

Agnew Tells the Thais To Ignore U.S. Critics

By JAMES M. NAUGHTON

Special to The New York Times

5 JAN 70

BANGKOK, Thailand, Jan. 4 — Vice President Agnew discussed foreign aid and American dissent with Thai leaders today and then, shoeless, toured Thailand's most famous temple.

Visiting the fourth of 11 Asian nations on his itinerary, Mr. Agnew advised Premier Thanom Kittikachorn not to be concerned about criticism in Congress or in the press over American involvement in Southeast Asia.

"Some of the people back home are so anxious to make friends of our enemies that sometimes they even seem ready to make enemies of our friends," Mr. Agnew said, according to an American official who attended the meeting.

The Thai Foreign Minister, Thanat Khoman, said the Vice President also had "strongly asserted that there will be no change in American policy and no lessening of U.S. commitments to Thailand and Southeast Asia."

Nepal Next Stop

Mr. Agnew and his party are to split into two groups tomorrow because of difficulties in traveling to the remote Himalayan city of Katmandu, Nepal. They will leave their giant Air Force jet behind and fly in two smaller propeller-driven planes to the city situated between Indian and Communist China.

In Bangkok today, the Vice President sought to soothe the troubled feelings of Mr. Thanom and other Thai leaders, who reportedly are concerned that dissent in the United States may have shaken Washington's commitments to come to their aid under terms of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization.

United States relations with Thailand have been damaged by news reports that the United States had made a five-year commitment of some \$1-billion to the Thai Government to obtain deployment of a Thai division in South Vietnam and subsequent criticism in Congress of the Thais as "mercenaries."

A week ago, students at a football game here staged an unusual demonstration in which a Thai soldier was shown being dragged in chains behind an individual carrying an American flag. Thai students rarely get involved in political issues.

Following Mr. Agnew's meeting today with the Thai leaders, Foreign Minister Thanat said the talks were held in a "most friendly atmosphere."

Dissenters Criticized

Mr. Thanat said the meeting had included discussion of "views expressed or statements made by persons in American Congressional circles, as well as by mass media." He said the Thais were assured such views were only personal ones aimed at creating disunity between Thailand and the United States.

American sources who attended the meeting could not recall so direct a charge by Mr. Agnew against domestic critics of the Thai troop sup-

port arrangements. But they agreed that the Vice President had, as one American stated it, "deplored the fact that on occasion people back home who may be playing internal politics have gotten involved in foreign affairs."

They said Mr. Agnew did not name any Congressional critics, but the assumption here was that he referred to such Senators as Stuart Symington of Missouri and J. W. Fulbright of Arkansas, the most outspoken critics of the American involvement in Thailand and elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

On Dec. 15, the Senate tacked a rider onto the defense appropriations bill specifying that no combat troops would be used in Laos or Thailand without the consent of Congress. The next day the Senate Republican Leader, Hugh Scott, said the resolution had the support of the White House.

Together with the Congressional criticism and news articles, the resolution may have given the Thais concern that the United States would withdraw from Southeast Asia, the American sources said.

The sources said that the Thais did not seek American combat support of their counterinsurgency efforts but wanted reassurance that they would continue to receive protection against outside attack and materiel to use in meeting the internal threat.

Vietnam Settlement Discussed

One of the sources said that the Thais felt better after their session with Mr. Agnew. "The fact it is the Vice President speaking and that he has come at the President's request," he said, had eased their fears.

The Vice President reportedly reasserted that any negotiated settlement of the war in Vietnam would have to stipulate that all North Vietnamese troops must pull back into North Vietnam from Laos, as well as from South Vietnam. Thai leaders feel threatened by the presence of North Vietnamese regulars in neighboring Laos.

In his visit to the temple today Mr. Agnew learned of an unusual foreign and offer the Thais once made to the United States.

The Vice President and his wife, Judy, were touring the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, in the Grand Palace, a collection of ornate buildings with gilt and pastel minarets. Their tour guide informed them that the Thai Government had offered to provide combat elephants to President Buchanan in the 1850's.

"That was the first aid program," Mr. Agnew laughingly replied.

The Agnews walked all around the temple buildings as American tourists, Thai citizens and Buddhist monks watched. Before entering the main building, housing a statue of Buddha with a large emerald in its forehead, they sat down under a portico and took off their shoes, as is customary in some Buddhist temples.