 371/27913, PRO. Cadogan noted in his diary: 'Things look critical, but American attitude seems firm and sound', diary entry Wednesday, 3 December 1941, in Dilks (ed.), *Cadogan Diaries*. See also British Embassy to SD, 30 November 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, p. 360; and Casey to Department of External Affairs No. 1064, 1 December 1941, *DAFP*, V, document 152, pp. 259–60.

110. WP (41) 296, 'Far Eastern Policy', memorandum by Eden, CAB 66/20; DC (O) (41) 71st mtg. (1), 3 December 1941, CAB 69/2, PRO. Direk expressed similar sentiments to Peck regarding the United States offer of 'ultimate independence' on 4 December 1941, Direk, *Siam and World War II*, p. 58.

111. Churchill minute to Eden, M.1078/1, 2 December 1941, F13114/86/23, FO 371/27913, PRO.

112. Halifax to FO No. 5577, 3 December 1941, F13219/86/23, FO 371/27914, PRO.

113. WP (41) 296, 'Far Eastern Policy', memorandum by Eden, 2 December 1941, CAB 66/20, PRO; WM 124 (41) 4, 4 December 1941, CAB 65/24, PRO.

114. Halifax to FO No. 5603, 5 December 1941, F13280/86/23, FO 371/27914, PRO; Halifax to FO No. 5612, 5 December 1941, F13282/86/23, FO 371/27914, PRO.

115. Crosby to FO No. 890, 5 December 1941, F13279/9789/40, FO 371/28163, PRO; FO to Crosby No. 590, 6 December 1941, F13329/9789/40, FO 371/28163, PRO; Swan, 'Thai–Japanese Relations', pp. 279–80.

116. FO to Halifax No. 6742, 8.45 p.m., 6 December 1941, F13329/9789/40, FO 371/28163, PRO.

117. Charivat, *Thai Foreign Policy*, p. 260; see also p. 227.

118. Halifax to FO No. 5654, 9.29 p.m., 6 December 1941, F13329/9789/40, FO 371/28163, PRO; Casey to Curtin and Evatt No. 1095, 6 December 1941, *DAFP*, V, document 168, p. 283.

119. Entry for Saturday 6 December 1941, in Dilks (ed.), *Cadogan Diaries*; Kennedy diary, entry for 6 December 1941, in J. Ferris, 'From Broadway House to Bletchley Park: The Diary of Captain Malcolm Kennedy, 1934–46', *Intelligence and National Security*, 4, 3 (1989): 53–4.

120. Churchill to Eden and COS, noon 7 December 1941, D311/1, AP 20/8/711, Avon Papers, BUL. Churchill's full message read, 'There is a possibility of imminent Japanese invasion of your country. If you are attacked, defend yourself. The preservation of the full independence and sovereignty of Thailand is a British interest and we shall regard an attack on you as an attack upon ourselves.' Crosby's Final Report p. 23, 7 October 1941, F7056/1083/40, FO 371/31860, PRO. See also

Churchill to Crosby, 7 December 1941, Prime Minister's telegram file—1941, Papers of General Sir Hastings Ismay, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London.

121. London only sent Crosby authority to deliver a guarantee, now reworded, at 1.40 p.m. on 7 December 1941. This did not arrive in Bangkok until the night of 7/8 December, FO to Crosby No. 590, 8.25 p.m., 6 December 1941, F13329/210/40, FO 371/21863, PRO; FO to Crosby No. 595, 1.40 p.m., 7 December 1941, F13329/210/40, FO 371/21863, PRO.

122. Crosby's Final Report, 7 October 1942, F7056/1083/40, FO 371/31860, PRO; Crosby to FO No. 903, 8 December 1941, F13942/210/40, FO 371/28128; Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, pp. 209–11; Reynolds, 'Ambivalent Allies', pp. 285–92, 301–8. A much neglected question seems to be the role of the Thai Air Force. On its modernity, see Leahy to Hull No. 97, 23 January 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, p. 38.

123. Churchill speech, 'War with Japan', delivered first in the House of Commons and then broadcast, 8 December 1941, in C. Eade (ed.), *The War Speeches of the Rt. Hn. Sir Winston Churchill*, London: Purnell, 1976, pp. 130–1; Sir E. L. Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, London: HMSO, 1971, Vol. II, *Anglo-American Support for Thailand*, p. 175. This erroneous analysis is followed by Charivat, *Thai Foreign Policy*, pp. 260–1, and Swan, 'Thai–Japanese Relations', p. 279, but not by Reynolds, 'Ambivalent Allies', p. 321. FO to Crosby No. 590, 8.25 p.m., 6 December 1941, F13329/210/40, FO 371/21863, PRO; FO to Crosby No. 595, 1.40 p.m., 7 December 1941, F13329/210/40, FO 371/21863, PRO.

124. Thawi Bunyaket in Direk, *Siam and World War II*, pp. 109–14. For a general discussion of Churchill in November/December 1941, see A. Gilchrist, *Malaya, 1941*, London: Robert Hale, 1992, pp. 166–8.

125. Crosby's Final Report, p. 23, 7 October 1942, F7056/1083/40, FO 371/31860, PRO; Ashley Clarke minute, 26 February 1941, F1126/5/40, FO 371/28110, PRO.

# 8
# Conclusions

## *Thailand Declares War*

THE war with Japan did not open as expected. During much of 1941 the policy debate on both sides of the Atlantic had been about how the United States would react to a Japanese attack upon the European territories in South-East Asia. Therefore Churchill was openly jubilant when American forces at Pearl Harbor were also attacked. In contrast Field Marshal Alanbrooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, recorded in his diary on 7 December 1941, that Whitehall had spent the previous two days debating feverishly how they could possibly contrive to involve the United States in the approaching Japanese attack on the European colonies in the Far East and so he greeted the news of Pearl Harbor with the ungrateful remark: 'All our work of the last 48 hours wasted.'[1]

Alanbrooke and the other Chiefs of Staff themselves had spent 7 December in fruitless discussion of the virtues of launching Operation Matador. Their caution was partly due to great political sensitivity regarding the territorial integrity of small nations because of the circumstances in which Britain had gone to war in 1939. It was also because the American Navy had passed secret intelligence to the British Admiralty in the form of a deciphered telegram to Tokyo of 29 November 1941 from Tsubokami, Japan's Ambassador in Bangkok, to Tokyo. This conveyed to Tokyo the advice of Vanich, a pro-Japanese Thai Cabinet Minister, that a British invasion of Thailand could be provoked by a Japanese landing just inside Malaya, thus forcing Britain to occupy defensive positions inside Thailand, and therefore 'enabling Thailand to declare war on Britain as aggressors'. This plan had apparently been approved by the Thai Chief of the General Staff. Roosevelt considered this intelligence significant enough to warn Halifax personally at their meeting as early as 29 November.[2] On

7 December, Churchill's instructions took careful account of this warning:

> I agree with the President that 'we should obviously attack the Japanese transports'. . . . I assume . . . we do all in our power both to forestall and prevent a Japanese descent upon the Kra Isthmus by attacking any expedition obviously making in that direction . . . but we should not actually move into Singorra [Songkhla] in Siam unless either Siam has been previously violated, or a Japanese landing on the Kra Isthmus is imminent. Sea or air action would have the advantage of not prejudicing us with the Siamese (see latest telegrams from Bangkok).

Churchill's closing remark illustrates, among other things, the remarkable way in which Crosby continued to have an impact upon events at the very highest level even on the eve of Pearl Harbor.[3]

It is in any case doubtful whether Brooke-Popham, who had been given permission at the very last moment to launch Matador at his own discretion, could have effected the operation with the meagre military resources at his disposal. In the subsequent fighting, long after Japan had violated Thai territory, two divisions of Indian infantry were ordered forward into Thailand to seize important positions against the Japanese, only to be halted by the resistance offered by the Thai border police.[4] On 10 December 1941 the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, sent to the Far East amid massive publicity, were sunk by Japanese aircraft on the open sea. The Thais had always been sceptical about Britain's ability to defend Singapore and their worst fears were now confirmed (Map 8.1). Meanwhile Pearl Harbor seemed to rule out any hope of rescue from the United States and Phibul therefore found it politic to move from a position of passive non-resistance to an open Thai–Japanese alliance. A formal treaty was signed between Thailand and Japan at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok on 21 December 1941. Yet the ever-cautious Phibul had still not jumped in with both feet, for the relevance of this treaty to the present conflict was only stated in a secret annex. Thailand still hung back from a formal declaration of war upon Britain and the United States.[5]

During December 1941 and January 1942, the Far Eastern Department nevertheless continued to implement Crosby's sympathetic policy towards Thailand and advised Washington against a declaration of war or unprovoked action against Thailand. Halifax noted that the Thai Ambassador in Washington had dis-

MAP 8.1
Thailand and the Malayan Campaign, 1941–1942


*Source*: Copyright © 1941/1942 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

owned the actions of his government as unrepresentative and unconstitutional and had suggested the formation of a Free Thai Movement.[6] The Far Eastern Department recommended that British propaganda agencies should present the Thais as 'a proud

and free people under the heel of an arrogant and rigid aggressor'.[7] Yet against the background of the disastrous Malayan campaign, this line found little support outside the Far Eastern Department. Sir Alexander Cadogan, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, dismissed these arguments as 'not very impressive'. Richard Law, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Minister who held particular responsibility for the Far East, rejected them as 'soothing syrup' adding, 'I remain unconvinced. . . . To maintain the fiction that the Thais are a jolly, friendly, little people . . . will irritate further a public opinion which is already highly irritable about the Far East.'[8] In Washington, Hull conceded to Britain that it was politically advantageous not to declare war on Thailand, but he was unenthusiastic. Hull's reply was consistent with his previous anti-Thai policy. It stated, 'As the conclusion of the alliance was an affirmative act on the part of the Thai Government . . . the Government of the United States . . . must of necessity regard the action of the Thai Government as unfriendly.' Halifax reported that the United States 'do not think anti-Japanese feeling in Thailand is so strong as we do'.[9]

Meanwhile in Burma, Thai troops were now engaging British forces and the Governor found himself 'severely embarrassed' by the absence of a state of war (Map 8.2). His face was saved, however, by an intercepted German communication which brought the news that Thailand had declared war on Britain and the United States on 25 January at twelve o'clock.[10] The debate now turned upon whether the West should 'return Siam's compliment'. Both the Far Eastern Department and the State Department continued to suspect an Axis plot aimed at 'throwing Thailand into the arms of Japan'. However, more senior Foreign Office officials were now becoming highly impatient over fighting between British and Thai troops in Burma. Therefore, with heavy fire being exchanged on the Thai–Burma border, Britain alone returned Thailand's declaration of war, while the United States was not directly involved and thought it better to ignore the matter.[11]

The debate as to whether Thailand had been sinned against or sinning in these matters gathered momentum as 1942 progressed. Eden remained a firm supporter of Crosby and of the Far Eastern Department. He told Churchill that Britain should have moved to support Thailand in July 1941 after Japan's advance into southern Indo-China. But as he himself admitted, this would have been near impossible for it was only this Japanese action that had

MAP 8.2
Thailand and the Conquest of Burma, 1942


*Source*: Copyright © 1941/1942 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

begun the consolidation of Anglo-American policy in the Far East. In his final report Crosby similarly argued that the Thais had been let down, and confessed to a sense of shame, but the hostile Sir Maurice Peterson, who superintended Britain's Far Eastern policy, replied, 'I shall feel no hesitation in "looking a Siamese in the face" after the war and shall indeed expect the boot to be on the other leg.'[12]

Yet despite the fervour of this moral debate, in reality the policies adopted by the West towards Thailand immediately after Pearl Harbor turned not upon a post-mortem of the actions of Phibul and his Cabinet, but upon far more practical matters. The Chinese, for example, had an immediate strategic interest in creating friction between Thailand and Japan. Therefore during April 1942, Dr Chen of the Chinese Embassy in London requested British support for a statement by Chiang Kai-shek declaring that 'Allied nations have no territorial designs in Thailand nor cherish any desire which may impinge upon her independence . . . nothing but an Allied victory will ensure sovereign and territorial integrity of Thailand'. The United States was wholly favourable and the Far Eastern Department considered the idea to be 'excellent'.[13]

However, on 21 May Churchill suddenly intervened to prevent agreement. His Secretary wrote to Oliver Harvey, Eden's Private Secretary, explaining why Churchill found a guarantee of Thailand's future territorial integrity to be unacceptable: 'Mr Churchill has asked me to draw your attention to the fact that it might be found neccesary after the war to consider some sort of protectorate over the Kra Isthmus area, including Singora [Songkhla], in the interests of the security of Singapore.' Eden disagreed and, fearing future political friction with the United States, replied that 'bearing in mind the Atlantic Charter', which renounced territorial aggrandizement, Britain could not refrain from agreement with the Chinese and the Americans without causing intense suspicion of British objectives.[14] On 12 June Churchill's Secretary replied that Churchill was still in strong disagreement. Eden now backed down and minuted to the Far Eastern Department, 'I was a bit bothered about this. Do we in fact line up with the State Department? . . . I appreciate P.M.'s point', and with regard to the proposed declaration, he minuted, 'don't do anything about it'. Consequently, Britain ignored China's proposed Thai declaration and Britain alone resolved to remain ominously silent on Thailand's post-war fate. Therefore British policies towards Thailand continued to be what they had been before the outbreak of war,

essentially an adjunct of British attempts to defend her position in South-East Asia both militarily and economically. As such, Britain was once again out of step with her American ally.[15]

## *'Watchful Waiting' and 'Expediency'*

This study does not concern itself in detail with Phibul's foreign policy or with Thai–Japanese relations, both of which have been analysed at length elsewhere. Nevertheless, studies of British and American policy are apt to neglect the impact of minor states upon the policies of the great powers. Thailand demonstrates the fallacy of this assumption, for her agile diplomacy had an impact upon regional developments during this period out of all proportion to her economic size and military weight. Yet contemporary assessments of Phibul's policy were not flattering and even the Thai-centric Crosby accorded him the undignified title of 'the human weather vane'. The Thais described his policy more accurately as 'watchful waiting'.[16]

The Spring of 1941 had delivered a great shock to the Thais, for the Japanese had chosen to maintain a useful relationship with the Vichy regime in Indo-China, rather than to fulfil their proclaimed objective of Asia for the Asiatics. Subsequent to this salutary lesson in the perils of *realpolitik*, Phibul had, in the words of the British Colonial Office, 'nailed his colours firmly to the fence'.[17] To facilitate this, Phibul maintained a constant and bewildering flurry of negotiations and discussions, not only in Tokyo, Singapore, Washington, and London, but also amongst the diplomats, attachés, and spies that flocked in increasing numbers to Bangkok. The objectives discussed and assurances given in this process were deliberately contradictory. As a consequence, Phibul kept Britain and Japan guessing to the end and both feared 'betrayal' by the Thai Premier. In early October 1941, with events moving towards an obvious climax, Tamura, the Japanese military attaché and a friend of Phibul, made his move but apparently in vain:

> Because I was exceptionally close to Phibun [Phibul] I occasionally visited him and impressed upon him that it was natural at this time for Thailand to co-operate with Japan in light of conditions in the world and East Asia and pressed for such a decision. However, he talked in rather general terms and was never specific.... Phibun [Phibul] couldn't make a decision. His attitude was very cautious; he never committed himself.

More significantly on 1 December 1941, the Japanese Premier, General Tojo, confessed to an Imperial Conference in Tokyo, that he had no idea how the mercurial Phibul would react to a Japanese incursion into Thailand, and furthermore, he believed most Thais to be no wiser. Therefore, Tojo was at pains to stress that on no account should Phibul be told of Japan's plans until the last possible moment. In fact Tamura in Bangkok seems to have known of Japan's plans by 3 December and to have discussed the problems of passage of troops at that moment with Phibul. Tojo's mistrust was well founded for on Saturday, 6 December, Phibul was busily communicating what he knew of the Japanese plans to Crosby and thence to London.[18]

As the Second World War drew to a close, British officials increasingly appreciated that Phibul's behaviour in 1941 simply represented an intelligent response to a most awkward national predicament, and one not so different from their own opportunist regional policy during 1941. In March 1945, Andrew Gilchrist, serving with SOE, asserted that Britain's 'anti-Siam line can hardly be justified—we have no real reason to reproach Siam for her weak behaviour in 1941'.[19] In 1946, Alec Adams, an official in the Far Eastern Department, soon to be appointed Britain's Consul-General in Bangkok, reflected philosophically upon Phibul's temporary incarceration as a 'war criminal'. He concluded, 'It is bad luck on Phibun that he has had to take the rap to satisfy Japan's enemies. . . . The fault of men like Phibun has been to be pro-Siamese.'[20] Yet to dwell upon the moral debate is to miss the essential point, for it was not from this that the thrust of Western policies had been derived. No less than for Phibul, Churchill and Roosevelt's policies were dictated by immediate and very practical issues. Writing in December 1941, the Head of the Far Eastern Department, John Sterndale Bennett, put it most succinctly: 'The question is, I submit, entirely one of expediency.'[21]

## *'A Challenge to the Colonial System in Asia'*

Within Western policies towards Thailand during the first half of the twentieth century, two distinct but related levels of activity can be identified: firstly, Western external relations with Thailand which, during the 1930s and early 1940s, were characterized by policies of expediency arising out of strategic weakness, and secondly, and equally importantly, the internal relations between

different Western government departments with diverse 'cultures' and attitudes which competed for influence over policies towards Thailand. It is suggested here that this latter subject is of critical importance for it is at this level of internal rather than external relations that the coherence and continuities within Western policies can be identified. The continuity is illustrated by curious transposition of British and American attitudes towards Thailand immediately after the outbreak of the Pacific War.

In much of South-East Asia, Japan's southward advance during 1941 and 1942 resulted in a *tabula rasa* eradicating European colonial rule and white supremacy. In this sense Thailand constituted an anomaly, for British informal dominance in Bangkok had been on the ebb tide during the 1930s and by 1941 it had been all but extinguished. Meanwhile, the mercurial figure of Phibul, occupying the premiership before, during, and after the war, albeit with interludes, serves to underline the unique pattern of continuity in this state. In contrast, turbulence and discontinuity seemed to prevail in Washington and London, with Britain pursuing a new policy of retribution after 1941 and the United States taking up Crosby's tattered flag of accommodation and sympathy. This reversal of roles can only be understood in terms of the diverse and fragmented nature of Western policies during the 1930s characterized by a variety of competing ideas.

During the inter-war period the dominant voice amongst Western policies had been that of the British diplomats, who enjoyed high quality representation in Bangkok and who aimed to strike a judicious balance between British dominance and Thai independence. This diplomatic approach was transformed slowly into an Anglo-American policy of bribe by 1941, in the context of a contest with Japan for Thai allegiance. Yet at the same time throughout the 1920s and 1930s British diplomats were painfully conscious of the existence of 'die-hard' antithetical policies developed by British military, economic, and colonial departments, which demanded the use of the 'big-stick' against Thailand. Consequently, there was an omnipresent undertone of threat.

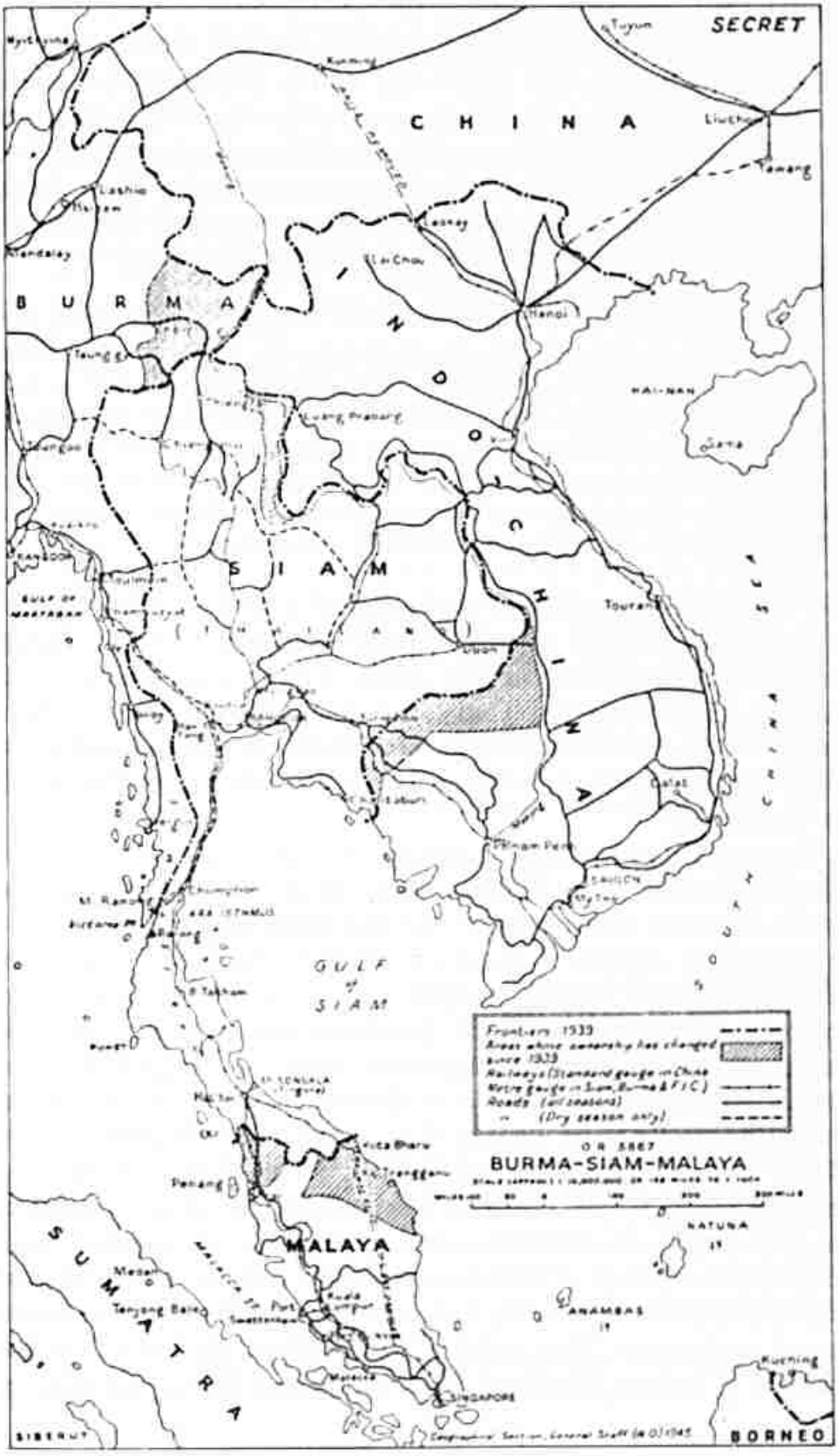
In 1942 the dominant diplomatic voice within British policies was eradicated by Japan's southward advance. Crosby and his staff were swept from the British Legation in Bangkok just as British colonial governments were ejected from Malaya and Burma. Thereafter, South-East Asia fell within the remit of various British-dominated military commands and British initiatives

towards occupied Thailand were co-ordinated at this level. Here the colonial undertone of the 1920s and 1930s faced no diplomatic opposition and quickly became dominant. Military officials who considered themselves betrayed by Thailand in 1941 now planned for a post-war strategic protectorate over the Kra Isthmus.[22] Leo Amery, the Colonial Secretary, waxed lyrical about the possibilities of linking Burma and Malaya.[23] Ex-colonial civil servants, in the guise of civil affairs officers, planned to incorporate the Malay-populated province of Pattani in southern Thailand into post-war Malaya.[24] Economic officials advocated the annexation of southern Thailand in order to obtain its valuable rubber and tin.[25] All these officials were stung into a stronger commitment to retribution against Thailand in the wake of the Thai annexation of parts of northern Malaya and Burma in 1942 and 1943 (Map 8.3). The Shan States of Burma in May 1942 were renamed the Original Unified Thai State. Officials now spoke of retaliation and co-ordinated their efforts against Thailand in both South-East Asia and London.[26] Meanwhile, Crosby and other diplomats laboured under the handicap of policies which were perceived to have failed and preoccupied themselves with papers that had little impact on the reality of Britain's wartime policies towards Thailand.

The newly dominant colonial voice within British policies was strongest within the British clandestine services, particularly the Special Operations Executive (SOE). SOE had recruited the senior officers for their Thai Country Section largely from the business community in Bangkok.[27] Accordingly, they reflected the 'die-hard' colonial attitudes that Dormer and Crosby had complained of bitterly in the 1930s. As in 1932 and 1933, these ex-commercial personnel, now empire traders in khaki, favoured the restoration of the Thai absolute monarchy.[28] The Far Eastern Department sought to challenge these clandestine policies but with little success. In August 1944 Sir Maurice Peterson, a senior Foreign Office official, confronted the Head of SOE in Asia over his activities conducted through the Free Siamese Movement and reported:

> I had a long conversation last night with Mr Mackenzie (in private life Director J. P. Coats) who is, I understand, Head of SOE in SEAC [South-East Asia Command]. . . . I dealt faithfully with the Free Siamese Movement and said I hoped we had heard the last of it. Mr Mackenzie was reduced to defending it on the grounds of postwar trade.[29]

MAP 8.3
Thai Gains in Malaya and Burma, 1942–1943




*Source*: Crown Copyright, Public Record Office, DO 35/1607.

But such diplomatic interventions were rare, for SOE opted to conduct its colonial-style policies independently of Foreign Office control.[30]

Britain's wartime shift back towards policies culled from the Colonial Office in the 1920s and 1930s provoked an equally radical reorientation of American policies. By 1942, American officials, anxious to implement Roosevelt's anti-colonial line, had forgotten Thailand's irredentist adventures in Indo-China during 1940 and were now preoccupied by rumours of British aggrandizement in Thailand. The State Department noted:

> [One] group of British businessmen would favour a free Thailand after the war but greatly reduced geographically—in particular this group would include peninsula Thailand . . . with either Malaya or Burma, thus putting all of the rubber and tin areas into the hands of British businessmen. Other British interests . . . think in terms of a revival of Thailand's absolute monarchy and would like to elevate a member of the royal family to the throne who would be so dependent on British support that Thailand would virtually become a British protectorate.

By 1943, the United States had adopted a firm pro-Thai attitude in response to British colonial aspirations against Thailand. Britain and the United States had now switched positions, London taking a hard line against the Thai 'aggressor' that was rather reminiscent of the American attitude over Thailand and Indo-China in 1940, while Washington now emulated Crosby's pro-Thai policy of the 1930s.[31]

Recently, historians of decolonization have convincingly argued that the decline of the British Empire in the twentieth century has been anything but constant and has been marked by periodic attempts at revival.[32] However, in focusing these arguments exclusively upon formal colonial states, imperial historians have neglected the extent to which this theme can also be detected in areas of British informal dominance, such as Thailand prior to 1945. Britain's related plans to defend and later to restore her hegemony in Bangkok are part of this wider revivalist phenomenon. They also constituted an overlooked Anglo-American episode: namely independent Thailand's important and paradoxical place at the centre of American anti-colonialism in wartime Asia. Unlike the writings of historians since the Second World War, at the time American officials were not slow to identify the colonial trend in Britain's Thai policies. Accordingly, by 1943 they had moved to protect Thailand from acquisitive British colonialists,

declaring instead that to 'Great Britain a strong independent Thailand might be a challenge to the colonial system in Asia'.[33]

1. W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War: The Grand Alliance*, London: Cassell, 1956, p. 512; Diary entry 7 December 1941, Alanbrooke Diary, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London. There has recently been speculation that Churchill knew in advance of Pearl Harbor but chose not to warn Roosevelt. For a refutation of this proposition see, R. J. Aldrich, 'Conspiracy or Confusion? Churchill, Roosevelt and Pearl Harbor', *Intelligence and National Security*, 7, 3 (1992): 335–47.

2. Admiralty (Director of Naval Intelligence) to COIS Singapore, 3 December 1941, fol. 156a, WO 208/1898, PRO; Halifax to FO No. 5519, 1 December 1941, F13114/83/23, FO 371/27913, PRO; J. Kennedy, *The Business of War: The War Narrative of General Sir John Kennedy*, London: Hutchinson, 1957.

3. Churchill to Eden and COS, noon 7 December 1941, D311/1, AP 20/8/711, Avon Papers, BUL. London had eventually informed Crosby of the possibility of a British pre-emptive operation in southern Thailand, whereupon Crosby and Direk together sent a characteristic joint appeal to the FO on 7 December 1941, urging 'For Gods sake do not allow British forces to occupy one inch of Thai territory', Cranborne (DO) to Curtin M.426, 5 December 1941, *DAFP*, V, document 163, pp. 276–7; Crosby to FO No. 893, 7 December 1941, F13332/9789/40, FO 371/28163, PRO.

4. WO to Brooke-Popham, 5 December 1941, V/4/41, Brooke-Popham papers, Liddell Hart Military Archives, King's College, London; S. W. Kirby, *The War against Japan*, HMSO, London, 1957, p. 186; H. P. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942*, London: Orbis, 1982, p. 169.

5. The text of this treaty, including its secret annex specifying its relevance to the present conflict, was available to the FO two days before it was signed, presumably from signals intelligence; see Broad minute, 19 December 1941, F14195/210/40, FO 371/28127, PRO.

6. FO to Washington No. 7006, 17 December 1941, not foliated, WO 106/4774, PRO. DS to British Embassy, 19 January 1942, *FRUS*, 1942, I, pp. 913–14.

7. FO to Washington No. 7183, 22 December 1941, fol. 120, WO 106/4474, PRO; Ashley Clarke minutes, 19 and 22 January 1942 and Sterndale Bennett minute, 24 January 1942, F1033/396/40, FO 371/31856, PRO; Sterndale Bennett memorandum, 27 December 1941, F14298/13522/40, FO 371/28164, PRO.

8. Law minutes, 23 and 29 December 1941, F14297/13522/40, FO 371/28164, PRO; Peterson minute, 21 January 1942 and Cadogan minute, 24 January 1942, F1033/396/40, FO 371/31856, PRO. A. F. Thavenot, an ex-British Legal Adviser to the Thai Government, declared in January 1942, 'Thailand has been more sinned against than sinning . . . it is entirely in the hands of this military clique and has no choice in the matter', A. F. Thavenot, 'Thailand and the Japanese Invasion', *Royal Central Asian Journal*, XXIX, 1 (1942): 117.

9. Hull aide memoire, 18 December 1941, FO 115/3447, PRO; Halifax to FO No. 34, 19 January 1942, F643/396/40, FO 371/31856, PRO.

10. Turner (Burma Office) to Hollis, 3 February 1942, CO 968/1/7/10138/42, PRO.

11. Sterndale Bennett minute, 31 January 1942, F1426/396/40, FO 371/31856, PRO; State Department memorandum, 19 January 1942, F1576/396/40, FO 371/31856, PRO; Peterson minute, 1 February 1942, F1426/396/40, FO 371/31856, PRO.

12. Crosby's Final Report, 7 October 1942, F7056/1083/40, FO 371/31860, PRO; Eden to Churchill, 28 January 1942, F1085/1083/40, FO 371/31860, PRO; Peterson minute, 31 October 1942, F7056/1083/40, FO 371/31860, PRO.

13. De la Valette to Dening, 10 April 1942, F2878/2878/40, FO 371/31866, PRO; Halifax to FO No. 2719, 11 May 1942, F3617/2878/40, FO 371/31866, PRO.

14. Martin to Harvey, 21 May 1942, F4097/2878/40, FO 371/31866, PRO; Harvey to Martin, 8 June 1942, F4097/2878/40, FO 371/31866, PRO

15. Martin to Harvey, 12 June 1942, F4097/2878/40, FO 371/31866, PRO; Eden minute, undated, ibid. Harvey's original letter on which Churchill wrote his minute subsequently referred to by Eden and Martin is missing from the Foreign Office file. There is some evidence to suggest that at one point Oliver Harvey included it in his diary, now deposited in the British Museum. If this was so it has subsequently been removed. A copy may have survived in the Churchill Papers, which remain closed. It is not in the Eden Papers, opened to public inspection at the University of Birmingham in May 1990.

16. Crosby to FO No. 38, 24 February 1941, F1208/210/40, FO 371/28120, PRO; Grant to Hull No. 369, 27 July 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, V, pp. 235–6.

17. Clauson (CO) to Consolidated Tin Mines Ltd., 26 June 1941, fol. 34, CO 852/435/1/19026/41, PRO. The Japanese chose to maintain a relationship with the Vichy regime in Indo-China until March 1945. On this see, R. B. Smith, 'The Japanese Period in Indochina and the coup of 9 March 1945', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, IX, 2 (1978): 268–302.

18. E. B. Reynolds, 'Ambivalent Allies: Japan and Thailand, 1941–1945', Ph.D. thesis, University of Hawaii, 1988, pp. 271–4; Crosby to FO No. 893, 6 December 1941, F13332/9789/40, FO 371/28163, PRO.

19. Gilchrist (SOE) to Brain, Very Secret and Personal, 27 March 1945, F2145/738/40, FO 371/46560, PRO.

20. Adams minute, 27 February 1946, F2105/1578/40, FO 371/57608, PRO.

21. Sterndale Bennett minute, 29 December 1941, F14297/13522/40, FO 371/28164, PRO.

22. See PHP (44) 6 (0) 2nd Preliminary Draft, 'Post War Security in South East Asia and the South West Pacific', 24 May 1944, CAB 81/45, PRO.

23. Amery asked: 'Ought we not to insist on the transfer to Malaya of the little malay states hitherto under Siamese suzerainty which occupy the Kra Isthmus and seperate Burma from Malaya?', Amery memorandum, DPM (44)3, 9 February 1944, W2166/1583/68, FO 371/42677, PRO.

24. In 1947 Colonial Office officials bemoaned the intervention of the United States to prevent them acquiring Pattani 'as some people have advocated', noting that now 'the time for action is past', Bourdillon minute, 29 January 1947, CO 953/3/4, PRO. See also Morris memorandum to Gater, 'Patani', January 1947, CO 953/3/4, PRO.

25. Doll memorandum to Niemeyer, 'Malaya', 22 February 1943, fol. 43, OV65/3 (2612/3), BE.

26. Much can be deduced from a minute by Bourdillon to Paskins, 4 May 1943, CO 953/3/4, PRO.

27. The Head of the SOE Siam Country Section was A. C. Pointon, a manager for the Bombay-Burma Company in Thailand in the 1920s and 1930s. Major Grut, another important SOE figure, was a pre-war manager of the Siam Electrical Company. Colonel Van Milingen, Head of the SIS country section was also an ex-teak manager, while his superior, Geoffrey Denham, Far Eastern Director of SIS until 1943, was a director of Anglo-Dutch Plantations Limited. A. Gilchrist, *Bangkok Top Secret: Force 136 at War*, London: Hutchinson, 1970, p. 4; DMI memorandum, 'Visit of DMI to Delhi' (DMI/9215), 19 August 1944, WO 203/291, PRO; DD(1), 1 June 1942, 'Dispatch on the Far East' by Brooke-Popham, CAB 120/158, PRO.

28. FO 371/46325, *passim*. See, for example, A. V. Scott minute, 31 January 1945, F214/127/61, FO 371/46325, PRO.

29. Peterson minutes of conversation with Mackenzie, 10 August 1944, F3770/100/23, FO 371/41798, PRO.

30. Those few SOE officers who did co-ordinate with the Foreign Office had to go to great lengths to prevent their superiors discovering this disloyalty, see minute by Young of a conversation with Major Guise of SOE, 29 December 1943 F22/23/40, FO 371/41844, PRO.

31. Memorandum of a conversation between Moffat, Landon, and Mani Sanasen, 27 July 1944, 892.01/7-2744, RG 59, NARA.

32. J. Darwin, 'British Decolonization Since 1945: a Pattern or a Puzzle?', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, XII, 2 (1984): 187–210, and also 'Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policies between the Wars', *Historical Journal*, XXII, 3 (1980): 657–79; J. Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

33. Memorandum 'Thailand—Current Developments', 11 December 1944, File 483, Box 79, Entry 106, RG 226, NARA.

# Appendices

## APPENDIX 1

British Financial Advisers to the Thai Government, 1898–1951*

**Charles James Rivett-Carnac, CBE (1898–1904)**
Born 18 February 1853; entered Indian Financial Department, 1872; Accountant-General and Commissioner of Paper Currency to Government of Burma, 1897; services placed by the British Government at the disposal of the King of Siam, 1898–1904; Grand Cross (first class) of the Order of the Crown Siam.

**Sir Walter James Franklin Williamson, CMG, FMZ (1904–25)**
Born 16 April 1867; entered Indian Financial Department, 1890; Assistant Accountant-General, United Provinces, Bengal and Madras, 1891–1900; services lent to the Siamese Government, 1900; Director of Paper Currency and Assistant Financial Adviser, 1900–4; Financial Adviser to the Government of Siam, 1904–25; Financial Adviser to the Estonian Government and Bank of Estonia, 1923–30; Grand Cross of the Crown of Siam, 1913; Grand Cross of the White Elephant of Siam, 1916. *Club*: East India United Service.

**Sir Edward (Mitchener) Cook, CSI, CIE (1925–30)**
Born January 1881; joined ICS in United Provinces, 1904; Under-Secretary to United Provinces Government, 1909; Under-Secretary to Government of India, Home Department, 1911; Finance Department, 1912; Accountant-General, Bombay, 1916; Controller of the Currency, 1917; Financial Secretary to the Government of India, 1919–23; Acting Finance Member of Council, 1922; Secretary to the High Commissioner for India, 1923–4; Financial Adviser to the Government of Siam, 1925–30; Governor, National Bank of Egypt, 1931–40; China Relations Officer, India, 1942; Grand Cross of the Order of the White Elephant of Siam; Grand Cordon of the Order of the Nile. *Clubs*: East India and Sports, Oriental.

*Between 1937 and 1942 the title of the office changed to Adviser to the Thai Ministry of Finance. Information for this Appendix is derived from *Who's Who* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1934–64) and from a memorandum by the Overseas and Foreign Department (Bank of England), 31 July 1935, fol. 50, OV 25/4 (669/3), BE.

**Sir Edmund Leo Hall-Patch, GCMG, KCMG, CMG (1930–2)**
Born 1896; Financial Adviser to the Government of Siam, 1930–2; Assistant Secretary, Treasury, 1935–44; H.B.M. Financial Commissioner in the Far East, 1940; Assistant Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 1944; Deputy Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office 1946; Chairman of Organisation for European Economic Cooperation, 1948; Permanent UK Representative to Organisation for European Economic Cooperation; UK Executive Director of International Monetary Fund and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1952–4; Chairman, Standard Bank, 1957–62. *Club*: Brooke's.

**James Baxter, CMG, MA (1932–5)**
Born 1 October 1896; Assistant Lecturer in Economics, University of Sheffield, 1911–12; Professor of Economics, Law School, Cairo, 1912; Lieutenant, 3rd Battalion Gordon Highlanders, 1915–19; Assistant Financial Secretary to the Egyptian Government, 1919–24; Financial Secretary to the Egyptian Government 1924–8; Financial Secretary to the Government of Siam, 1932–5; Financial Assistant to the Governor of Burma, 1936–7; Financial Adviser to the Government of Burma, 1937–43; Financial and Economic Expert to the Government of Egypt, 1943–6; *Club*: Athenaeum.

**William Alfred Millner Doll, CMG (1936–42, 1946–51)**
Born 19 December 1895; N. M. Rothchilds & Sons, 1912–24; Inter-Allied Commission, Bulgaria, 1925–30; British Delegate, 1926–30; Financial Observer, State of Parana, Brazil, 1930–3; negotiated for Metropolitan Vickers financial agreement with Government of Brazil for electrification of Central Railway, 1933–4; Financial Adviser, Ministry of Finance, Siam, 1936–42; Advisory Attaché, Bank of England, 1943–5; Currency Adviser to Lord Louis Mountbatten's South East Asia Command, 1945–6; Financial Adviser to Siamese Government, 1946–51. Order of the Crown of Siam (first class), Légion d'Honneur. *Club*: MCC.

## APPENDIX 2

### American General and Foreign Affairs Advisers to the Thai Government, 1902–1949*

**Professor Edward H. Strobel (1902–7)**
Prior to his appointment, Strobel served as an American diplomat and as Bemis Professor of International Law at Harvard University. Died in service, 1907.

**Professor Jens I. Westengard (1907–15)**
Prior to his appointment Westengard was Assistant Professor of Law at Harvard University. He served as Assistant General Adviser to Strobel

*Young, 'American Adviser', pp. 1–31. On Dolbeare and OSS see File 481, Box 49, Entry 106, RG 226, NARA.

(1904–7), succeeding Strobel upon his death. He returned to Harvard in 1915.

**Professor Wolcott H. Pitkin (1915–17)**
Pitkin was a Graduate of Harvard University Law School and a practising lawyer in Boston before departing to Bangkok. He returned to practice law in the United States in 1917.

**Professor Eldon R. James (1917–23)**
Prior to his appointment, James was a Professor at the Harvard Law School. He returned to become the librarian at the Harvard Law School in 1923.

**Professor Francis B. Sayre (1923–5)**
Prior to his appointment, Sayre was a Professor at the Harvard Law School. Although he remained in Siam less than one year he led a mission to Europe to revise Siam's unequal treaties with the Great Powers. He returned to Harvard briefly in the late 1920s and continued to be Thailand's representative to the International Court at The Hague until the early 1930s. In 1935 he became an Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the State Department with Far Eastern responsibilities, which included renegotiating treaties with Thailand for the United States. In 1939 he became American High Commissioner in the Philippines.

**Courtney Crocker (1925)**
Crocker was a Harvard Law School Graduate who was practising as a lawyer in Boston before his appointment in Siam.

**Raymond B. Stevens (1926–35)**
Graduate of Harvard Law School.

**Frederic R. Dolbeare (1935–40)**
Graduate of Yale College and Columbia Law School. Dolbeare served with the State Department (1915–28) before joining the J. Henry Schoeder banking house. He retired in 1940 after Japan's first move into Indo-China. Subsequent to his appointment in Thailand he worked for William J. Donovan in the secret intelligence (SI) branch of the Office of Strategic Services. After the war, he served as a Director of the Committee for a Free Europe.

**Kenneth S. Patton (1946–9)**
American Minister to New Zealand during the Second World War.

## APPENDIX 3

Foreign Officials in Thai Government Service, 1920 and 1939

| *Date* | *1920*[a] | *1939*[b] |
|---|---|---|
| American | 7 | 5 |
| British | 107 | 22 |
| Danish | 21 | 3 |
| Dutch | 1 | 1 |
| French | 24 | 14 |
| German | 0 | 4 |
| Italian | 25 | 3 |
| Japanese | 0 | ? |
| Norwegians | 1 | 1 |
| Filipino | 0 | 2 |
| Portuguese | 1 | 1 |
| Swiss | 0 | 1 |
| Swedish | 0 | 1 |

[a]Hulz (Bangkok) to SD No. 9, 30 September 1920, M726, reel 6, 892.00/01a 46, RG 59, NARA.

[b]Vivat memorandum, 'Foreign Officers in Government Service', 17 February 1939, fol. 4, K Kh 0301.1.35/47. TNA. Vivat noted: 'There are also Japs in the Ministry of War; but we don't seem to have a record of them.'

# Bibliography

SOURCES for quotations and references in the text are given in the endnotes, together with bibliographic details. The literature concerning the decade prior to the Second World War is immense, therefore the Bibliography is selective and comprises the more important works consulted during the preparation of this study.

## *Unpublished Documents*

### I. Public Record Office, Kew Gardens, Surrey, England

*Admiralty*

A source of considerable value, particularly for the period 1937–41, but awkward to use owing to the poor organization of the class lists.

ADM 1 Admiralty and Secretariat Papers.
ADM 116 Admiralty and Secretariat Cases.
ADM 178 Admiralty and Secretariat Cases (supplementary series).
ADM 199 War of 1939–45, War History Cases.
ADM 239 Navy Reference Books.

*Air Ministry*

The Air Ministry have displayed a propensity for retaining excellent collation files on grand strategy that are particularly useful for the period after 1937. They also contain illuminating material on SOE and SIS. Poorly catalogued.

AIR 2 Correspondence of the Air Ministry.
AIR 5 Papers of the Air Historical Branch, 1922–40.
AIR 8 Files held in the Office of the Chief of the Air Staff.
AIR 9 Records of the Director of Plans.
AIR 20 Air Ministry Registry.
AIR 23 Overseas Commands including Asia.
AIR 40 Air Intelligence Files.

*Board of Trade*

Some of the memoranda and minutes within these files are useful, but for the most part they contain recirculated Foreign Office telegrams.

BT 11 Commercial Department, Correspondence and Papers.
BT 29 Ministry of Production, Numerical Indexes.
BT 60 Department of Overseas Trade, Correspondence and Papers.

*Cabinet Office*

A wide-ranging series including the conclusions of full Cabinet discussions and their accompanying memoranda; the papers of the Committee of Imperial Defence; the records of the Cabinet Far Eastern Committee; the memoranda and minutes of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and their Subcommittees; and papers generated by many other Cabinet Committees and Subcommittees.

CAB 2 Committee of Imperial Defence Minutes.
CAB 5 Committee of Imperial Defence Memoranda.
CAB 16 Committee of Imperial Defence (Subcommittees).
CAB 21 Cabinet Office Files.
CAB 23 Cabinet Minutes, 1937–9.
CAB 24 Cabinet Memoranda, 1937–9.
CAB 53 Chiefs of Staff Committee Minutes and Memoranda, 1931–9.
CAB 55 Joint Planning Staff Memoranda, 1931–7.
CAB 65 Cabinet Minutes, 1939–46.
CAB 66 Cabinet Memoranda, 1939–46.
CAB 69 Cabinet Far Eastern Committee.
CAB 72 War Cabinet Economic Policy (Far Eastern Subcommittee).
CAB 79 Chiefs of Staff Committee Minutes, 1940–7.
CAB 80 Chiefs of Staff Committee Memoranda, 1940–7.
CAB 81 Chiefs of Staff Subcommittees.
CAB 84 Joint Planning Staff Minutes and Memoranda, 1940–7.
CAB 96 Cabinet Far Eastern Committee.
CAB 106 Cabinet Office Historical Section Files.
CAB 119 Joint Planning Staff Collation Files, 1940–7.
CAB 120 Minister of Defence Files, 1939–45.
CAB 122 Joint Staff Mission (Washington) Files, 1940–7.

*Colonial Office*

These series deal with thematic subjects such as economics or defence as well as correspondence with those Asian colonies dealt with by the Eastern Department of the Colonial Office. The files of the Economic Department (CO 852) were especially valuable. In some cases up to 90 per cent of the contents of these classes have been 'destroyed under statute' prior to release by their custodians, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Within the Eastern Department series (CO 825) this destruction amounts to nineteen files on Siam for the year 1941 alone. The registers of correspondence remain to remind the researcher of what has been destroyed.

CO 273 Straits Settlements, Correspondence.
CO 323 General Department Files.
CO 378 General Department, Registers of Files.
CO 537 General Department, Secret Series.
CO 717 Unfederated Malay States Files.
CO 732 Middle Eastern Department, Original Correspondence.
CO 788 Middle Eastern Department, Registers of Correspondence.

CO 825 Eastern Department Files.
CO 852 Economic Department Files.
CO 865 Far Eastern Reconstruction, Original Correspondence.
CO 872 Eastern Department, Registers of Original Correspondence.
CO 936 International Relations Department Files.
CO 953 Singapore, Original Correspondence.
CO 968 Defence Department, Original Correspondence.

*Dominions Office*
These papers throw interesting light upon Australia's role in the Anglo-Siamese relations, as well as issues of Imperial Defence and Anglo-American relations. The files are not well indexed for the years up to 1937.
DO 35 Correspondence Files, 1937–49.
DO 114 Confidential Print.
DO 121 Private Office Papers.

*Foreign Office*
Perhaps the most important source for British overseas policies. The series holding the general correspondence of the Foreign Office, FO 371, are the day-to-day working files of Departments and therefore contain a vast quantity of information concerning the formulation of policy including correspondence with Embassies, other Government Departments, and invaluable internal minutes and memoranda. The files of the British Embassy in Washington (FO 115) are of particular value for Anglo-American issues. The files of the Bangkok Legation (FO 628) contain much material that has not survived elsewhere, including rare material relating to Singapore and Malaya. However, it appears that on the eve of Japan's drive south in December 1941, the Legation files for the period 1938–41 were burnt as a security precaution.
FO 115 Washington Embassy Files.
FO 371 Foreign Office Registry Files.
FO 628 Bangkok Legation Files.
FO 660 Minister Resident (French National Committee), Files.
FO 800 Papers of various Secretaries of State.
FO 850 Communications Department Files.
FO 892 British Mission to the French National Committee Files.
FO 959 Saigon Consulate Files.
FO 991 Chieng Mai Consulate Files.

*Ministry of Economic Warfare*
FO 837 Ministry of Economic Warfare Files.

*Ministry of Information*
FO 930 Ministry of Information Files.

*Ministry of Supply*
Very little material of interest.
SUPP 14 Supply Files.

*Prime Minister's Office*

An unpredictable source. Much of this material is duplicated in Foreign Office or Cabinet Office files, but by no means all.

PREM 3 Prime Minister's Minutes, 1939–45.

*Treasury*

These files contain some interesting material on economic issues but many of the documents are duplicated in Foreign Office or Board of Trade files. A poor source in comparison with the material held at the Bank of England.

T 160 Finance Files.

T 236 Overseas Finance Division Files.

*War Office*

A source of enormous value. The files kept by the Directorates of Military Intelligence and Operations (WO 106, 193, 208) contain duplicate copies of papers dealing with SOE and other clandestine organizations which are otherwise closed to historians. They are also the best source for the detailed planning for Operation MATADOR. Sadly, few papers relating to Eastern Headquarters prior to 1942 have survived. However, the files of Mountbatten's South-East Asia Command (WO 203) contain some material relating to the pre-1943 period. They include the papers of Esler Dening's Chief Political Adviser's Office which are largely of a political and diplomatic rather than of a military nature. These files are much more than a mere military headquarters registry and reveal an important and much neglected level of regional policy-making.

WO 32 War Office, Registered Files.

WO 106 Directorate of Military Operations and Intelligence.

WO 172 War Diaries of Far Eastern Military Formations.

WO 193 Directorate of Military Operations.

WO 203 Headquarters Files, South-East Asia Command and Allied Land Forces South-East Asia.

WO 208 Directorate of Military Intelligence.

WO 216 Papers of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

WO 220 Directorate of Civil Affairs.

WO 252 Topographical and Economic Survey—The Joint Intelligence Bureau.

WO 258 Private Office papers of the Permanent Under-Secretary.

WO 259 Papers of the Secretary of State for War.

*Ministry of Works*

All materials from WO 55 relating to the British Legation in Bangkok have been closed due to their poor state of preservation. The material in WO 10 appears to be on permanent loan to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

WORK 10 New Buildings.

WORK 55 Embassy Plans and Photographs.

## II. India Office, Blackfriars, London

*Political (External) Department: Annual Files*
Political files containing significant material on relations between the British Empire and Thailand. Some of the material is duplicated in Foreign Office files, but by no means as much as one might expect.
L/P&S/12 Annual Files and External Collections, 1931–49.

*Burma Office Files*
Of considerable interest with regard to the defence of Burma's eastern border and Thai-sponsored nationalist agitation and subversion in Burma.
M/3–5 Files of the Political and External Departments.

*War Staff Files*
Military files, many of which pertain to the outbreak of war with Japan.
L/WS/1 War Staff.

## III. The Bank of England, Threadneedle Street, London

A neglected source of very considerable value.

| | |
|---|---|
| ADM 25 | Papers of H. A. Siepmann. |
| C 43 | Gold and Foreign Exchange Files. |
| C 44 | Accounts of Overseas Central Banks. |
| G 61 | Files of the Governor of the Bank of England. |
| G 30 | Governor of the Bank of England, Miscell. Correspondence. |
| OV 9 | Papers of Sir Otto Niemeyer. |
| OV 25 | Thailand: Country Files. |
| OV 43 | Egypt: Country Files. |
| OV 65 | Malaya: Country Files. |
| OV 66 | Far East: Country Files. |
| OV 95 | French Indo-China: Country Files. |

## IV. Imperial War Museum, London

*Japanese Monographs*

| | |
|---|---|
| AL 5192 | Japanese Monograph on the operations of the 15th Army, (translated). |
| AL 5199 | Japanese Monograph on operations in Thailand (translated). |

## V. Cambridge University Library

Records of Vickers-Armstrong Limited
Director's Correspondence Files.

## VI. State Department Branch, National Archives, Washington, DC

*State Department*
A very valuable series of records. Documents are kept loose in folders and therefore the integrity and order of these files is sometimes in doubt.

The absence of minutes complicates the task of identifying a flow of policy. However, the detailed and sometimes verbatim records of conversations are extremely valuable. The OSS Research and Analysis (RA)/State Department Research and Intelligence Reports are informative though mostly unexciting. It should be noted that although these records are held in RG 59, the OSS RA branch was only transferred to the State Department in 1945.

RG 59 Decimal Files, Washington.
RG 59 OSS Research and Analysis Reports/State Department Research and Intelligence Reports.
RG 59 Harley Notter Files.

## VII. Modern Military Branch, National Archives, Washington, DC

*Office of Strategic Services*

A unique collection of documents being the first archive of a modern intelligence organization to be opened (with limited 'weeding') to public inspection. These operational and policy records reveal much about the way in which the United States gathered information on British policy. OSS research material is held by the Diplomatic Branch of the National Archives.

RG 226 Old Series (CID).
RG 226 New Series: Entry 99, 106, 110, 143, 148.

*National Security Agency*

This series contains not only voluminous wartime 'Magic' decrypts of Japanese and German communications, but also intelligence reports summarizing the contents of these communications entitled 'Signals Research Histories (SRH)'.

RG 457 Signals Research Histories (SRH).

## VIII. United States Naval Operations Archives, Navy Yard, Washington, DC

*Navy Group China Records*

Navy Group China constituted a curious outgrowth of United States Naval Intelligence co-operating closely with the Chinese Secret Service—the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics. Both organizations operated into Thailand and these files contain interesting material relating to Chamkad Balankura.

## IX. Thai National Archives, Bangkok

*Office of the British Financial Advisers (K Kh 0301.1)*

An excellent collection comprising the materials kept in the Ministry of Finance by British Financial Advisers. Very little of the material has been closed to researchers and as a result it throws light on almost every aspect

of the British Advisers' work within the Ministry. It is interesting to contrast this official material with the private archives kept by the British Advisers, much of which is extant at the Bank of England in London.

1 Revenue and Taxation
2 Land House and Fisheries Tax
4 Revenue Farms and Monopolies
6 Opium
7 Excise
8 Customs
10 Forests
11 Mines
12 Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones
16 Railways, Highways and Power Stations
17 Navigation, Shipping and Waterways
18 Irrigation and Waterworks
19 Municipalities
21 Law and Justice
22 Police and Jails
23 Currency and Exchange
25 Loans
26 Retrenchment
27 Government Investment
28 Commerce, Statistics and Co-operative Credit
30 Special Articles, Reports and Memoranda
31 Education
34 Former Siamese Malay States
35 Personal Cases
38 Annual Reports of Government Departments
  a Comptroller-General's Department
  b Budgetary Reports by Financial Adviser
  c Paper Currency Department
  d Treasury Department
  f Education Department
  n Bangkok International Chamber of Commerce

*Office of the American Economic Adviser (K Kh 0301.2)*

These collections of papers concern the work of an American Economic Adviser who arrived in the 1950s to replace the last British Financial Adviser. Although this collections relates to a later period, it contains a surprising amount of material for the pre-war period.

2.1 USA Operations Mission
2.2 Institute of Public Administration
2.3 UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE)
2.4 National Economic Development Board
  2.4/1 Economic Development Project
  2.4/2 Economic Planning Notes
  2.4/3 Economic Development Plans

2.5 National Economic Council
2.10 Oil Refinery
2.11 Taxation
2.12 Investment
2.13 Acts and Loans
2.14 Government Budget
2.15 Lectures and Speeches

## *Private Papers*

Collections of private papers proved to be generally disappointing for the period before 1940. British policy towards Thailand remained at the level of officials prior to this date and few of their papers have survived. Cecil Dormer kept no papers. Extensive efforts have been made to ascertain whether any Crosby papers survived in Mombasa, where Crosby retired in 1945. Despite the kind assistance of many individuals in Kenya, no papers were located.

### I. Great Britain

Alanbrooke, Field Marshal Lord (LHCMA, King's College, London).
Brooke-Popham, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert (LHCMA, King's College, London).
Butterfield and Swire Company Limited (SOAS, University of London).
Cadogan, Sir Alexander (Churchill College, Cambridge).
Chatfield, Admiral of the Fleet Lord (National Maritime Museum).
Clark Kerr, Sir Archibald (PRO).
Cunningham, Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Andrew (British Library).
Dorman-Smith, Sir Reginald (IOLR).
Avon, Lord (PRO and Birmingham University Library).
Halifax, Lord (Churchill College, Cambridge).
Harvey, Oliver (British Museum).
Ismay, General Sir Hastings (LHCMA, King's College, London).
Pownall, General Sir Henry (LHCMA, King's College, London).
Somerville, Admiral of the Fleet (Churchill College, Cambridge).
Vlieland, C. A. (LHCMA, King's College, London).
Wilkinson, Lt.-Col. G. W. (Churchill College, Cambridge).

### II. United States

Berle, Adolf (Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York State).
Brett, Henry H. (Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Washington, DC).
Donovan, General William J. (Private access, subsequently deposited at the Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania and Churchill College, Cambridge).
Hornbeck, Stanley K. [George Sansom file] (Hoover Institute, Stanford).

Hull, Cordell (Library of Congress and microfilm copy at Cambridge University Library).
Peck, Willys R. (Hoover Institute, Stanford).
Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York State).
Sayre, Francis B. (Library of Congress, Washington).
Stimson, Henry L. (microfilm copy, Brotherton Library, Leeds).

## *Published Documents*

### I. Australia

*Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937–9*, Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs, 1976–87.

### II. Germany

*Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945*, Series D, Vols. VIII–XIII, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1956–64.

### III. Great Britain

*British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. XXIII, London: Ridgeway, 1865.
*Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939*, 2nd and 3rd series, London: HMSO, 1955–79.
*Hansard, House of Commons Debates*, 5th series, Vols. 374–411, London, 1932–45.

### IV. Japan

Ike, N. (ed.), *Japan's Decision for War: Record of the 1941 Policy Conferences*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967.
Lebra, J. C. (ed.), *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II: Selected Readings and Documents*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975.

### V. Thailand

Batson, B. (ed.), *Documents from the End of the Absolute Monarchy*, Cornell University Data Paper 96, Ithaca, 1974.
Thak Chaloemtiarana (ed.), *Thai Politics: Extracts and Documents, 1932–1957*, Bangkok: Social Sciences Association of Thailand, 1966.

### VI. United States

*Foreign Relations of the United States*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952–64.

**VII. International**

Kimball, W. F. (ed.), *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, Vols. I–III, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

## *Newspapers and Journals*

*Bangkok Times*
*Courrier D'Haiphong*
*Daily Express*
*Evening News*
*L'Impartial*
*North China Herald*
*Thai Chronicle*
*Straits Times*

## *Interviews*

Stanley Beddlington, Malayan Police Officer (Special Branch) attached to mission to the Thai Government, 1948–9. Subsequently employed by the United States Government in various capacities. (Washington, 14 August 1986)

Derek Bryan, Consul-General, Chungking, 1937–43. (3 October 1989)

Sir Andrew Gilchrist, Consular officer, Bangkok Legation, 1937–41; Special Operations Executive, Siamese Country Section, 1942–5; Political Adviser to GOC British Troops Siam, 1945; Deputy Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Far East, 1954–6. (Scotland, 12 January 1986)

Lord Gladwyn, Senior Official with the Special Operations Executive, 1943; subsequently Head of the Economic and Reconstruction Department of the Foreign Office. (London, 27 June 1986)

Colonel Hugh Toye, British Army investigator, Indian National Army. (3 July 1986)

## *Published Diaries, Memoirs, and Contemporary Material*

Amery, L. S., *My Political Life*, Vol. III, London: Hutchinson, 1955.

Avon, Lord, *Memoirs: Facing the Dictators*, London: Cassell, 1962.

_____, *Memoirs: The Reckoning*, London: Cassell, 1965.

Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.

Barnes, J. (ed.), *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries, 1929–45*, London: Hutchinson, 1988.

Baudouin, P., *The Private Diaries of Paul Baudouin*, London: Eyre Spottiswoode, London, 1948.

Berle, B. and Jacobs, T. (eds.), *Navigating the Rapids: From the Papers of Adolph A. Berle*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973.

Bisson, T. A., *American Policy in the Far East, 1931–1941*, New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1941.

_____, 'Diplomatic Warfare Centers on Thailand', *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, 20, 43 (1941): 24–9.

Blum, J. M. (ed.), *From the Morgenthau Diaries: Years of War, 1941–45*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967.

_____, *The Price of Vision: The Diary of Henry A. Wallace, 1942–1946*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.

Bond, B. (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lt. General Sir Henry Pownall*, Vol. II, London: Leo Cooper, 1974.

Bowring, Sir John, *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1969 [1853].

Bryant, A., *The Turn of the Tide, 1939–1943*, London: Cassell, 1957.

_____, *Triumph in the West, 1943–1946*, London: Cassell, 1959.

Butler, R. A., *The Art of the Possible*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971.

Byrnes, J. F., *Speaking Frankly*, New York: Harper & Bros., 1947.

Catroux, G., *Deux actes du drame Indochinois*, Paris: Plon, 1959.

Chandos, Lord, *Memoirs*, London: Cassell, 1961.

Chapman, J. W. (ed.), *The Price of Admiralty: The War Diary of the German Naval Attaché in Japan, 1939–43*, Vols. I–III, Sussex: Saltire Press, 1982–4.

Christian, J. L., 'The Kra Canal Fable', *Amerasia* (February 1938): 558–91.

_____, 'Thailand Renascent', *Pacific Affairs*, XIV, 2 (1941): 185–97.

Christian, J. L. and Ike, Nobutake, 'Thailand in Japan's Foreign Relations', *Pacific Affairs*, XV, 2 (1942): 385–91.

Chauvel, J., *Commentaire*, Vol. 1, *De Vienne à Alger (1938–1944)*, Paris: Fayard, 1971.

Chennault, C. L., *Way of a Fighter*, New York: Putnam, 1949.

Chula Chakrabongse, Prince, *Brought Up in England*, London: G. T. Foulis, 1943.

_____, 'Siam in this War and the Last', *Fortnightly* (December 1943): 385–91.

_____, *The Twain Have Met*, London: G. T. Foulis, 1956.

_____, *Lords of Life*, London: Alvin Redman, 1960.

Churchill, W. S., *The Second World War*, Vols. I–VI, London: Cassell, 1948–54.

Cook, E., 'The Building of Modern Siam', *Asiatic Review*, 27, 88 (1930): 779–88.

Cooper, Duff, *Old Men Forget: An Autobiography of Duff Cooper*, London: Rupert Hart Davis, 1953.

Craigie, R., *Behind the Japanese Mask*, London: Hutchinson, 1946.
Crosby, J., *Siam at the Crossroads*, London: Hollis Carter, 1943.
_____, 'The Failure of Constitutional Government in Siam', *Asiatic Review*, 39, 3 (1943): 415–20.
_____, 'Siamese Imperialism and the Pan-Thai Movement', *Fortnightly* (May 1943): 300–7.
_____, 'Observations on a Post-War Settlement in South-East Asia', *International Affairs*, 20, 3 (1944): 357–68.
_____, *Siam*, Oxford Pamphlets in Indian Affairs, No. 26, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945.
Dalton, H., *Memoirs, 1931–1945: The Fateful Years*, London: Muller, 1957.
Decoux, J., *A la barre de l'Indochine: Histoire de mon gouverment générale, 1940–1945*, Paris: Plon, 1949.
de Gaulle, C., *War Memoirs: Unity, 1942–1944*, London: Cassell, 1960.
_____, *War Memoirs: Salvation, 1944–1946*, London: Cassell, 1960.
Dilks, D. (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938–1945*, London: Cassell, 1971.
Direk Jayanama, *Siam and World War II*, Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1978. (This work includes contributions from Thawee Bunyaket, Puey Ungpakorn, and Phra Phisal Sukhumvit.)
Eade, C. (ed.), *The War Speeches of the Rt. Hn. Sir Winston Churchill*, London: Purnell, 1976.
Emerson, R. (ed.), *Government and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*, New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1942.
Farley, M., *America's Stake in the Far East*, New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1941.
Fujiwara, Iwaichi, Gen., *F Kikan: Japanese Army Intelligence Operations in World War II*, Hong Kong: Heinemann Asia, 1983.
Gilchrist, A., *Bangkok Top Secret: Force 136 at War*, London: Hutchinson, 1970.
_____, *Malaya, 1941*, London: Robert Hale, 1992.
Grew, J. C., *Ten Years in Japan*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945.
_____, *Turbulent Era*, Vol. II, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952.
Harvey, J. (ed.), *The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey, 1937–1940*, London: Collins, 1970.
_____, *The War Diaries of Oliver Harvey, 1941–1945*, London: Collins, 1978.
Hutchinson, E., 'Siam—Buffer State or Federal Unit', *Asiatic Review*, 41, 148 (1945): 380–1.
Hauser, E. O., 'Britain Faces Japan across Siam', *Asia* (February 1937): 118–20.
Hull, C., *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, Vol. II, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948.
Israel, F. L. (ed.), *The War Diaries of Breckenridge Long*, Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1956.

Ismay, Lord, *Memoirs*, London: Cassell, 1960.

James, R. (ed.), *Chips: The Diaries of Sir Hugh Channon*, London: Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1967.

Kennedy, J., *The Business of War: The War Narrative of General Sir John Kennedy*, London: Hutchinson, 1957.

King, E. J. and Whitehill, W., *Fleet Admiral King*, London: Norton, 1957.

Landon, K. P., *Siam in Transition: A Brief Survey of Cultural Trends in the Five Years since the Revolution of 1932*, Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1939.

_____, *The Chinese in Thailand*, London: Oxford University Press, 1941.

_____, 'Thailand's Quarrel with France', *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 1, 1 (1941): 25–42.

_____, 'Thai Non-Resistance: A Footnote in History', *Far Eastern Survey* (November 1944): 222–3.

Lapomarede, Baron de, 'The Settling of the Siamese Revolution', *Pacific Affairs*, 7, 1 (1934): 251–9.

Leahy, W. D., *I Was There: The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman Based on His Notes and Diaries Made at the Time*, London: Gollancz, 1950.

Levy, R. and Roth, A., *French Interests and Policies in the Far East*, New York: Institute of Pacific Relations Enquiry Series, 1941.

Leutze, J. (ed.), *London Observer: The Journal of General Raymond E. Lee*, London: Hutchinson, 1972.

Lilienthal, P. and Oakie, J., *Asia's Captive Colonies*, New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1944.

Macdonald, A., *Bangkok Editor*, New York: Macmillan, 1946.

Macmillan, H., *The Blast of War, 1939–1945*, London: Macmillan, 1967.

May, E., 'The International Tin Cartel', in W. Y. Elliot (ed.), *International Control in Non-ferrous Metals*, New York: Macmillan, 1937.

Menzies, R. G., *Afternoon Light*, London: Cassell, 1967.

Miles, M. E., *A Different Kind of War*, New York: Doubleday, 1967.

Murphy, R., *Diplomat amongst Warriors*, London: Collins, 1964.

Miller, E. H., *Strategy at Singapore: A Study of the American Council on Public Affairs*, New York: Macmillan, 1942.

Mountbatten, Admiral, *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Allied Commander South-East Asia, 1946*, London: HMSO, 1951.

Nicholson, N. (ed.), *Harold Nicholson: The War Years, 1939–1945, Diaries and Letters*, London: Cassell, 1967.

Office of Strategic Services, *Japanese Domination of Thailand*, New York: Office of Services, 1943.

Onraet, R., *Singapore: A Police Background*, London: Crisp, 1946.

Peterson, M., *Both Sides of the Curtain*, London: Cassell, 1950.

Pimlott, B., *The Dalton Diary*, London: Cape, 1986.

Price, W., 'Siam Turns to Army Rule', *Asia Magazine* (May 1938): 301–3.

Quaritch-Wales, H. G., 'The Situation in Siam', *Asiatic Review*, 28, 95 (1935): 543–5.

Robequain, C., *The Economic Development of French Indochina*, London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Pacific Relations, 1944.

Robertson, E., *The Japanese File: Pre-War Japanese Penetration in World War Two*, Hong Kong: Heinemann Asia, 1979.

Ronan, W. J., 'The Kra Canal: A Suez for Japan?', *Pacific Affairs*, 9, 4 (1936): 406–15.

Roosevelt, E., *As He Saw It*, New York: Duel, Sloan and Pearce, 1946.

Roosevelt, E. (ed.), *FDR: His Personal Letters, 1928–45*, Vol. II, New York: Duel, Sloan and Pearce, 1950.

Sansom, K., *Sir George Sansom and Japan: A Memoir*, Tallahassee, Florida: Diplomatic Press, 1972.

Sayre, R. B., *Glad Adventure*, New York: Macmillan, 1964.

_____, 'Siam', *Atlantic Monthly*, 137 (1926): 841–51.

_____, 'Siam's Fight for Sovereignty', *Atlantic Monthly*, 140 (1927): 677–9.

Seni, M. R. Pramoj, 'Thailand and Japan', *Far Eastern Survey*, 12, 3 (1943): 204–8.

Sivaram, M., *The New Siam in the Making: A Survey of the Political Transition in Siam, 1932–1936*, Bangkok: Stationer's Press, 1936.

Slim, W., *Defeat into Victory*, London: Cassell, 1960.

Smith, N. and Clark, B., *Into Siam the Underground Kingdom*, New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954.

Spitzer, H. M., 'Siam's Political Problems', *Far Eastern Survey*, 15, 7 (1946): 105–9.

_____, 'Siam's Economic Problems', *Far Eastern Survey*, 15, 9 (1946): 139–41.

Strang, Lord, *Home and Abroad*, London: André Deutsch, 1956.

Sweet-Escott, B., *Baker Street Irregular*, London: Methuen, 1965.

Tamagna, F. M., *Italy's Interests and Policies in the Far East*, New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1941.

Taylor, E., *Richer by Asia*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1948.

Thavenot, A. F., 'Thailand and the Japanese Invasion', *Royal Central Asian Journal*, XXIX, 1 (1942): 111–19.

Tedder, Lord, *With Prejudice*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1966.

Thompson, R. W. (ed.), *Churchill and Morton*, London: Cassell, 1976.

Thompson, V. M., 'Thailand Irredenta—Internal and External', *Far Eastern Survey*, 9, 21 (1940): 243–50.

_____, *Thailand: The New Siam*, New York: Macmillan, 1941.

_____, 'Siam and the Great Powers', *Foreign Policy Reports*, 21, 24 (1946): 322–31.

Tota Ishimaru, *Japan Must Fight Britain*, London: Hurst, 1936.

Tsuji, Masanobu, *Singapore, the Japanese Version*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962.

van der Poel, J. (ed.), *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, Vol. VI, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.

Vichit Vadhakarn Luang, *Thailand's Case*, Bangkok: Thai Commercial Press, 1941.

Wedemeyer, A. C., *Wedemeyer Reports*, New York: Henry Holt, 1958.

Welles, S., *A Time for Decision*, New York: Harper, 1944.

White, T. (ed.), *The Stilwell Papers*, New York: William Sloane, 1948.

Williamson, Sir Horace, *India and Communism*, Delhi: Government of India, 1935. (Secret reference book produced by the Delhi Intelligence Bureau, Government of India and reprinted with introduction by Mahadevaprasad Saha, Calcutta: Editions India, 1976.)

Woodman, D., 'Soldier and Statesman: Pibul and Pridi', *Asian Horizon*, 1, 2 (1948): 9–21.

General X [Buhrer, J.], *Aux Heures tragique de l'Empire*, Paris: Fayard, 1947.

Young, K., *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, 1919–1965*, Vol. II, London: Macmillan, 1980.

Zimmerman, C., *Siam: Rural Economic Survey*, Bangkok: Bangkok Times Press, 1931.

## *Secondary Sources: Books*

Aldcroft, D. H., *The Inter-War Economy: Britain, 1919–1939*, London: Batsford, 1970.

Allen, L., *Singapore, 1941–1942*, London: Hart-Davis, 1977.

Alsop, S. and Braden, T., *Sub Rosa: The O.S.S. and American Espionage*, New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1946.

Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983.

Anderson, I. H., *The Standard Vacuum Oil Company and the United States East Asian Policy, 1933–1941*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Andrew, C. M., *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community*, London: Heinemann, 1985.

Barnett, C., *The Audit of War: The Illusion and Reality of Britain as a Great Power*, London: Macmillan, 1986.

Barnhart, M. A., *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Batson, B., *The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam*, Singapore: Oxford University Press/Asian Studies Association of Australia, 1984.

Bauer, P. T., *The Rubber Industry: A Study in Competitive Monopoly*, London: Bentinck, 1948.

Bell, R. J., *Unequal Allies: Australian–American Relations and the Pacific War*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977.

Betts, R. F., *Uncertain Dimensions: European Overseas Empires in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Blanchard, W., *Thailand: Its People, Its Society and Culture*, New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1958.

Blumenthal, H., *Illusion and Reality in Franco-American Diplomacy, 1914–1945*, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1986.

Borg, D., *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933–1938*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964.

Borg, D. and Okamoto, S., *Pearl Harbour as History: Japanese American Relations, 1931–1941*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.

Borg, D. and Heinrichs, W. (ed.), *Uncertain Years: Chinese–American Relations, 1947–1950*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

Brailey, N., *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore: A Frustrated Asian Revolution*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1986.

Brown, I., *The Élite and the Economy in Siam, c.1890–1920*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Bullock, A., *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary*, New York: Norton, 1983.

Butow, R. J., *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954.

_____, *Tojo and the Coming of the War*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

Cady, J. F., *Thailand, Burma, Laos and Cambodia: The Modernization Nations in Historical Perspective*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

Carr, E. H., *The Twilight of the Comintern*, London: Macmillan, 1977.

Chandler, D. P., *A History of Cambodia*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1982.

Chaiwat Khamchoo and Reynolds, E. B. (eds.), *Thai-Japanese Historical Relations in Historical Perspective*, Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, 1988.

Chandran Jeshurun, *The Contest for Siam, 1889–1902: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry*, Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1977.

Charivat Santaputra, *Thai Foreign Policy, 1932–1946*, Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1987.

Clarke, Sir Richard, *Anglo-American Economic Co-operation in War and Peace, 1942–1949*, ed. Sir Alec Cairncross, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.

Colbert, E., *Southeast Asia in International Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Connell, J., *Wavell, Scholar and Soldier*, London: Collins, 1964.

Cooray, F., *The Thai: Our Neighbours*, Kuala Lumpur: Kyle & Palmer, 1941.

Costello, J., *The Pacific War, 1941–1945*, New York: Quill, 1981.

Cruickshank, C., *SOE in the Far East: The Official History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Dallek, R., *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Darling, F. C., *Thailand and the United States*, Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1965.

Darwin, J., *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War, 1918–1922*, London: Macmillan, 1981.

_____, *British Decolonisation since 1945*, London: Macmillan, 1988.

Davenport-Hines, R. P. T., *The Life and Times of Dudley Docker*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Dayer, R., *Finance and Empire: Sir Charles Addis, 1861–1945*, London: Macmillan, 1988.

Denoon, D., *Settler Capitalism: The Dynamics of Dependent Development in the Southern Hemisphere*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Dixon, C. and Heffernan, M. J., *Colonialism and Development in the Contemporary World*, London: Mansell, 1991.

Donnison, F. S., *British Military Administration in the Far East, 1943–1946*, London: HMSO, 1956.

Doyle, M. W., *Empires*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Dimbleby, D. and Reynolds, D., *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988.

Drummond, I. M., *Imperial Economic Policy, 1917–1939*, London: Macmillan, 1974.

Dunn, P. M., *The First Indochina War*, London: Hurst, 1985.

Feeny, D., *The Political Economy of Productivity: Thai Agricultural Development, 1880–1975*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1982.

Fifield, R. H., *The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, 1945–1958*, New York: Harper, 1958.

Fistie, P., *L'Evolution de la Thailande Contemporaine*, Paris: Mouton, 1967.

_____, *Sous-development et utopie au Siam: Le programme de réformes présenté pen 1933 par Pridi Phanomyong*, Paris: Mouton, 1969.

Ford, C., *Donovan of OSS*, Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1970.

Frater, A., *Beyond the Blue Horizon: Imperial Airway's Eastern Service*, London: Viking, 1987.

Gallagher, J., *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Gardner, R. N., *Sterling Dollar Diplomacy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956.

Gaunson, A. B., *The Anglo-French Crisis in Lebanon and Syria, 1940–1945*, London: Macmillan, 1985.

Gibbs, N. H., *Grand Strategy*, Vol. 1, London: HMSO, 1976.

Gopal, S., *British Policy in India, 1858–1905*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.

Gough, R., *SOE Singapore, 1941–1942*, London: William Kimber, 1985.

Haggie, P., *Britannia at Bay: The Defence of the British Empire Against Japan, 1931–1941*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Hall, D. G. E., *A History of South East Asia*, London: Macmillan, 1981.

Hamill, I., *The Strategic Illusion: The Singapore Strategy and the Defence of Australia and New Zealand, 1919–1942*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981.

Haseman, J. B., *The Thai Resistance Movement during the Second World War*, Illinois: Northern Illinois Center for South East Asian Studies, 1979.

Hauner, M., *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981.

Heclo, H. and Wildavsky, A., *The Private Government of Public Money: Community and Policy inside British Politics*, London: Macmillan, 1981.

Harper, R. W. E. and Miller, H., *Singapore Mutiny*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Henderson, W. (ed.), *Southeast Asia: Problems of United States Policy*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1963.

Hinsley, F. H. et al., *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, Vols. I–III, London: HMSO, 1979–83.

Hogan, M. J., *Informal Entente: The Private Structure of Co-operation in Anglo-American Economic Diplomacy, 1920–1930*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977.

Hoisington, W., *The Casablanca Connection: French Colonial Policy, 1936–1943*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

Holland, R. F., *European Decolonization, 1918–1981*, London: Macmillan, 1985.

Hudson, G. F., *The Far East in World Politics*, London: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Huynh Kim Kahn, *Vietnamese Communism, 1923–1945*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Hyde, H. M., *The Quiet Canadian*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962.

Ienaga, S., *Japan's Last War*, New York: Pantheon, 1979.

Ingram, J. C., *Economic Change in Thailand, 1850–1970*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971.

Iriye, A., *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific Region*, London: Longman, 1989.

Ishii Osamu, *Cotton-Textile Diplomacy: Japan, Great Britain and the United States, 1930–6*, New York: Arno Press, 1981.

Jackson, R., *The Secret Squadrons*, London: Robson Books, 1983.

Jeffrey, R., *Asia: The Winning of Independence*, London: Macmillan, 1981.

Jeffreys-Jones, R. (ed.), *Eagle and Empire: American Opposition to European Imperialism, 1914–82*, Aix-en-Provence: Dupuis, 1983.

Jeffries, C., *The Colonial Police*, London: Max Parish, 1952.

Jones, F. C., *Japan's New Order in East Asia: Its Rise and Fall, 1937–1945*, London: Oxford University Press, 1954.

Kahin, G. M. (ed.), *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964.

Keyes, C., *Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom as a Modern Nation State*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1987.

Khoo Kay Kim (ed.), *The History of South, South East and East Asia: Essays and Documents*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Kirby, S. W., *The War Against Japan*, Vols. I–IV, London: HMSO, 1959–67.

Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai–Malay Relations: Traditional Intra-regional Relations from the Seventeenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Kruz, D. K., *The Battle for the British Gold Standard in 1931*, London: Croom Helm, 1987.

Lacoutre, J., *Ho Chi Minh*, New York: Random House, 1968.

Lash, J. P., *Roosevelt and Churchill, 1939–41*, London: André Deutsch, 1977.

Lebra, J. C., *Jungle Alliance: Japan and the Indian National Army*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1971.

_____, *Japanese Trained Armies in South-East Asia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.

Leutze, J. R., *Bargaining for Supremacy: Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1937–1941*, Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1977.

Lewin, R., *The Other Ultra: Codes, Cyphers and the Defeat of Japan*, London: Hutchinson, 1982.

Lissak, M., *Military Roles in Modernization: Civil–Military Relations in Thailand and Burma*, London: Sage, 1976.

Loh Fook Seng, *Seeds of Separatism: Education Policy in Malaya, 1874–1946*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Louis, W. R., *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonisation of the British Empire, 1941–1945*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

_____, *British Strategy in the Far East, 1919–1939*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

_____, *The British Empire in the Middle East: Arab Nationalism, the United States and Post-War Imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Low, D. A., *Lion Rampant: Essays in the Study of British Imperialism*, London: Frank Cass, 1973.

_____, *Eclipse of Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Lowe, P., *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

_____, *Britain in the Far East: A Survey from 1819 to the Present*, London: Longman, 1981.

Lunt, J., *A Hell of a Licking*, London: Collins, 1986.

MacFaydean, A., *A History of Rubber Regulation, 1934–43*, London: Macmillan, 1944.

Marder, A. J., *Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Marks, F. W., *Wind over Sand: The Diplomacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1988.

Marr, David G., *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Moffat, A. L., *Mongkut: The King of Siam*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961.

Moore, F. J. with Neher, C. D., *Thailand: Its People, Society and Culture*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Montgomery, B., *Shenton of Singapore: Governor and Prisoner of War*, London: Hutchinson, 1984.

Morley, J. W. (ed.), *The Fateful Choice: Japan's Advance into South-East Asia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

Murfett, M., *Fool-Proof Relations: The Search for Anglo-American Naval Co-operation during the Chamberlain Years, 1937–1940*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1984.

Neidpath, J., *The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain's Eastern Empire, 1919–1941*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Nish, I., *Japanese Foreign Policy, 1869–1942*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.

Nuetchelein, D. E., *Thailand and the Struggle for South-East Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965.

Painter, D. S., *Oil and the American Century*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Patti, A. L., *Why Vietnam: Prelude to America's Albatross*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

Pluvier, J., *South-East Asia from Colonialism to Independence*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Pointon, A. C., *The Bombay–Burmah Trading Company*, London: Wallace, 1964.

Prasad, B. (ed.), *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War*, Kanpur: Orient Longman, 1958.

Presseisen, E. L., *Germany and Japan: A Study in Totalitarian Diplomacy, 1933–4*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1958.

Purcell, V. W. W. S., *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Ray, J. K., *Portraits of Thai Politics*, New Delhi: Oriental Longman, 1972.

Reddi, V. M., *A History of the Cambodian Independence Movement, 1863–1955*, Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University Press, 1974.

Reeve, W. D., *Public Administration in Siam*, London: Oxford University Press, 1951.

Reynolds, D., *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937–1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation*, London: Europa, 1981.

Ride, E., *B. A. A. G.: Hong Kong Resistance, 1942–1945*, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Roskill, S., *Naval Policy between the Wars*, Vol. II, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Riggs, F. W., *Thailand: The Modernisation of a Bureaucratic Polity*, Honolulu: East–West Center, 1966.

Sassoon, J., *Economic Policy in Iraq, 1932–1950*, London: Frank Cass, 1987.

Sayers, R. S., *The Bank of England*, Vol. II, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Schaller, M., *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938–1945*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

Schroeder, P. W., *The Axis and Japanese-American Relations, 1941*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958.

Seymour, Susan, *Anglo-Dutch Relations and Germany, 1933–1945*, Gylling: Odense University Press, 1982.

Sherwood, R., *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History*, New York: Harper & Bros, 1948.

Silverfarb, D., *Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East: A Case Study of Iraq, 1929–1941*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Silverstein J. (ed.), *South-East Asia in World War Two*, New Haven: Yale University, South East Asia Studies, 1966.

Skinner, G. W., *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967.

_____, *Leadership and Power in the Chinese Community in Thailand*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958.

Smith, B. F., *The Shadow Warriors: O.S.S. and the Origins of the C.I.A.*, London: André Deutsch, 1983.

Smith, R. H., *O.S.S.*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

Songsri Foran, *Thai-British-American Relations during World War II and the Immediate Post-war Period, 1940–1946*, Thai Khadi Research Institute Paper No. 10, Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, 1981.

Spector, R. H., *Advice and Support: The Early Years of the United States Army in Vietnam*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983.

Stewart, R. A., *Sunrise at Abadan: The British and Soviet Invasion of Iran, 1941*, New York: Praeger, 1989.

Stoff, M. B., *Oil, War and American Security*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.

Storry, G. R., *Japan and the Decline of the West in Asia*, London: Macmillan, 1979.

Stowe, J. A., *Siam Becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue*, London: Hurst, 1991.

Shaharil Talib, *After Its Own Image: The Trengganu Experience, 1881–1941*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Thamsook Numnonda, *Thailand and the Japanese Presence, 1941–1945*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1977.

Thawatt Mokarapong, *A History of the Thai Revolution: A Study in Political Behaviour*, Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1972.

Thomas, R. T., *Britain and Vichy: The Dilemma of Anglo-French Relations in the Far East, 1940–42*, London: Macmillan, 1979.

Thorne, C., *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League, and the Far Eastern Crises, 1931–1933*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972.

_____, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain and the War against Japan, 1941–1945*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978.

_____, *The Issue of War: States, Societies and the Far Eastern Conflict of 1941–1945*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985.

Thornton, A. P., *Imperialism in the Twentieth Century*, London: Macmillan, 1978.

Toye, H., *Laos: Buffer State or Battleground*, London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Trebilcock, R. C., *Vickers Brothers*, London: Macmillan, 1977.

Trenowden, I., *Operations Most Secret: SOE in the Malayan Theatre*, London: William Kimber, 1978.

Vanderbosch, A. and Butwell, R., *The Changing Face of South-East Asia*, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966.

Vella, W. F., *The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955.

_____, *Chaiyo! The Role of King Vajiravudh in the Development of Thai Nationalism*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978.

Warren, K., *Armstrongs of Elswick*, London: Macmillan, 1989.

Watt, D. C., *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place, 1900–1975*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Wilkins, M., *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from 1914 to 1940*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Willmott, H. P., *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942*, London: Orbis, 1982.

Wilson, D. A., *Politics in Thailand*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962.

Woodward, Sir E. L., *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, Vols. I–V, London: HMSO, 1970–6.

Wyatt, D., *Thailand: A Short History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.

Ziegler, P., *Mountbatten*, London: Collins, 1985.

## *Secondary Works: Articles*

Aldrich, R. J., 'A Question of Expediency: Britain, the United States and Thailand, 1941–42', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XIX, 2 (1988): 209–44.

_____, 'Imperial Rivalry: British and American Intelligence in Asia, 1942–6', *Intelligence and National Security*, 3, 1 (1988): 5–55.

_____, 'Conspiracy or Confusion? Churchill, Roosevelt and Pearl Harbor', *Intelligence and National Security*, 7, 3 (1992): 335–47.

Anderson, B., 'Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies', in E. B. Ayal (ed.), *The Study of Thailand*, Athens: Ohio University, Center for International Studies, 1978, pp. 3–9.

Andrew, C. M., 'The Entente Cordiale from its Origins to 1914', in N. Waites (ed.), *Troubled Neighbours: Franco-British Relations in the Twentieth Century*, London: University of Reading, 1971, pp. 12–26.

Batson, B., 'The Fall of the Phibun Government, 1944', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 62, 2 (1974): 89–120.

Brown, I., 'Siam and the Gold Standard, 1902–8', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, X, 2 (1979): 381–99.

Charnvit Kasetsiri, 'The First Pibul Government and its Involvement in World War II', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 62, 2 (1974): 25–83.

_____, 'British Financial Advisers in Siam in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn', *Modern Asian Studies*, 12, 2 (1978): 193–215.

Clifford, N., 'Britain, America and the Far East, 1937–41: A Failure in Co-operation', *Journal of British Studies*, III (1963): 148–60.

Cushman, J. W., 'The Kaw Group: Chinese Business in Early Twentieth Century Penang', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XVII, 1 (1986): 67–72.

Darwin, J., 'Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy between the Wars', *Historical Journal*, XXIII, 3 (1980): 657–79.

_____, 'British Decolonization since 1945: Pattern or a Puzzle?', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, XII, 2 (1984): 187–210.

Darling, F. C., 'British and American Influence in Post-War Thailand', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 4, 1 (1963), 88–102.

Dreifort, J., 'Japan's Advance into Indochina, 1940: The French Response', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XIII, 2 (1982): 279–95.

Duke, P., 'Thai–American joint efforts and co-operation for the abolition of unequal treaties (1918–1938)', in Wiwat Mung Kandi and W. Warrens (eds.), *A Century and a Half of Thai–American Relations*, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn Press, 1982.

Duncanson, D., 'Ho-Chi-Minh in Hong Kong, 1931–2', *The China Quarterly*, 57, 1 (1974): 84–101.

Eiji Murashima, 'The Origin of Modern Official State Ideology in Thailand', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XIX, 1 (1988): 80–96.

Ferris, J., 'From Broadway House to Bletchley Park: The Diary of Captain Malcolm Kennedy, 1934–46', *Intelligence and National Security*, 4, 3 (1989): 48–70.

Flood, E. T., 'The 1940 Franco-Thai Border Dispute', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, X, 2 (1969): 304–25.

Gilchrist, A., 'Diplomacy and Disaster: Thailand and the British Empire in 1941', *Asian Affairs XIII* (Old Series), 69, 3 (1982): 249–65.

Hillman, J., 'Malaya and the International Tin Cartel', *Modern Asian Studies*, 22, 2 (1988): 237–61.

_____, 'The Freerider and the Cartel: Siam and the International Tin Restriction Agreements, 1931–1941', *Modern Asian Studies*, 24, 2 (1990): 297–323.

Horner, D. M., 'Special Intelligence in the South West Pacific Area in World War II', *Australian Outlook*, 32, 3 (1978): 310–27.

Jeffrey, R., 'The Politics of "Indirect Rule": Types of Relationship among Rulers, Ministers and Residents in a "Native State"', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, XIII, 3 (1975): 261–81.

Kahn, D., 'The Intelligence Failure of Pearl Harbor', *Foreign Affairs*, 70, 5 (1991/2): 142–52.

Kiernan, V. G., 'The Kra Canal projects of 1882–5: Anglo-French Rivalry

in Siam and Malaya', *History*, XLI, 1 (1956): 137–57.

_____, 'Britain, Siam and Malaya: 1875–1885', *Journal of Modern History*, XXVIII, 1 (1956): 1–20.

Klein, I., 'Britain, Siam and the Malay Peninsula, 1906–9', *Historical Journal*, XII, 1 (1969): 119–36.

LaFeber, W., 'Roosevelt, Churchill and Indochina', *American Historical Review*, LXXX, 4 (1975): 1277–95.

Laffey, J. F., 'French Far Eastern Policy in the 1930s', *Modern Asian Studies*, 23, 1 (1989): 117–49.

Leary, W. M., 'A Short History of the Thai Airforce', *Aerospace History*, 29, 2 (1982): 93–7.

Louis, W. R., 'American Anti-colonialism and the Dissolution of the British Empire', *International Affairs*, 61, 3 (1985): 395–420.

Lowe, P., 'The Dilemmas of an Ambassador: Sir Robert Craigie in Tokyo, 1937–41', *Proceedings of the British Association for Japanese Studies*, 1, 1 (1977): 33–56.

_____, 'Winston Churchill and Japan', *Proceedings of the British Association for Japanese Studies*, VI, 1 (1981): 37–49.

Marks, F. W., 'The Origins of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Promise to Support Britain Militarily in the Far East—A New Look', *Pacific Historical Review*, 53, 4 (1984): 447–62.

Martin, J. V., Jr., 'Thai-American Relations in World War II', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 12, 4 (1963): 451–67.

Mikesell, R., 'Sterling Area Currencies of the Middle East', *Middle East Journal*, 11, 1 (1948): 161–4.

Ong Chit Chung, 'British Defence Planning in Malaya, 1935–8: From the Defence of Singapore to the Defence of the Malayan Mainland', *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, 70, 1 (1988): 161–97.

Osgood, S. M., 'Le mythe de "la perfide Albion" en France, 1919–40', *Cahiers d'Histoire*, 20, 1 (1975): 116–24.

Reynolds, E. B., 'Aftermath of Alliance: The Wartime Legacy in Thai-Japanese Relations', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XXI, 1 (1990): 66–88.

_____, 'The Opening Wedge: The OSS in Thailand', in G. Chalou (ed.), *The Secrets War*, Washington, DC: National Archives, 1992.

Sbrega, J., '"First Catch Your Hare": Anglo-American Perspectives on Indochina during the Second World War', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XVI, 2 (1985): 63–78.

Smith, R. B., 'The Japanese Period in Indochina and the Coup of 9 March 1945', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, IX, 2 (1978): 268–302.

Spector, R., 'Allied Intelligence and Indochina, 1943–1945', *Pacific Historical Review*, LI, 1 (1982): 23–51.

Stowe, J. A., 'Japan's Relations with Thailand in 1945', *International Studies*, 1 (1985): 30–9.

Swan, W. L., 'Thai-Japanese Relations at the Start of the Pacific War: New Insight into a Controversial Period', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XVIII, 2 (1987): 270–93.

_____, 'Thai-Japan Monetary Relations at the Start of the Pacific War', *Modern Asian Studies*, 23, 2 (1989): 313–47.

Tarling, N., 'King Prajadhipok and the Apple Cart: British Attitudes towards the 1932 Revolution', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 64, 2 (1976): 1–39.

_____, 'Atonement before Absolution: British Policy towards Thailand during World War II', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 66, 1 (1978): 22–65.

_____, 'Rice and Reconciliation: The Anglo-Thai Peace Negotiations of 1945', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 66, 2 (1978): 59–112.

_____, '"Some Rather Nebulous Capacity": Lord Killearn's Appointment in Southeast Asia', *Modern Asian Studies*, 20, 3 (1986): 559–600.

_____, 'Britain and the First Japanese Move into Indochina', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XXI, 1 (1990): 35–66.

Thamsook Numnonda, 'The Anglo-Siamese Secret Convention of 1897', *Journal of the Siam Society*, LII, 1 (1965): 51–2.

_____, 'Negotiations Regarding the Cession of the Siamese Malay States, 1907–1909', *Journal of the Siam Society*, LV, 2 (1967): 227–35.

Thiravet Pramuanratkarn, 'The Hong Kong Bank in Thailand: A Case of a Pioneering Bank', in F. H. H. King (ed.), *Eastern Banking: Essays in the Early History of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*, London: Athlone, 1983.

Thorne, C., 'The Indochina Issue between Britain and the United States, 1942–1945', *Pacific Historical Review*, XCV, 1 (1976): 73–96.

Tomlinson, B., 'Britain and the Indian Currency Crisis, 1930–2', *Economic History Review*, XXXII, 1 (1979): 89–107.

Whealey, R. H., 'Anglo-American Oil Confronts Spanish Economic Nationalism: A Study in Economic Imperialism', *Diplomatic History*, 12, 2 (1988): 112–25.

Young, K. T., 'The Special Role of American Advisers in Thailand, 1902–49', *Asia*, 14, 1 (1969): 1–31.

## *Doctoral Theses and Unpublished Papers*

Apichart Chinvanno, 'Thailand's Search for Protection: The Making of the Alliance with the United States, 1947–1954', Ph.D. thesis, St Anthony's College, Oxford, 1985.

Brown, I. G., 'The Ministry of Finance and the Early Development of Financial Administration in Siam, 1885–1910', Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1975.

Flood, E. T., 'Japan's Relations with Thailand: 1928–1941', Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1967.

Mackay Johnston, A., '"A Mess of Pottage": Vichy and the Mekong Affair', Unpublished paper, Oxford, 1987.

Nutter, D. N., 'US Policy towards Japan, 1941', Ph.D. thesis, University of Columbia, 1976.

Oblas, P., 'Siam's Efforts to Revise the Unequal Treaty System in the Sixth Reign, 1910–25', Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1974.

Ong Chit Chung, 'Operation Matador and the Outbreak of the War in the Far East', Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1985.

Pritchard, R. J., 'Far Eastern Influences on British Strategy, 1937–39', Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1983.

Reynolds, E. B., 'Ambivalent Allies: Japan and Thailand, 1941–1945', Ph.D. thesis, University of Hawaii, 1988.

Sogn, R. R., 'Successful Journey: A History of US–Thai Relations, 1932–45', Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1990.

Vikrom Koompirochana, 'Siam in British Foreign Policy, 1855–1938: The Acquisition and Relinquishment of British Extraterritorial Rights', Ph.D. thesis, Michigan State University, 1972.

# Index


ABBAIBAL, PHYA, 103, 245n
Abyssinia, 174, 187, 211n
Adams, Charles, 121
Adams, Alec: view of Phibul, 368
Addis, Sir Charles, 62
Aditya Didd-abha, Prince, 220; and Japanese espionage, 185; and Singapore, 216
Admiralty, London: and gunboat diplomacy, 103, 138n; and the Singapore strategy, 131, 151n; use of Bangkok coaling station, 163
Advisers: decrease in numbers, 9, 49–50, 379; agricultural co-operative movement, 9
Alanbrooke, Field Marshal, 361
Amborn, Major, 220
Amery, Leo, 26, 232, 370
Anchluss, 215
Anglo-American naval talks: in 1938, 181, 192–3, 216–17; in 1940, 257, 272; in 1941, 313–14
Anglo-Burmese War, 4
Anglo-French Staff Talks, 221–3
Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 10, 20, 49, 216; possible revival, 225
Anglo-Persian Oil Company, 6, 242
Anglo-Siamese Corporation, 37
Anglo-Siamese Tin Syndicate Limited, 53
Anglo-Siamese treaties, *see* Anglo-Thai treaties
Anglo-Thai treaties: 1855, 41, 54, 57; 1897, 11; 1909, 11, 45; renegotiation of 1925, 15, 59, 119; renegotiation of 1936–7, 15, 162–4
Anti-Chinese legislation, 233–4
Anti-Comintern Pact, 181, 215–16, 224
Apichart Chinvanno, 12
Armstrong Vickers Limited, *see* Vickers Armstrong Limited
Asia for the Asiatics, 270
Asiatic Petroleum Company, 121, 167, 238
Assembly, Bangkok, 196–8; and trade issues, 115–17, 164–6
Attlee, Clement, 333
Axis influence, 173–6, 215–16
Axis ambitions, 269–70, 276, 281, 303n
Australia: as a source of manpower, 22, 219; views on Thailand, 322, 334

BACKHOUSE, SIR RODGER: and the Singapore strategy, 192
Bailey, Consul-General, 102
Baker, James, 99, 152, 170, 183
Balliol College, Oxford, 124
Ba Maw, 174
Bandon, 189
Bangkok: port development, 37, 198n
*Bangkok Times*, 17, 280, 322
Bank of Egypt, 8, 51, 73–4
Bank of England, 50; and American financial power, 18, 120; attack on Crosby, 154–5, 237; *Empire Newsletter*, 8; files and records, 5; financial adviser, 58, 160; Governor, 7, 8; loans, 8, 50–2, 65, 154, 160; power in decline, 176
Barry, R. H.: and SOE, 357n
Battambang, 43, 290; Bovaradet in, 103
Baudouin, Paul, 23, 263
Baxter, James, 8, 90, 132; and Crosby, 154; and education, 123; and Phibul, 105–11; and Prajadhipok, 101; and Pridi, 112–3; resignation, 158–9; and retrenchment, 98–9,

377; and United States, 120
Bellairs, Admiral, 313
Bennett, John Sterndale, 264, 281; on expediency, 288; and scepticism regarding Crosby, 321, 325
Bevin, Ernest: on Hall-Patch, 68
Bididh Senamatya, Phya, 181
Birch, Sir Noel, 91
Bletchley Park, 348
Board of Trade, 154, 160
Bombay-Burmah Company, 37, 53
Bond, General, 263, 276–7
Boripat, Prince, 93
Borneo, 189
Borneo Company, 77
Bovaradet Kridakorn, Prince, 102–5, 134n, 138
Bowring Treaty; *see* Anglo-Thai treaties
Britain: aggrandizement, 26–33, 372–3; appeasement, 21–3, 217–18, 258; arbitration efforts over Indo-China, 286–9; Burma Road, 261–2; and *coups d'etat* of 1933, 97–105; declaration of war on Germany, 224; declaration of war on Thailand, 364–6; dominance of, 2–15, 48–61, 132–3, 152–4; economic crisis, 61–78; economic decline, 18; fear of Japanese embargo, 331; imperial defence, 8, 10, 91, 96–7, 189–91, 215–17, 271–2; imperial retreat, 49; imperium, 6–7; misunderstanding of Japanese strategy, 278; naval training, 124; propaganda, 219, 224, 248n, 273, 303n; reactions to Revolution of 1932, 92–7; rearmament, 182; resistance in Indo-China, 258, 262, 274, 285; search for American naval co-operation, 20, 158, 181, 216–17, 256–7; support for Phibul in 1934, 110–12; and Thai nationalism, 133, 172–80; tin smelting, 116–19; weakness in 1940, 256
British American Mines Limited, 117–18, 122, 242
Brooke-Popham, Sir Robert, 334; attack on Crosby, 334; entry into southern Thailand, 339; opinion on Matador, 362–3; and SOE, 336–7
Brown, Ian, 50
Bruce, S. M., 334
Budgetary politics, 102, 108–10, 114–15
Burma, 6–7; British misrule, 155; defence of, 188–9, 211n, 262; frontier with Thailand, 73–5; indigenous élites, 14; nationalists, 232–3; police, 57; post-war future, 25; subversion, 13, 317–18; Thai ambitions, 288–9, 370; wars with Thailand, 40
Burma Road, 22–3, 261–2
Butler, R. A., 225, 248n, 257, 279, 281

CADOGAN, SIR ALEXANDER, 281, 289; declaration of war on Thailand, 364; dislike of R. A. Butler, 248n; and impending Japanese attack, 348; on new ministries, 254; and Roosevelt, 333; and SOE in Thailand, 335
Calcutta, 7
Caltex Company, 244
Cambodia: border crisis, 261–310; French acquisition, 42–3; Thai ambitions, 155, 183–4;
Campbell, Sir John: as chairman of the ITC, 164
Canton: fall to Japan, 187
Casey, Richard, 322, 348
Caswell, Jesse, 41
Catroux, General George, 23, 263; eviction from Indo-China, 264; resistance in Indo-China, 285, 357
Cavendish-Bentinck, Victor: and the JIC, 335
Chamberlain, Austen, 61
Charoonsak Kridakorn, Prince, 60
Chauvel, Jean, 227, 263
Chiang Kai-shek, 22
Chiefs of Staff: and the defence of Singapore, 191–3, 216, 256; and France, 222; and Operation Matador, 293–4, 341–2, 344; pessimism, 261–2; policy of threats, 290–1; retaliation against Thailand, 277
Chieng Mai, 173
Chile, 239

China, 8; importance in American Thai policy, 27; railway finance, 59
Chinese in Thailand, 56, 122; boycott of Japanese goods, 233
Chulalongkorn, King Rama V, 177
Churchill, Winston, 256, 297; ambitions in Thailand, 27–8, 366–7; and Admiral Bellairs, 313; and the Burma Road, 22, 261–2; confidence during 1941, 330; and defence of Malaya, 263; and Indo-China, 26; misrepresentation of offer to Thailand, 349; and Phibul, 230; problems of a guarantee to Thailand, 348–9; and Roosevelt, 256, 272–3; with Roosevelt on the HMS *Prince of Wales*, 332
Civil aviation, 181
Clark Kerr, Sir Archibald, 192
Clarke, Henry Ashley, 23, 226, 263, 274, 323, 332; and the key to the South, 23, 332; scepticism regarding Thailand, 321
Cleary, D. G., 14
Clementi, Sir George, 113
Clive, Sir Robert, 121
Cochin-China, 42
Codes and cyphers, 155, 196n
Colonial Office, 133; and Operation Matador, 339; and nationalism, 154, 164–5; and Pridi, 113; and rubber, 115; and SOE, 375n; and southern Thailand, 27–9; and tin, 116, 241; and treaty renegotiation, 163
Colonial school, 2, 28–30, 75, 217–18, 223, 370; increase in strength after the war, 238–9; acceleration after 1941, 369–70
Commercial espionage, 166–71, 200n, 238
Committee of Imperial Defence: and the relief of Singapore, 189–91, 216
Communism, 57, 110–11, 132
Constitution, 106–7, 134n
Cook, Sir Edward, 8, 51, 376; and economic crisis, 63; and the gold standard, 65, 73–4; technical skills, 52–3
Comintern, 56–7, 85
Commodity prices, 63–4
Consul-General: role of, 56, 59
*Coups d'etat*, 97–105
Craig, R. D., 93–105
Craigie, Sir Robert, 192, 224, 281
Crosby, Sir Josiah: arrival as Minister, 153; attack on Doll and the colonial school, 234–5; attack on the Raj, 156; character, 153; clash with the ITC, 165–6; and Colonel Karb Kunjara, 276; as Consul-General, 13–4; early support for Pridi, 110–12, 133, 140n; and exchange controls, 232–5; and Greater Thailand, 177, 288–9; and Hugh Grant, 279; and military power, 126, 192, 224–6; and nationalism, 153–5; 168–9, 172–80, 217–18; and neutrality, 195; and the non-aggression pacts, 225–30; offer of resignation, 289, 324; opposition to SOE, 336–7; pessimism in November 1941, 343; and Phibul, 283–4, 367; receipt of signals intelligence, 266; renegotiation of treaties, 162–3; speculation on a Thai-Japanese alliance, 218–21; support for Thailand against France, 267, 277–9
Cunliffe-Lister, Sir Philip, 116
Cunningham-Reid, Captain, 128
Customs Adviser, 52
Czechoslovakia: in 1938, 218

DALADIER, 227
Damrong, Prince, 172
Danish East Asiatic Company, 54
Dartmouth Naval Academy, 55
Darwin signals intelligence station, 265
Day, E. V. G: provisional administrator for southern Thailand, 339
Decoux, Admiral Jean, 231, 264–8; links with Singapore, 285, 287–9
Defence Requirements Committee, 130
De Gaulle, General, 285
Deuxieme Bureau, 223
Devawongse, Prince, 60
Denham, Geoffrey: as SIS chief in the Far East, 375n

Dening, Esler, 264; views on currency reserves, 66, 73
Dickinson, Inspector A. H., 113–14, 132, 141n
Diplomatic school, 28–30, 223; policy of bribe, 294–5, 319–24
Directorate of Military Intelligence: criticism of Crosby, 343
Direk Chaiyanam, 231, 261; and the American aircraft issue, 280; criticism of Phibul, 288; and Crosby, 314; as Foreign Secretary, 335; and Germany, 276; on the oil question, 320–3
Djibouti, 274
Dobbie, Major-General, 127, 188–9; and increased troop levels, 191
Dolbeare, Frederic R., 18, 56, 101, 157, 160, 186, 225, 234, 236, 280, 378, 316, 378
Doll, William, 280, 377; and Japanese resentment, 233; on the oil question, 239; relations with Pridi, 234, 328; selection, 160; undermining of Grant, 315–16
Dollars, 19, 55, 60, 236–45
Do Hung, 223
Don Muang airfield, 7, 185
Donovan, William J., 313, 345; missions to Europe, 21
Dormer, Cecil: attitude to intervention, 101; defence of adviser, 100; on devaluation, 66–7; and Pridi, 103, 112–13, and the Revolution of 1932, 94–7
Ducroux, Joseph, 57
Dunkirk, 230

East Asia Co-prosperity Scheme, 315
Eastern Smelting Company, 241
East Kencheng, 43
Eastwood, Christopher, 114
Economic crisis, global, 61–78
Economic warfare: and Malaya, 277, 320
Eden, Anthony: dislike of SOE, 337; and the disposal of Grant, 326; hopes for *rapprochement* with Japan, 192; and Indo-China, 26, 285; influence of Australia, 334; and intervention in 1932, 95; and Japan's advance into southern Indo-China in July 1941, 330; and Phibul reassurance, 295, 332; on the problem of neutral states, 290; resistance to British aggrandizement against Thailand, 366; and Roosevelt, 347–8; support for Crosby, 289, 315, 324, 364–6
Education of Thai élite, 49, 55
Egypt, 1, 51, 59, 235; constitution, 107; and Italy, 276; nationalist pressure, 276
Emerald Buddha, 42, 362
Entente Cordiale, 49
Espionage; *see* Intelligence

Far Eastern Combined Bureau, 337
Far Eastern Committee, Cabinet, 257; and the Franco-Thai border crisis, 277; policy of bribe, 294–5, 319–24; and Pridi, 234; support for Thailand against France, 281–4
Far Eastern Security Service, 340
Financial Adviser, 6, 49–53, 58, 132; aims, 9–10, 161; communication, 8, 196n; control, 98–9, 143n; and *coups d'etat* of 1933, 100; and the Foreign Office, 158; reappointment, 96; and the Revolution of 1932, 94–5; role in commerce, 116–17; Thai complaints, 160
Finland, 239
Foreign Affairs Adviser, 7, 16–18, 54, 58; eclipse, 101, 157, 160; as a source of information, 47; on tin, 119–20
Foreign Office, London: attack on the Bank of England, 237; relations with other departments, 41
Foreign officials, 379
Franco-Thai border crisis, 226–30, 256–97; Japan's dilemma, 278–9; Japan's enforcement of arbitration, 286; repercussions, 315–19
Free Thai, *see* Seri Thai
France, 2, 40; alarmism, 183–4, 221–3; annexations of Thailand, 42–3; collapse in 1940, 21, 215, 256–8;

educational influence, 55–6; and Greater Thailand, 177; and Japan, 185, 266–8, 273; Legation, 3, 18; racial ideas, 23; renegotiation of Franco-Thai treaties in 1937, 162–3
French Indo-China, 177; in Anglo-American wartime relations, 24–6; border crisis, 226–30, 256–97, 315–9; friction with Japan, 225, 266; Governors-General, 23, 243; indigenous élites, 14; Japanese bases, 267–8, 273, 328–32; policing, 57; reinforcements, 274; and United States, 257

GRANT, HUGH, 260, 288–9; attack on Halifax, 270; on Germany, 276; and Hull, 316; on the oil question, 323; pessimism, 274; and Roosevelt, 316; and the *status quo*, 267; unpopularity, 279, 321
General Adviser, 16, 47
Germany: attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, 330; education, 55–6; and the Franco-Thai border crisis, 274–6; German Legation, 18; influence of National Socialism, 154, 177, 215–16; the Sudetenland, 259; the Tripartite Pact, 275; wolfram trade, 220
Gibraltar, 276
Goering, Hermann, 220
Gold standard, 50, 162, 163, 165
Gore, Sir Ormsby, 163
Greater Thailand, 154, 177, 195, 231–2, 288–9, 317, 370
Great Kentung Opium Scandal, 158
Grew, Joseph: on the oil question, 121; possible mediation over Indo-China, 286; support for American guarantees in South-East Asia, 271; support for Britain, 321
Grimsdale, Colonel Gordon, 337

HAIPHONG, 268
Halifax, Lord: as an appeaser, 270; and the declaration of war, 362, 364; and economic warfare, 321; and the Franco-Thai border crisis, 277; and the removal of Grant, 326; and Hull, 314; and MAGIC, 330; and the oil question, 320; and Operation Matador, 345; and Roosevelt, 361
Hall-Patch, Sir Edward, 64; and devaluation, 65–6; legacy, 98–9, 132, 263
Hamilton, Maxwell: as Head of the Far East Division, 280; and mediation over Indo-China, 285, 341
Hanoi, 243
Harris, Townsend, 41
Harvard Law School: and Foreign Affairs Advisers, 18, 54, 58, 107
Harvey, Oliver, 227, 366
Henderson, Thynne, 187
Henniker-Major, Sir John, 226
Hitler, Adolf, 215, 230
Hoare, Sir Samuel, 159
Ho Chi Minh, 57, 114
Holland, Sir Robert, 122
Hong Kong, 7, 103, 261; policing, 57
Honolulu: and naval strategy, 272
Hoover, Herbert, 78
Hopkins, Harry, 342
Hornbeck, Stanley, 23, 323, 341; and Roosevelt policy on South-East Asia, 272; and the *status quo*, 279; support for mediation over Indo-China, 285
Hornbrook, William, 47–8
Horner, P. K, 117–19, 242
Howe, Sir Robert, 219, 234
Hua Hin, 91
Hull, Cordell, 157, 219; and MAGIC, 332; and the question of oil, 167–71, 256; and the *status quo*, 257, 267, 279, 285; Thailand and China, 332
Hurley, General, 28
Hull–Nomura conversations, 342

IMPERIUM, 6–7
Ingersoll–Phillips conversations, 192
India, 7; and the Axis, 281; and economic crisis, 63; jute, 53; local democracy, 93; and military manpower, 22; and nationalist pressure, 15; post-war future, 25; Princely States, 1, 5, 152; rice, 114; subversive activities, 13; trade with Thailand, 53
Indian Civil Service, 51–2

Indian Ocean, 45
Indirect rule, 33n
Intelligence: British espionage, 220, 229–30, 335–7; commercial espionage and oil, 167–9, 201n, 220n, 238; French espionage, 103, 223, 247n, 295, 302n; German espionage, 340; Japanese espionage, 128, 185, 222–3, 340, 341; *see also* Postal interception; Signals intelligence; Special Operations Executive
Intelligence Bureau, India, 113–14, 14
International Rubber Regulation Committee, 115–16
International Tin Committee, 116, 165–6
Inter-Services Conference, Burma, 188
Iran, 5, 6, 77, 281
Iraq, 5; loans, 160; nationalist pressure, 15
Ireland, 59
Italy, 171, 174; ambitions, 275; interception of diplomatic correspondence, 229; and nationalism, 154; and oil, 121; and the Tripartite Pact, 269

JAMES, ELDON, 54, 57, 376
Japan, 2; Army plans, 180, 275; Asia and the Asiatics, 177; and the Axis, 269; and the *coups d'etat* of 1933, 125; dilemma of the Franco-Thai border crisis, 278–9; early interest in Thailand, 123–4; and East Asia, 152, 185; economic rivalry with Britain, 3, 123–4, 315–19; Hiranuma Government, 224; Konoye Government, 261, 340; League of Nations and Thailand, 125; Meiji, 5; military conferences of 1940, 264–5, 282–4; military conference of November 1941, 342; military education, 181; move into northern Indo-China, 328–32; naval co-operation with Thailand, 182; Navy plans, 180; Nazi–Soviet Pact, 224–5; negotiations over Indo-China, 240–1; New Order, 179, 278; and the oil question, 121, 166–7, 239–45; preference for Vichy over Phibul, 316–17; propaganda, 188, 228, 280; reactions to British policy of bribe, 288–9; and the Soviet Union, 224; strategic rivalry with Britain, 3–4, 123–33, 180–94, 228–9; suspicions of Phibul, 270, 282, 367–8; Thai–Japanese alliance, 362–3; trade with Thailand, 122, 315–19; Tripartite Pact, 269, 274; Yonai Government, 261
Java, 53, 103
Jellicoe, Viscount, 131
Joint Intelligence Committee, London, 266, 300n, 335, 337
Jouan, Admiral, mission to Singapore, 287
Judicial Advisers, 7, 14, 47, 49, 96, 122

KADIR, RAJAH ABDUL, 45
Karb Kunjara, Colonel, 276
Kedah, 11, 45; Thai ambitions, 274, 317
Kelantan, 11, 45; admiration of Crosby, 156, 196; Thai ambitions, 274
Khota Baru, 314
Killery, Valentine St: and SOE in Thailand, 335
Klai Kwangol, 91
Knox, Frank, 313
Koh Samui, 220
Koumintang, 56
Kra Isthmus: British ambitions, 343, 366; canal projects, 10, 44–5, 128–30, 195, 260; strategic sensitivity, 189, 319–20, 337–9; views of Roosevelt, 362

LANSDOWNE, LORD, 68
Lansing, Edward, 18
Laos: French acquisition, 42–3; Thai ambitions, 155, 183–4, 206n, 261–310
Law, Richard, 364
Lawson, Eric St J., 13
Lebanon, 24
League of Nations, 58; and Japan in 1933, 125

Lend-Lease, 22
Lepissier, M., 223; alarmism, 223; character, 249n; disciplined, 228; rebellion against Paris, 224, 227
L'Evesque, M., 119
Loans, international, 50, 67–9, 235
Local Government Act, 109–10
London School of Economics, 124
Louis, Williams R., 6, 25
Luang Prabang, 43

MACE, D. F., 52
Mackenzie, Colin: Head of SOE in the Far East, 370
MAGIC, *see* Signals intelligence
Malaya, 1, 5–7, 10, 44–5, 177, 262, 276; Chinese population, 232–3; indigenous élites, 14; northward defence of, 127–33, 188–91, 262–3, 278–9; post-war future, 25; tariffs as a lever, 119, 182, 277; Thai annexation, 370; tin quotas, 165; trade with Thailand, 55, 114–15; war scare of 1934, 127
Malborough, 90, 124
Mallet, Victor, 95
Manchukuo, 270, 278; and oil, 121; as a puppet state, 188
Manchuria, 125–6
Mano Nitthithada, Phya, 96, 106; and his *coup d'etat* of 1933, 97–100; and tin smelting, 118–19
Marshall, General George C: and descent to war, 345; resistance to American defence commitments in South-East Asia, 272, 325, 342
Matsuoka Yosuke, 270, 282
Matsushima, 181
Mekong River, 226, 232, 269
Menzies, Sir Stuart, 357n
Mergui, 317
Middle East: dependence on India and Australia for military manpower, 22; militarism, 173, 231, 281
Ministry of Economic Warfare, London, 323–5
Ministry of Fuel and Power, London, 154
Mitsui, 220
Mongkut, King Rama IV, 41
Monopoly legislation, 117–19, 162–3, 167–171
Morgenthau, Henry, 256, 272; as a hawk, 258
Munich, 215; repetition in the Far East, 270
Mussolini, 230

NAKAMURA, REAR-ADMIRAL, 183
Nakhon Panom, 287
National City Bank of New York, 69
Narai, King, 40
Nazi–Soviet Pact, 215, 220, 238; jolt to Japan, 224–5
Niemeyer, Sir Otto, 67–8, 160, 237; resistance to Thai national banking, 235, 242
Netherlands, 256, 269
Netherlands East Indies: and Churchill, 333; and Roosevelt, 22, 333; trade, 53
Neville, Edward, 157; departure from Thailand, 228, 260; and oil, 169–70, 238; and Thai–Japanese relations, 219
New Deal, 120
New York: as a financial centre, 52
New York Orient Mines, 19
*New York Times*, 183, 314
Nigeria: and tin, 115
Neutral states, 290
Noble, Admiral Sir Percy, 221
Nomohan incident, 224
Non-aggression pacts, 215, 224–30; employed to pressurize the French, 226–7
Norman, Sir Montagu, 8

O'CONNELL, BARRY, 118
Office of Strategic Services, 26; *see also* Donovan, William J.
Officer corps in Thailand, 124
Oil: boycott by the major oil companies, 239–45; and Japan, 21; nationalization of, 19, 21, 121, 166–71, 200n, 237–45, 256, 319–28; and Spain, 121, 145n
Operation Etonian, *see* Operation Matadaor
Operation Matador, 290–4, 335–9,

361–3; debate in Cabinet Defence Committee, 339, 343; and the role of SOE, 294, 309n
Orde, Charles, 94, 185, 188, 219; and Prajadhipok, 103
Outre Mer: Anglophobic tendencies, 264; and colonial die-hards, 258; influence on French policy in Asia, 223;
Oxford and Cambridge Club, 55
Oxford University, 55, 90, 124

PANNAY INCIDENT, 192
Patrap, Makendra, 132
Pattani, 45, 370, 374n
Patton, Kenneth S., 378
Pearl Harbor, 24, 195, 362, 366; and the revisionist schools of historians, 373
Peck, Willys R., 315, 326, 340
Penang, 7, 317
Perlis, 11, 44–5
Peterson, Sir Maurice: and Britain's declaration of war on Thailand, 366; dislike of SOE, 370
Percival, Colonel, 189, 193
Petroleum Department, London, 168–9
Phahol Balabayuha, Phya, 94, 106, 174; and counter-coup of 1933, 100–5; and Prajadhipok, 102
Phibul Songkram, Luang, 133; appeals for oil, 322; assassination attempts upon, 177; assessment of foriegn policy, 367; assumption of premiership, 215; and the Axis, 173–4, 259, 274, 281, 289; and Baxter, 105–11, 159; and Bovaradet, 102–3; desire for an Anglo-American bloc to balance Japan, 262, 269, 271; disappointment over Indo-China, 278–9, 318; and Doll, 161; and Eden, 330, 341, 343; fear of Thailand being used as a battleground, 175, 201, 229, 275, 282; flight from Bangkok in 1941, 350; and German action over the Sudetenland, 259, 281; and Grant, 271, 274; and Indo-China, 260, 282; and Japan, 126, 183, 219, 270, 328; learnings towords dictatorship, 174–5, 182; and the military, 173, 271–81; and military missions dispatched, 265; and oil, 238; proposal of non-aggression pacts, 225; relations with Crosby, 269, 277, 318–19, 343; rule by decree, 231; secretive style of diplomacy, 220–1; under severe strain in 1941, 343
Philippines, 259
Pitkin, Walcott, 378
Placentia Bay, 333
Postal interception, 103, 154–5, 169, 196, 229, 295; *see also* Signals intelligence
Pointon, A. C.: and SOE, 375n
Poland, 259
Police, 49; and security co-operation, 13–14, 56–7, 113–14; *see also* Special Branch, London; Special Branch, Singapore
Political executions, 231
P'ra Nang Klao, King Rama III, 40
Prajadhipok, King Rama VII: abdication, 104–5; and communism, 101–2; and democracy, 93–4; and Eton, 37; fear of assassination, 103, 105; financial policy, 51, 63, 71–2, 93; opening of the Assembly, 107; and Phahol, 102; and royalist plots, 232, 251n; and Pridi, 101; and Sayre, 59; and the Revolution of 1932, 90–7; at Songkhla, 103; state visit to the United States, 77
Prayoon, Pamommontri, Colonel, 173; in Germany, 275
Pridi Banomyong, 94, 133; American and British assessments, 112–15; banishment in 1933, 99; and Doll, 234–5; economic radicalism, 99; as Foriegn Minister, 161; and Japan, 113, 183, 209n, 326–40; Local Government Act, 109–10; in London, 159; and a new university, 181; and oil, 167–9; and Prajadhipok, 105; resistance to Japan in 1941, 326–9; and Thai National Bank, 235; and treaty renegotiation

in 1937, 171–2, 176; and the US dollar, 238
Price, Williard, 193
*Prince of Wales*, HMS, 333, 362
Purachatra, Prince, 73, 92, 103, 126

QUAI D'ORSAY, 223, 227, 263

RACIAL ISSUES, 23, 26, 56, 62, 233, 288, 308n, 310n
Racial stereotypes, 137n, 219
Railways, 45
Rangoon, 7
Ray, Marcel, 177, 183
Rengo, 228, 280
*Repulse*, 362
Retrenchment, fiscal, 93
Reuters, 273
Revolution of 1932, 90–7
Rhineland, 174
Ribbentrop, Joachim von, 275
Ritthi Akaney, Phya, 94
Ritchie, Sir Adam: on the use of the big stick, 77
Rivett-Carnac, Charles, 68, 376
Rockefeller Foundation, 56
Ronald, Sir Nigel, 219, 223
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 16; approval of Matador, 345; attention to South-East Asia, 313; and the Burma Road crisis, 22; and economic embargo of Japan, 257; on the importance of the Kra Isthmus, 346; and Indo-China, 26; neutralization proposals for Indo-China, 332; opinion of Bangkok as a career backwater, 260; and the Pannay incident, 198; and possible British defeat, 257; prediction of attack on Thailand, 345; problems of offering a security guarantee, 20, 22, 256, 297n, 312, 348–9; on the value of South-East Asia, 23, 271, 272; warning to Britain about the Kra Isthmus, 361–2; warning to Sayre of impending attack, 345; with Churchill on the HMS *Prince of Wales*, 333
Roux, Colonel, 183, 188
Royal Air Force, 75
Royal Dutch-Shell, 19, 121, 166–70
Royal Medical School, 56
Royal Siamese Air Force, 75
Rubber, 53; and Japan, 280; prices, 64; and restriction schemes, 115–17; wartime competition for, 242–3, 320–4
Rule by decree, 23
Ryan, Colonel R. S., 91, 102–3, 137n

SALISBURY, LORD, 43
Sandhurst Academy, 55, 90
Sayre, Francis B., 16, 17, 18, 166–73; and American opportunities, 62; attitude to the Revolution of 1932, 94, 157; in the Philippines, 23; and the removal of Grant, 326; and renegotiation of treaties, 58–60; on the value of South-East Asia, 272
Sarit Charoenrath, Nai, 179
Sarasat Pholkand, Phra, 107–8
Sattahib, 319
Seni Pramoj, Mom Rajawong: warning by the United States, 267; lecture by Hull
Seri Thai, 16, 363
Seymour, Sir Horace, 28
Shanghai, 261
Shan States, 43; Thai absorption, 370; and Thai ambitions, 115–16
Sherwood, Robert, 314
Siam, change of name to Thailand, 215, 231
*Siam Chronicle*, 181
Signals intelligence (sigint), 246n; American capabilities, 305n; Darwin intercept station, 265; and events of December 1941, 348; and Japan in July 1941, 330; post-war sigint, 12; insight into Thai–Japanese relations, 281–4; *see also* Postal interception
Siamese Commercial Bank, 82n
Simon, Sir John, 128
Sikh subversion, 13–4
Silver reserves, 64, 110
Sindhu Songramchai, Luang, 130, British view of, 177; and Japan, 182, 193
Singapore, 7, 10, 20, 40, 224, 256, 262, 272; and American military missions, 24; Thai view of, 186–7,

193–4, 272–3, 278; visit by Pridi, 103
Singapore military staff, 127–8, 150n, 188–9, 219; and Anglo-French staff talks, 221–3; and Japanese strength, 188; and oil, 239
Sino-Japanese War, 183, 192
Singer Sewing Machines, 54
Socony Vacuum Oil, 121, 166–70
Songkhla, 186–7, 193, 319, 362, 366–7; Prajadhipok visits, 103
Song Suradet, Phya, 94, 173, 205n
South China Sea, 20
Soviet Union: and attack on Germany, 330; and Axis strategy, 281
Spain: and Gibraltar, 276; as a neutral, 312; and oil nationalization, 121, 145n, 238
Special Branch, London, 104–5
Special Branch, Singapore, 57, 103, 113–14, 132
Special Operations Executive, 28, 258; and incursions into Thailand, 294, 335–8, 370, 375n; and resistance in Indo-China, 262, 274, 285
Sri Dharmadhibes, Chao Phya, 107, 220, 231
Sri Sena, 160
Sri Visarn Vacha, Phya, 95–6
Standard Vacuum Oil, 19, 54, 121, 166–70, 239, 323
Stark, Admiral, 342; and decision for war, 345
State Department: and advisers, 7
Sterling, 8; and arms purchases, 240; and decline of confidence, 236; and devaluation, 19, 62–81; link to the tical, 98–9; and Thai trade patterns, 55; and the yen, 233
Stevens, Raymond B., 18, 154, 378; attitude to the Revolution of 1932, 94; on Hall-Patch, 68; on Prince Wan, 101; and tin smelting, 119
Straits of Malacca, 45
*Straits Times*, 159
Students, 83n, 124, 207n
Suez, 10
Sultan of Johore, 5
Sultan of Kelantan, 5
Supreme Council, Bangkok, 65, 93
Sûreté, 103, 223
Swan, L. M., 51
Syria, 24

TAMURA, COLONEL, 299n, 321, 367
Tangau, 43
Tanks, 92, 100
Tan Malaka, 113
Tavoy, 317
Teak, 166
Thailand: air force, 96; alliances, 12–13; anti-colonialism, 369–74; and China, 233; and currency reserve, 7, 19; declaration of war on Britain and the United States, 364–6; and economic crisis, 61–78; and the élite, 13–14, 41, 49, 55, 60, 63, 90, 124; fear of an Anglo-Japanese war, 188–9; First World War, 57–8; intelligence service, 92, 139n, 142n; inter-war relations with the United States, 15–24; and Japan, 123–33; 186–8; 270–4, 314–24, 362; loans, 8; military missions to Singapore and Tokyo, 265, 276; nationalism, 10, 55, 133, 153–4, 172–80, 231–5; Navy, 182; neutrality, 194, 216–17; oil shortages, 240; peasantry, 63; rice exports, 53; and rubber regulations, 115–16; and Thai-American treaties, 16, 58, 92, 100, 119, 170–2; trade with India, 53; wartime controversy over the future of Thailand, 24–33, 369–74
Thai National Bank, 235–6
Thalweg principle, 73, 226
Thamrong Nawasawat, Luang, 105
Thavenot, A. F., 373n
Thawee Chullasap, 334
Third International, 114
Thomas, Sir Shenton: and arbitration initiative, 286–9; and tin restriction, 164
Thomas, Wilhelm, 340
Tientsin, 215, 224
*Times, The*, 273
Tin, 7, 115; competition with Japan, 280, 320–4; and dollar earnings, 240; restriction schemes, 15–17,

164–5; smelting, 19, 116–19, 240–1, 237–45

UNFEDERATED MALAY STATES, 11, 15, 34n; and Thai ambitions, 155–6, 370
United Engineers Limited, 37
United States: aircraft for Thailand, 280; 'American python', 20, 69; and anti-colonialism, 24–33, 369–74; arbiter of the British Empire, 158, 195; and British dominance, 152–3; and China, 27; and economic crisis, 61–78; economic rivalry with Britain, 3; education, 55–6; importance of inter-war relations with Thailand, 15–24, 157–8; interests in South-East Asia, 53–4, 258; isolationism, 90, 312, 314; largest creditor nation, 18; Legation, 3; and Malaya, 274; new interest in Singapore, 314; and oil, 21, 157, 166–70, 236–45, 319–24; Protestant missions, 40–1; rejection of mediation role over Indo-China, 285–6; and Seri Thai, 2; and the *staus quo*, 264, 271; and Thai–American treaties, 2, 41, 58, 119, 162–3, 170–2; and tin, 116–19; and trade, 18, 153; view of Pridi, 112
United States Navy: resistance to South-East Asian commitments, 272, 313, 342

VAJARAVUDH, KING RAMA VI, 55; view of the Chinese, 56
Vanich, Pananond, Nai, 167–71; correspondence stolen, 169, 239; and Japan, 361
Van Milingen, Colonel: and SIS, 375n
Versailles, Treaty of, 58
Vichit Vadhakarn, Luang, 231; in Burma, 302n
Vichy, 23, 258, 262, 278, 316; and Britain, 274; and Germany, 274–5; and Japan's incursion of 1940, 268; representatives in the Far East, 306n; security service, 274; and Singapore, 284; and Thai claims on Indo-China, 266–7
Vickers Armstrong Limited, 91–2, 100, 102, 160
Vientianne, 42
Vilas Ostananda, Nai, 321
Virginia Water, 232

WALEY, DAVID, 236
Wang Ching-wei, 233
Wan Waityakorn, Prince Voravan, 18; appointment as Foreign Affairs Adviser, 101; and Crosby, 187; on Indo-China, 262, 288; on the key role of the United States, 195; and military education, 182; and the non-aggression pacts, 225; and oil, 167; and overseas education, 124; prediction of Japanese strategy in South-East Asia, 278; pro-Japanese attitude, 278; on the vulnerability of Singapore, 128, 186
War Plan Dog, 272
War Plan Orange, 192
War Plan Rainbow, 192
War Plan Rainbow 3, 272
Washington Naval Treaty, 20
Welles, Sumner, 265, 276, 332; and Grant, 279, 326; and MAGIC, 330; on the HMS *Prince of Wales*, 333; change in views on South-East Asia, 313
Wellesley, Sir Victor, 101
Wendler, Ernst: and fifth column, 340
Westengard, Jens I., 17, 45–7, 337
Williamson, Sir Horace, 113–14
Williamson, Sir Walter, 376
Woolerton, E. N. C., 169
Woolwich Academy, 55

YALE, 58, 101
Yatabe, Japanese Minister, 125–6, 194
Yen bloc, 238, 327
Yokohama Specie Bank, 290
*Yorkshire Post*, 273
Y service, *see* Signals intelligence
Yuvachon, 173, 231