

THE ANGLO-THAI PEACE SETTLEMENT NEGOTIATIONS,
1945-1946

Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud

Anglo-Thai relations were of long-standing and cordial. This long-standing relationship was disrupted after Thailand, under the leadership of Pibul Songgram, decided to collaborate with Japan in the Second World War. On January 25, 1942, Thailand declared war against Britain and the United States. Unlike the United States, Britain recognised the Thai declaration of war and this placed the two countries in a state of war. The aim of this paper is to account British postwar plans towards Thailand and the Anglo-Thai peace negotiations to terminate the state of war between the two countries. This paper will also examine the role played by the Americans in the bilateral negotiations and its influence on the terms of the Peace Agreement. The principal and most valuable source in this study is the relevant documents in the general correspondence files of the British Foreign Office, now preserved at the Public Record Office, Kew. The Principal primary source is supplemented, whenever possible, by documents released by the State Department of the United States.

ANGLO-THAI RELATIONS AND
THE PACIFIC WAR

British relations with Thailand began in the 17th century when the English East India Company established their factories in Ayuthia and Pattani. However, it was only in 1855 when the Bowring Treaty was signed that official diplomatic relations were fully established.¹ Since then, until the outbreak of the Pacific War, Britain was the major Western power which exercised most influence over Thailand by virtue of her possession of Burma and Malaya, and her dominant naval and commercial power in the region. About 80% of capital invested in Thailand was British. The British Commonwealth became Thailand's best customer for her exports of rice, tin, rubber and teak besides being the principal supplier of various kinds of manufactured goods. About 70% of the tin out-

¹M.L. Manich Jumsai, *History of Anglo-Thai Relations*, Chalermint, Bangkok, 1970.

put was worked by British Companies. Up to 1932 British citizens formed the largest group of foreign advisers in the Thai Government service. Large numbers of Thai students went to the United Kingdom and other parts of the British Commonwealth countries for education.

The emergence of Japan as a new emergent power in the Far East in the 1930s threatened the British dominant influence in Thailand. Japan's steady rise to prosperity and power impressed young Thai leaders, and the growing Thai nationalism in the late 1930s fostered pro-Japanese attitudes.² The Japanese slogan 'Asia for the Asiatics' coincided with the desire to keep Thailand for the Thais and to eliminate foreign influence. Therefore, the 1930s saw a trend towards closer relations in the areas of commerce, communications and cultural affairs between Thailand and Japan. Britain watched the new Thai-Japanese relations with increasing concern. Clearly it was the growing Japanese threat to their existing colonies in Southeast Asia which was the main source of anxiety to the British as well as to the French. Likewise they were worried that Thailand under the increasingly militaristic rule of Pibul Songgram might conclude a military alliance with Japan to preclude a joint attack on their territories in Southeast Asia.³ Hence, when Britain and France were occupied with the German threat in Europe, they proposed to Thailand a non-aggression pact. The pact was concluded with Britain and France on 12 June 1940.⁴ It was hoped that the pact would not only contribute towards regional stability but also deter Thailand from entering into military alliance with Japan.⁵

²Sir Josiah Crosby, *Siam: The Crossroads*, Hollis and Carter, London, 1945.

³Major-General Twiss, the General Officer Commanding in Burma, to Defence Department, 3 April 1938, FO 371/22215 (F6J72/2213/40); See also minute by M.J.R. Talbot in Foreign Office minutes, 21 June 1939, FO 371/22215 (F6310/2213/40).

⁴The Non-Aggression Pacts were signed between Britain and Thailand and France in Bangkok on 12 June 1940. These agreements, which were valid for five years and were subject to denunciation thereafter by one year's notice on either side, provided for the reciprocal respect by each country of the other's territorial integrity. It was further laid down that, if one country became involved in war with a third party, the other would refrain from affording aid or assistance to such third party.

⁵This was part of the message sent by British Premier Winston Churchill to Pibul Songgram on the successful conclusion of the Non-Aggression Pact. Foreign Office-Bangkok, 13 June 1940, FO 371/24751 (F3395/19/40).

But the sudden reverses the Allied Forces suffered in Europe against the Germans and the collapse of France in the summer of 1940 drastically affected British hopes for regional stability in Southeast Asia and a means of checking the Japanese advance. Subsequently, Pibul Songgram himself succumbed to Japanese political, economic and military pressure on December 8, 1941. Thailand's submission to Japan on December 8, 1941 was originally regarded by Britain as an act under duress and she was thus content to consider Thailand as a territory under enemy occupation.⁶ This position, however, was altered when the Thai Government hastily declared war upon Britain and the United States on January 25, 1942.⁷ British banks, companies and other assets in Thailand were sequestered or in some cases handed straight over to the Japanese. From the British point of view, Thailand had not only violated the Non-Aggression Pact of 1940 but had breached earlier treaties between the two countries which recognised the sovereignty and integrity of the British territories.⁸ Thus, in accordance with international law and regulations, on February 2, 1942 Britain recognised Thailand's declaration of war.⁹ The United States, with long-term interests in mind, refused to do so, being satisfied to treat Thailand as an enemy-occupied country.¹⁰ Compared with

⁶Despite the Japanese-Thai military alliance on 12 December 1941, Britain refrained from declaring war against Thailand. There were two main reasons for this attitude. Firstly, she believed that the majority of the Thai people were anti-Japanese, if not pro-Allies, and were 'likely to become increasingly anti-Japanese as the Japanese proceed to apply their usual arrogant methods, and to infringe their agreement to respect the sovereignty of Siam'. Secondly, she felt that a declaration of war might change that trend and would encourage the Thai to collaborate with Japan. See, British Embassy to the Department of State, 24 December 1941, Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1941, Vol. 5.

⁷Foreign Office Memorandum, 19 December 1944, FO 371/46544 (F6089/296/40).

⁸In return for Thai collaboration, the Japanese had agreed to give Thailand the Northern Malay States (Kelantan, Kedah, Terengganu and Perlis) and the Shan States (Keng Tung and Mongpan). In accepting this promise and readily declaring war on Britain, Thailand had violated the Non-Aggression Pact which had stipulated, in Article 5, the sovereignty and integrity of the British territories. Furthermore, the Anglo-Thai Agreement of 1909 had firmly stated that the Northern Malay States belonged to the British. See, Donald E. Nuechterlein, *Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1965, pp. 73-74.

⁹See, Far Eastern Committee (44), 21 December 1944, FO 371/41848 (F6092/1599/40).

¹⁰James V. Martin, 'Thai-American Relations in World War II', *The Journal of Asian Studies*. Vol. 22, 1963, p. 461.

Britain, the United States had small economic interests in Thailand and its broader concerns about the balance of power in East Asia were not directly threatened by Thai collaboration with Japan. This was the first and fundamental divergence of view between Britain and the United States which was profoundly to affect the post-war settlement negotiations between Britain and Thailand.

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN DIVERGENCE OF ATTITUDES ON THAILAND

The state of war between Britain and Thailand had a tremendous effect on the reaction towards Thailand of British foreign policy makers during and after the war. During the war, the British Government abstained from making any political commitments towards Thailand which would affect its interests there. The Foreign Office, for instance, did not recognise the 'Free Thai Movement' as the representative of Thailand, fearing that this would constitute a political blunder affecting British future planning for Thailand.¹¹ When the Foreign Office was requested by Lord Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander of Southeast Asia Command (SEAC), to formulate a general statement for Thailand as issued by the Chinese and the United States Governments which guaranteed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Thailand,¹² the Foreign Office only clarified a general statement for Thailand. It set forth the argument that Thailand had 'betrayed' its friendship with Britain, had collaborated with the Japanese and that 'the Siamese people would have to pay a price for the acts of their government but that if they cooperated with the British they might expect Britain to support the emergence of an independent Siam after the war.'¹³ The State Department retorted that the statement would not be helpful in giving encouragement to the Thai people to resist the Japanese because it failed to give any indication that Thailand would be continued as an independent country.¹⁴ At first the Foreign Office was prepared to modify the statement but was overruled by the War Cabinet. Winston Churchill drew the Foreign

¹¹Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: Proposed S.O.E. Operations in Siam, 9 September 1944. FO 371/41845 (F4285/23/40).

¹²See Report of the Far Eastern Committee, dated 14 July 1945, section L (c), on attitude of the US towards Thailand. FO 371/46545 (F4298/296/40).

¹³British Embassy to the Deputy Director of Far Eastern Affairs, 26 February 1944. *FRUS*, 1944, Vol. 5.

¹⁴Washington-Foreign Office, 22 March 1944. FO 371/46560 (F4186/23/40).

Office attention to the British post-hostilities plan that 'it might be found necessary after the war to consider some sort of Protectorate over the Kra Peninsula area, including Singgora, in the interests of the future security of Singapore.'¹⁵

Anglo-American divergencies on Thailand were of little practical consequence prior to mid-1944. The divergencies on Thailand became a matter of real concern with the favourable folding of the military situation in Southeast Asia, accompanied by the downfall of the collaborationist Pibul regime in July 1944 and its replacement by a government dominated by the Regent, Pridi Banomyong.¹⁶ Pridi established contacts with the Allied powers through his Free Thai Movement and informed them of his preparations to assist the Allies in their fight against the Japanese. At the same time, Seni Pramoj, in the United States, intensified his propaganda campaign to gain Allied sympathy and support.

The British 'passive' attitude towards the changing situation in Thailand was naturally regarded by the United States as indicating that Britain had definite designs upon Thailand in the post-war period. The United States' suspicion was reinforced by Britain's own attitude. For example, the Foreign Office, apart from not being able to issue its general statement on Thailand, was unreceptive to the United States proposal that a 'Free Siamese Liberation Committee' be established on Allied soil. In contrast to the United States policy, the British refused to unfreeze Thai funds in London for use by the Free Thai Movement.

On August 18, 1944, the Foreign Office received a letter from John G. Winant, the United States Ambassador in London, demanding a confidential statement of British policy towards Thailand. Winant expressed his regret for the British attitude.¹⁷ Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, tried to placate the United States suspicions of the British attitude towards Thailand by declaring that the British were no less favourable than the United States and China to the idea of a free and independent Thailand after the war but subject only to its acceptance of such special arrangements for security or economic collaboration as might be judged necessary within an international system.¹⁸ On territorial integrity, Eden said

¹⁶Herbert A. Fine, 'The Liquidation of World War II in Thailand', *Pacific Historical Review*, February 1965. p. 67.

¹⁷Winant-Eden, 18 August 1944. FO 371/41845 (F5550/23/40).

¹⁸Eden-Winant, 4 September 1944. *ibid.*

that Britain was not thinking of territorial expansion but this did not mean that Thailand would be allowed to retain "the ill-gotten gains which she has accepted from the Japanese at the expense of Malaya, of Burma and of French Indochina." On the Kra Isthmus, he emphasised the need for some special strategic arrangement within the framework of an international security system.

On October 21, 1944, Winant stressed the need for a frank exchange of views between the two governments in order to achieve a coordination of policy.¹⁹ He demanded that Eden clarify precisely what was intended by those reservations. Eden explained that the existence of differences between the two governments were due to their different approach to restoring Thailand as 'a free, sovereign and independent country.'²⁰ He said:

"To us Siam is an enemy who must 'work her passage' before she can rehabilitate herself; whereas the United States Government regards her, in spite of her declaration of war, merely as an enemy-occupied territory."²¹

On the question of reservations, it was quite difficult for the British Government to clarify these in detail as there were many unknown factors as regards the future. Nevertheless, Eden stressed that it was only 'as a matter of prudence, even in the case of those who are but the satellites of our enemies, to reserve the right to stipulate that as a condition of their ultimate freedom, sovereignty and independence, they should accept such special arrangements for security or economic collaboration as may be judged necessary to the functioning of the post-war international system.'

As regards the special reservation affecting the Kra Isthmus, Eden considered it to be decided and recommended by the respective Allied military expert. However, he stressed that the Kra Isthmus had played an important part in the Japanese plans for the capture of Singapore, and as such 'it will have to figure in whatever arrangements may be made for the future security of Southeast Asia, and particular for the defence of Singapore.'

When, in late April 1945, the War Cabinet directed the Far Eastern Committee to frame concrete policy, the Committee set up a Working Party. The result of its efforts was the 'Draft Conditions for Acceptance by Siam' dated May 31, 1945.²² The report

¹⁹ Winant-Eden, 21 October 1944. *ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² 'Draft Conditions for Acceptance by Siam', dated 31 May 1945. FO 371/46545 (F4298/296/40).

noted that, although the Pibul Cabinet's declaration of war had been issued under Japanese duress and neither the United States nor China regarded itself as at war with Thailand, this did not prevent the British government from securing a just redress for damage done to British interests by that collaboration with Japan. The Working Party proposed immediate decisions on three most urgent questions: a charge of free rice from Thailand; a supply of Thai currency required for the pay of Allied troops in Thailand; and a grant of special rights to Britain with regard to defence matters, both in time of peace and in the event of war.

The rice was a top priority. Britain had to acquire the maximum quantity of rice from Thailand at the earliest possible date in order to relieve her colonies liberated from the Japanese. The best course was to invoke the analogy of mutual aid: the 1.5 million tons of rice to be demanded was to be viewed as Thailand's contribution towards the Allied war effort. The requirement of cash to pay Allied troops in Thailand was essential because the Allies did not wish to provide the services free of costs. Thailand was also expected to provide local supplies and services for the Allied armed forces. New defence arrangements were seen as necessary to prevent a repetition of the military disasters of 1941-42.

The Working Party's recommendations were before the Far Eastern Committee by the end of May, and the Far Eastern Committee concluded its report 'Policy towards Siam' in mid-July.²³

The Far Eastern Committee recommended two separate forms of conditions to be imposed on Thailand, a military agreement signed by the Supreme Allied Commander, Southeast Asia and a Political Agreement signed by the British representative.

Thus, by the time the Japanese surrendered in mid-August 1945, the British had, although rather late, formulated a well-defined policy to be adopted towards Thailand.

THE ANGLO-THAI PEACE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AND THE UNITED STATES INTERVENTION

The Japanese surrendered on August 14, 1945. Britain and Thailand, however, were still, technically, at war. On August 16, 1945, Pridi Banomyong, as Regent of Thailand, issued a proclamation in the Thai National Assembly that the declaration of war upon Britain

²³'Policy towards Siam' FE(45) 29 Final, 14 July 1945. FO 371/46545 (F4542/296/40).

and the United States was null and void, and signifying willingness to return the British territories and pay compensation for damages incurred by the citizens of those countries.²⁴ As a mark of repudiation of all commitments with Japan, Khuang Aphaiwong and his wartime cabinet resigned on August 17 and was replaced by Thawee Bunyakee. On September 17, 1945, Seni Pramoj, the Thai Minister in Washington and the leader of the Free Thai Movement, was appointed as the new Prime Minister to undertake negotiations with the Allied powers.

Although Pridi's declaration was welcomed by the British Labour Government, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Ernest Bevin made it clear that British policy towards Thailand would depend on Thailand's future action, namely the outcome of negotiations with Britain for a peace treaty.²⁵ Ernest Bevin's statement was elaborated in the proposed political and military agreements which were to become the basis for negotiations between Thailand and Britain. The proposed political agreement, which was purely a Britain concern, included Thai measures of repudiation and restitution and steps of post-war cooperation in the economic and strategic fields. The proposed military agreement was mainly concerned with Allied measures and called for the Thai to help in disarming the Japanese and in turning them over to Allied authorities. The agreement further called for the release of all Allied prisoners of war and internees, the acceptance of military control over Thailand and of an Allied military mission. Thailand was to make a free contribution of 1.5m tons of rice, and to accept Allied controls over exports of tin, rubber and teak.²⁶

Four days after the Pacific War, the Foreign Office authorised M.E. Dening, Political Adviser to Lord Mountbatten, to present the military terms to the Thai Government, and that simultaneously he should present the political terms with the military terms as an annex on behalf of the British Government. Britain expected the

²⁴Siam: Summary of Regent's broadcast, 16 August 1945. FO 371/46578 (F5521/518/40).

²⁵Ernest Bevin, in his speech in the House of Commons on 20 August 1945, spelt out that the British policy towards Thailand would depend on the way in which the Thai met the requirements of the Allied troops that were about to enter their country, and extent of their contribution to the restoration of peace, good order and economic rehabilitation in Southeast Asia. Dominion Office-Dominian Governments, 29 August 1945. FO 371/46547 (F5947/296/40).

²⁶The British, Embassy to the Department of State, 20 August 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. 6.

terms contained in the political agreement, called the Heads of Agreement, to be preliminary conditions for Thailand to fulfil in return for the liquidation of war with Britain. The future attitude of the British government toward Thailand would depend on the degree of Thailand's cooperation in redressing past wrongs and in ensuring the security of the region for the future. On the morning of September 4, Denning handed the agreement to the Thai authorities.

However, before any formal Anglo-Thai peace negotiations took place, the British communicated to the State Department the procedures it planned to follow.²⁷ As far as the proposed military agreement was concerned, the United States shared responsibility for this since it was part of an Allied effort.

In its first comment on the draft agreement, the State Department had in fact, reminded the Foreign Office that such settlement would not conflict with the viewpoints, interests or policies of the United States, but would on the other hand, contribute to Anglo-American unity of action in the Far East.²⁸ The Department stressed that:

“Thailand is the only country within the Theatre of a combined Anglo-American command with one of the governments represented in the command at war, while the other government is not. It is important therefore that unusual care be exercised by that command in matters which would involve the relationship of those governments with Thailand.”²⁹

Whatever action the British Government wanted to take, the State Department was confident that it would not embarrass the United States Government. It emphasised that the Thai Government had given every indication of its determination to make restitution for the past and to cooperate with the United States in the future and so meet the basic objectives of the British Government.

The State Department also demanded clarification on certain clauses in the proposed agreements which seemed to be vague and dubious in intent. The Department urged the Foreign Office to clarify clause D5 regarding the international arrangements for the supply of tin and rubber, and hoped that these would be effected

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Washington-Foreign Office, 1 September 1945. FO 371/46548 (F6195/296/40).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

under the auspices, or with the approval of, the United Nations or the Economic and Social Council. It hoped that such a commitment would not be made a condition for British recognition of the sovereignty and independence of Thailand. The Department also felt misgivings over the implications of clauses D2 and D3 which envisaged that, if Thai citizens wished to reserve economic, commercial or professional pursuits to their own nationals, they would need British consent so far as British interests were concerned. The Department felt that the British required only non-discriminatory treatment for British nationals, since demands beyond this would infringe Thai sovereignty and economic independence. The Department concurred that Thailand should pay compensation for losses or damage for which she was directly responsible, but urged that Thailand should not be required to pay compensation until the question of reparation was decided. A requirement that Thailand should make compensation at that juncture might seriously intensify the economic ills of the country, given the fact that Thailand was suffering from serious financial and economic problems arising from hundreds of millions of bahts loaned to Japan during the war.³⁰

On the proposed military agreement, the State Department reiterated that this should be limited to matters of Allied concern against the common enemy and requested that South East Asia Command should not take any action tending to compromise the position held by the United States that Thailand was not an enemy but a country to be liberated from the enemy.

On the rice levy, the Department expressed its concurrence in the tripartite agreement by Britain, the United States and Thailand to stimulate the production and maximise the export of Thai rice through an Anglo-American commission. The Department, however, asserted that the rice levy was unjust in view of Thai readiness to join the war against Japan and the fact that their deferment of such an action was at the request of the Supreme Allied Command and the United States government. It noted additionally that the size of the proposed levy might exceed the amount of Thai rice available for export, that the levy would be prejudicial to American interests in Thailand and that the United States government would not feel free to share the proceeds of the levy.

³⁰ According to Blanchard, Thailand was required to supply the Japanese with baht notes to exchange for yen credits. Under this system enormous sums — totalling 1.5 billion bahts — were delivered to the Japanese from 1942 to 1945. See, Wendell Blanchard, *Thailand*, Human Relations Area Files Press, New Haven, 1958, p. 267.

The Foreign Office made a sharp rejoinder on 5 September that the reason one of the governments in Southeast Asia Command was at war with Thailand, while the other was not, was solely because the United States had chosen to ignore Thailand's declaration of war.³¹ While not questioning that decision, the British government could not agree that it entitled the United States government to ask that other governments who were in a state of war with Thailand should forego their rights or mitigate the conditions upon which they were prepared to liquidate the state of war. On the contrary, the British government was entitled to ask that the United States would not take any action which would embarrass them or compromise their position as a belligerent ally. They were therefore unable to agree that the actions of the Supreme Commander should be limited to matters of concern affecting the war against Japan.

The British Government would give due weight to the Thai resistance movement but the state of war between Britain and Thailand remained to be liquidated and Thailand's association with Japan left many practical questions for settlement. The British government reiterated that their attitude towards Thailand would depend on the way Thailand met their requirements. The British Government did not believe that the conditions demanded might constitute an infringement of Thai sovereignty or were in a spirit of retaliation for the injury to Allied interests by Thailand's association with Japan. But the British Government could scarcely accept a position in which Thailand should profit from that association, or, in such matters as the export of her commodities during the liberation period, from the needs of countries which had suffered from Japanese aggression. It was British policy to protect the interests of other Allied powers until those powers were in a position to arrive at their own settlement with Thailand.

Although the British expressed their desire to see the United States' views accommodated in conformity with those expressed in the State Department's *aide-memoire*, they pointed out that Thailand, alone among the warring nations, had accumulated a very large surplus of an essential commodity and, if permitted to dispose of its stocks at the high prevailing prices, would come out of the war in a far better financial position than those who had offered greater resistance to the aggressors. The British maintained that a stockpile of 1.5m tons of rice already existed in Thailand. On the matter of compensation, they did not agree that claims should be

³¹Foreign Office-Washington, 5 September 1945. FO 371/46546 (F6195/296/40).

postponed until the general reparations question relating to Japan was decided. They also gave assurances that they sought no exclusive privileges for British commercial interests.

As the Allied troops had to be moved into Thailand for the purpose of disarming and disposing of the Japanese forces in Thailand and to relieve Allied prisoners of war and internees, Lord Mountbatten found it urgently necessary to have some discussions with the Thais in order to ensure their smooth operations. The Thais complied and early in September the Thai military representatives headed by Lt. General Sakdi Senanarong arrived in Kandy, Ceylon, to negotiate with Lord Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander, for an interim military agreement.³² This interim military agreement was similar to the proposed Military Annex to the Heads of Agreement which covered almost every aspect apart from the political one to liquidate the state of war between Britain and Thailand.

On September 4, Denning handed the interim military agreement to a member of Thai delegation. The Thais later found out that General Senanarong's credentials did not authorise him to sign such an agreement.³³ As a compromise, and so to save Thai face, Lord Mountbatten suggested to Denning, in consultation with a member of the Thai delegation, a division of the proposed agreement into two. One half concerned military matters which General Senanarong was empowered to sign, and the other half covered the annex on rice procurement and various other economic matters. These were known as Military Agreement No. 1 and No. 2 respectively. Before these latter provisions were agreed, Lord Mountbatten wanted both drafts to be taken back to Bangkok for the approval of Pridi and the government. Lord Mountbatten sent a message to Pridi assuring him that what the Thais were being asked to sign in Kandy was simply an interim measure and Allied forces would only stay in Thailand long enough to relieve the Allied prisoners of war and to disarm the Japanese troops.³⁴

Pridi was prepared to sign the agreement. He also did not seem to be alarmed at the economic provisions in the agreement. On his

³²Supreme Allied Command, Southeast Asia (SEAC) — Foreign Office, 5 September 1945. FO 371/46546 (F6646/296/40).

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴Denning-Sterndale Bennett, 7 September 1945. FO 371/46550 (F6867/296/40).

³⁵*Ibid.*

recommendation, the Thai Assembly approved the two agreements on September 5 but with a rider that it was forced upon them by the British and not of their free will.³⁵ Thus the signal of acceptance was sent to Kandy.

Meanwhile, some members of the Thai military delegation met the American representative of the OSS, the American organisation set up to carry out clandestine operations in enemy occupied countries, alleging that the British were imposing terms which infringed Thailand's political and economic independence.³⁶ As soon as OSS cabled to Washington the terms of the draft agreement, as drafted by Dening, an international furore was unleashed. Under instruction from Washington, the US Ambassador in London, Winant, immediately went to see the British Prime Minister, Attlee on September 5 to make representations to stop Mountbatten from such an agreement. However, the purely military agreement could be signed, if necessary, after a few alterations were made and agreed upon. Attlee told the Americans that orders were already on their way to Kandy for Mountbatten to conclude only the first part of the agreement dealing purely with military matters.³⁷

On September 8, 1945, a revised version of the Interim Military Agreement No. 1 was signed in Kandy. Essentially, this agreement provided for the entry of Allied troops into Thailand for the purpose of disarming and concentrating, in cooperation with the Thais, the Japanese troops in Thailand and to succour and relieve Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees.³⁸

After the signing of the Interim Military agreement, arrangements were made for the Anglo-Thai talks on the liquidation of war between the two countries. On September 22, the British representatives asked the Seni Pramoj Government to send another delegation to Kandy to negotiate the settlement of war between the two countries. The Thai delegation was headed by Prince Vivat, the Adviser to the Prime Minister's Office as well as the Ministry of Finance.³⁹

³⁷Dening-Foreign Office, 7 September 1945. FO 371/46548 (F6415/296/40).

³⁸For text of agreement, See Direck Jayanama, *op. cit.* pp. 296-297.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 170.

³⁶Thawee Bunyakee's account in Jayanta K. Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics*, Oriental Longman Ltd., New Delhi, 1972. p.109; Direck Jayanama, *Siam and World War II*, The Social Science Association of Thailand Press, Bangkok, 1967. pp. 494-495.

The preliminary meeting was held on September 25.⁴⁰ After welcoming the Thai delegation and outlining the situation which had led the British to draw up the Heads of Agreement and Annex, Dening touched on the subject of rice. Dening pointed out that the voluntary offer of 1.5m tons of rice should be regarded as 'a token of goodwill' or as a Thai financial contribution to the Allied war efforts. This offer could permit the British to delete the clause which stipulated the levy of an equal amount of rice from the agreement. Prince Vivat confirmed that the Thai government was willing to make a free gift of rice.⁴¹ As regards the peace settlement procedure, Dening pointed that the relations between the two countries would be restored by an exchange of letters between the plenipotentiaries. Dening then handed the Heads of Agreement and Annex to the Thais. Dening also insisted that his were a bilateral negotiations to which the United States was not a party, though it had seen the terms and Charles Yost, who was to be the U.S. Charge d'affaires in Bangkok might indicate the U.S. did not agree with all of them.

Prince Vivat replied that he came to Kandy solely to conclude an agreement with the British. Prince Vivat then informed Dening that he would study the Heads of Agreement and Annex before making any comments on them. In his telegram to the Foreign Office, Dening expressed his confidence that were the Americans not to interfere, the Thais would sign the agreement.⁴²

Next day, Prince Vivat saw Dening alone during which a number of questions were raised and a number of changes of form were proposed.⁴³ He wanted the Kra canal clause linked with the clause on post-war security rather than in a separate undertaking and that the wording of the clause requiring the Thais to prohibit the exports of rice, tin, rubber and teak, except at the discretion of the Allied Combined Board, until the world scarcity was declared at an end by the United Nations, should be slightly altered, because he read it as prohibiting the exports of Thailand's main articles.

⁴⁰Dening-Foreign Office, 25 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7480/296/40).

⁴¹It should be noted that the promise to offer the Allies 1.5m tons of rice was made by Seni Pramoj, the Thai Prime Minister, during his talks with Sterndale Bennett at the Foreign Office on 3 September 1945. Bennett minuted that Seni Pramoj remarked; 'that there was a stockpile in Siam at present of about one-and-a-half million tons.' F.O. minutes, September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F6285/296/40). See also, Jayanta K. Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁴²Dening-Foreign Office, 25 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7480/296/40).

⁴³Dening-Foreign Office, 26 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7505/296/40).

Dening said that clause 15, which was on rice, was not designed to destroy Thailand's trade, but merely to control vital commodities. The Prince also enquired why the word 'Allied' was used in the annex if it were a British agreement. The terms, Dening explained, were what Britain considered a minimum requirement to end the state of war but the Command was an Allied one. Prince Vivat enquired what was to prevent another ally - China - demanding another military agreement. Dening was unable to give a definite reply but assured Prince Vivat that Thailand was within the SEAC theatre.⁴⁴

On September 27 Prince Vivat handed to Dening the redraft of the clauses which he proposed amending during the meeting.⁴⁵ This included a new version of section C of the Heads of Agreement, which included a phrase indicating that Britain would sponsor Thailand's entry into the United Nations that Dening thought could not be part of the agreement. It also linked the undertaking over Kra to the other clauses so that it applied only to the period before Thailand entered the United Nations. The Thais also wanted some reassurance in the Preamble to the Annex indicating that prolonged occupation was not intended.

At the second plenary session on 28 September, Dening explained that the state of war should be terminated on the conclusion of a formal agreement embodying the terms of the Heads of Agreement and Annex, and not on the exchange of letters as he mentioned in the previous meeting.⁴⁶ Dening then pointed out that the credentials presented by Prince Vivat appeared to authorise the Thai plenipotentiaries to negotiate with him as 'representative of British Military Authorities'. Dening further pointed out that the credentials pledged the Regent to approve what the plenipotentiaries signed only 'if agreeable' and in his opinion they did not really have the same full powers as he did. Prince Vivat assured Dening that it had not been the intention of the Regent to limit the powers of the plenipotentiaries and that he would draft suitable alternative credentials and refer them to Bangkok for approval. The rest of the meeting was spent on detailed discussion of the Heads of Agreement and Annex. The issue of compensation for damage to British property was also raised. The parties discussed clause 13 on the military mission, which Prince Vivat thought had no *raison d'être* following the Japanese surrender. Dening said that a redraft might be considered. It was also agreed that a deletion of clause 16(A)

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Dening-Foreign Office, 27 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7550/296/40).

⁴⁶ Dening-Foreign Office, 28 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7630/296/40).

on the delivery of rice would depend upon a voluntary offer being made by the Thai Government in the required terms.

Dening felt that the Thais were anxious to save face as far as possible for internal reasons and in so far as this was compatible with British requirements he recommended that it should be allowed. Furthermore, Dening also felt that while the Thais were anxious to get off as light as possible, there was apparently no marked reaction among the Delegation on the Heads of Agreement and Annex. On the other hand, Dening was certain of obstruction from the Thais in general, particularly Seni Pramoj as the Prime Minister. He warned the Foreign Office that Seni seemed to think 'that next to nothing is required to get Siam out of her predicament. In this he may be encouraged by O.S.S. whose general conduct seems to conform very little with American policy ...'.⁴⁷

During the interval, further attempts to expedite the matter by Dening apparently failed. Dening was suspicious that the Thai Government was really holding out against the British agreement. As Dening reported on 3 October, 'the longer the delay the more the Siamese will be encouraged to think that they can get off even more lightly than heads of agreement suggest'.⁴⁸ It was 'open gossip' in Bangkok that the United States had prevented the signature of Mountbatten's second military agreement. 'This I am told has encouraged the Siamese to believe that if they hold out they can count upon American support. Even more are they likely to hold out on negotiations with the French.'⁴⁹

Dening found Thai procrastination intolerable and began to show his impatience when he suggested to the Foreign Office that a threat should be made to the Thai delegation that he would break off negotiations unless he received satisfaction over the matter of credentials within a stated time.

The Foreign Office was more realistic. A.C.S. Adams thought that the Thais were not using delaying tactics. The main problem was that the Regent could not grant full powers and it appeared that the kind of treaty involved required the approval of the National Assembly.⁵⁰ The best course was for Dening to recognise the constitutional difficulty and if tactfully handled, he would be able to win the goodwill of the mission. But, warned Adams, 'if

⁴⁷ Dening-Foreign Office, 3 October 1945. FO 371/46552 (F8127/296/40).

⁴⁸ Dening-Foreign Office, 3 October 1945. FO 371/46552 (F8752/296/40).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Minutes by A.C.S. Adams on *ibid.*

handled not so tactfully, they would simply dig in their toes, sulk and play for time.⁵¹ This advice was adopted by the Foreign Office. Dening was duly told that constitutional forms should be completed before actual signature.

This suspicion by Dening was in fact not entirely groundless for the Thais were in fact well aware of the differences between the British and the United States over this agreement. The Anglo-American differences were exploited by the Thais, to mitigate any heavy demands made by the British.⁵²

During the suspension of the Kandy talks, the dialogue between London and Washington was continually developed in order to reach a final understanding concerning Thailand. The central themes of the discussions were focussed on the questions of post-war strategic cooperation and economic control of the country.

On September 26, the State Department commented on the proposed clause C1, committing the Thais to recognising the importance of Thailand to the security of Southeast Asia, which it regarded as sounding like a 'protectorate' and might be interpreted as an advance commitment by Thailand to accept the steps which the United States opposed.⁵³ In its place, the State Department proposed that the clause should be substituted by a proviso that Bangkok should agree to cooperate in relevant international security arrangements under the United Nations. These comments were accordingly referred by the Foreign Office to the British Chiefs of Staff for further consideration. On October 3, the British Chiefs of Staff pronounced their decision to leave unaltered the clause requiring the Thais to recognise their country's importance in the defence of Southeast Asia and the security of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.⁵⁴ But it was agreed to omit from the Annex the clause requiring the Thais to agree to the setting up of a military mission.

The Foreign Office accordingly explained to the State Department on October 5 the object of C1, which was to make it easier to negotiate a regional scheme of defence in any world organisation by warning Thailand that they would in future be expected to play their part in defence schemes in the area specified.⁵⁵ The

⁵²Foreign Office-State Department, 27 September 1945. FO 371/46550 (F7249/296/40).

⁵³Washington-Foreign Office, 26 September 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7505/296/40).

⁵⁴Foreign Office-Washington, 5 October 1945. FO 371/46551 (F7504/296/40).

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

British were ready to accept the State Department's suggestion as a corollary to, but not in place of, C1. In view of the special concern of the British with the security of Malaya and Burma the British Government thought it important to have on record that recognition by the Thai Government of the importance to defend these territories and sea routes. The C1 clause would be retained but C2 would be replaced by a new clause requiring Thailand to collaborate in all international arrangements approved by the United Nations Organisation.

In addition to the question of the post-war strategic cooperation of Thailand, which occupied the main part of the London-Washington dialogue, the issues of economic control, reparations and the rice levy remained important topics throughout October and November 1945.

The State Department, in its *aide-memoire* on October 5, agreed with the proposed procedures relating to the procurement of Thai rice and suggested that the Tripartite Rice Agreement should be concluded at the earliest possible moment.⁵⁶ However, the State Department felt that a slight modification was required on the language of the clause which required the Thai to control their financial institutions and transactions as required by the Allies for so long as necessary for the conclusion of all financial and economic matters arising out of the war. This would give the Allies complete control over the specified aspects of the Thai economy until such matters was settled. It was also not satisfied with the British explanation of the intention of the clause requiring the Thais not to enforce measures excluding British commercial interests or British professional men from participating in the Thai economy. It believed that no independent sovereign country should be subject to unilateral control by another Government over its power to determine conditions relating to its economy and trade. It required the British to reconsider this clause so that the economic, commercial and professional relations between Britain and Thailand might be founded on the principle of mutuality.

On October 25, the State Department reiterated to the Foreign Office its disapproval of the rice levy and its perturbation that the size of the levy was being maintained at 1.5m tons.⁵⁷ The full levy would be burdensome on the Thai economy and would adversely affect the interests of other nations in Thailand. The Department

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Washington-Foreign Office, 25 October 1945. FO 371/46551 (F9034/296/40).

therefore requested British acceptance of the figure of 78,000 tons or that they leave the determination of the exact amount of rice accumulated in Thailand to the rice commission.

The Department was also concerned with the war damage claim situation. It pointed out that it was American policy that no nation be compelled to pay a volume of reparations which, without external aid, would impair its civilian economy. It noted further that the United States was directly concerned with preservation for the Thai people of an adequate standard of living and opportunity for economic progress without dependence on foreign governments for financial aid, and that prompt, orderly stabilization of the Thai economy was essential for stability throughout Southeast Asia.

The State Department was doubtful that Thailand could meet all claims for compensation. It was also suggested that the rice levy be recognised as constituting reparations in kind.

On November 12, the Foreign Office replied that, under the proposed plans, the rice levy would only come from accumulated stocks and that it did not constitute reparations but rather 'a special measure of reconciliation'.⁵⁸ The British Government felt that an Allied Claims Commission was unnecessary. Furthermore, it was inappropriate for any state not at war with a country to be associated in determining its capacity to pay reparations or in deciding the equitable distribution of claims.

Toward the end of November 1945, the dialogue between London and Washington developed into a strongly worded confrontation. Perturbed at the uncompromising British attitude, the State Department made a more powerful response in its communication to London on November 29.⁵⁹ The State Department expressed deep concern at the British view that the British Government had precedence in determining Thai capacity to pay compensation for damage to Allied property and that the claim of the United States and other Allies not at war with Thailand must be subordinated to those of belligerent countries. It stressed that Thailand was in an Allied theatre, under combined Anglo-American command, which meant that the United States was on the same footing as Britain. It also dismissed the Foreign Office proposal that the rice levy was not reparations but a special measure of reconciliation. It reiterated that the rice levy would affect the economy of Thailand

⁵⁸British Embassy-Department of State, 12 November 1945. *FRUS* 1945, vol. 6.

⁵⁹Washington-Foreign Office, 29 November 1945. FO 371/46570 (F10489/1349/40).

and its ability to pay Allied claims. The State Department urged the Foreign Office to consider the position of the United States to be equal to that of Britain in determining the Allied claims question and the capacity of Thailand to satisfy them.

In addition to this *aide-memoire*, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson also discussed the matter with British Ambassador Lord Halifax. In his discussion with the British Ambassador, Acheson expressed American intention to begin the resumption of diplomatic relations with Thailand to which Washington attached a great deal of importance. The State Department had already postponed this action until December 1, and would not defer it beyond that date. Nevertheless, Washington would not wish to take action without affording the British Government opportunity to respond to American questions in the November 29 *aide-memoire*.⁶⁰

The Foreign Office agreed to give the United States an equal footing in an Allied Claims Commission and was ready to reconsider the questions of rice contribution and Allied claims with the United States. It also stated that the rice contribution would not be used to settle claims against Thailand. Finally, the British hoped that the United States would now agree that the two suggestions contained in the *aide-memoire* of 29 November had been met.

The State Department, however, continued to remain dissatisfied and continued to press for the exclusion of the rice levy or agreement to an impartial determination of the amount of surplus stocks in Thailand.⁶¹ The Department also would not acquiesce in clause CI, maintaining it still had the appearance of a protectorate. It had also warned that, if the British failed to consider its proposals, the United States would establish diplomatic relations with Thailand prior to the Anglo-Thai termination of war. It also suggested that the delay in the negotiations might be attributed to the Thai knowledge that the United States objected to some of the terms. If the British Government could meet the American points, an early conclusion might be prompted by Dening indicating that the United States had no further comments. At the same time he could convey to the Thais the same British assurance as to 'application and intent' as made to the United States.

When the British government called for resumption of the Anglo-Thai negotiations at the new headquarters of Southeast Asia Command in Singapore in early December 1945, the negotiators

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Washington-Foreign Office, 30 November 1945. FO 371/46554 (F10985/296/40).

of both parties were well prepared. Dening was aware that some factors had weighed against Britain from the outset. The generally favourable attitude of the United States towards Thailand and the recent American intervention to prevent Thailand from signing the original military agreement with the Supreme Commander put the British at a considerate disadvantage. Also, the fact that the terms had not been presented to Thailand until the war ended and the fact that the British forces entered Thailand before agreement was reached led to the necessity of treating the Thai government, for military purposes, as a friendly ally and put London in a rather awkward situation.

The lapse of time since negotiations had started in Kandy and then been suspended further strengthened the Thai position and their hopes to be able to hold out for better terms. Furthermore, with the stationing of the American advisers in Bangkok, Dening became suspicious. When rumours of harsh British terms were being widely circulated, he assumed that the situation was 'encouraged by the American in Bangkok.'⁶²

With the lapse of time, too, the Thais had become aware of the world need for rice and the strength of their position. 'If the Siamese were to encourage the strikes and non-delivery' already affecting the trade, 'we could not successfully counter such tactics. Failure on our part on the other hand to relieve the distress would affect our entire position in South East Asia.'⁶³

Thus, probably to achieve Anglo-American unity in the Far East and to avoid any unnecessary delays, the British agreed to revise some of the terms of the agreement. On 18 December, 1945 it informed the State Department that the amount of the rice levy would be determined by the proposed United States-United Kingdom Commission.⁶⁴ On 21 December, the Foreign Office agreed to link Clauses C1 and C2.⁶⁵ This removed the last American major objection. The State Department therefore instructed Yost to inform the Thai Government of the American wish now to withdraw the recommendation for delay in signing the agreement with Britain.

⁶²Dening-Foreign Office, 30 November 1945. FO 371/46554 (F10985/296/40).

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴Dominion Office-Dominion Governments, 20 December 1945. FO 371/46554 (F9926/296/40).

⁶⁵Dominion Office-Dominion Governments, 21 December 1945. *Ibid.*

With the State Department's concurrence, on January 1, 1946 the letters to give effect to the Heads of Agreement and Annex were duly exchanged between Denning and Prince Vivat. Immediately afterwards a formal agreement terminating the state of war between Britain and Thailand was concluded between the Plenipotentiaries.⁶⁶ Among the major points of the treaty were that Thailand would return the Malay and Burmese territories acquired during the war, would turn over free one and a half million tons of rice to United Kingdom, would not build a canal across the Kra Isthmus without British approval, and would sell rubber, tin, rice and tea in accordance with prices fixed by International Committee. In return, Britain and India agreed to support Thailand's membership in the United Nations.

With the signing of the Formal Agreement on January 1, 1946, the diplomatic relations between Britain and Thailand were resumed again after being temporarily interrupted by the Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia. With the state of war now officially terminated, Hugh R. Bird presented his credentials and became British Charge d'Affaires to post-war Thailand. In early March 1946, Geoffrey H. Thompson was appointed as British Minister. To the Thais, although there were still unsolved questions as to how the government would meet requirements of the rice levy and the reparations claimed by the Allies, the conclusion of the peace treaty was a great relief.

The Allied forces were completely withdrawn from Thailand by mid-November 1946. The Allied military agreement signed at Kandy on September 8, 1945 was finally cancelled on December 1, 1946.⁶⁷ The same day the headquarters of Supreme Command Southeast Asia was also abolished. The Anglo-Thai agreement of January 1, 1946 was, in May 1946, revised and updated, since Thailand had completely fulfilled the obligations as required by the terms of the agreement. Finally, the Peace Treaty was cancelled in January 1954 by an exchange of notes by the two governments. This brought the Anglo-Thai relations back to complete normality.

⁶⁶For Text, see Direck Jayanama, *op. cit.* pp. 286-291.

⁶⁷SACSEA-Foreign Office, 26 January 1947. FO 371/54362 (F17186/4/40).