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## "No God-Damned Thailander Can Be Trusted to Do a Job Without Getting Political Minded": The Free Thai Movement and the Politics of Independence During World War II

**Nobchulee (Dawn) Maleenont**

On December 8, 1941, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the imperial forces of Japan invaded Thailand, a small independent country on the other side of the Pacific, as a part of its campaign to bring about the so-called 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.' Without any hope of a successful opposition against Japan's advance, the Thai government, led by military dictator Premier Plaek Phibunsongkhram, surrendered and joined the Axis. The event sparked pockets of resistance to emerge within and outside the country, all working towards the common goal to regain Thailand's independence. By the end of the war, these anti-Japanese organizations would become known as a single movement called the 'Free Thai.'<sup>[1]</sup> The Free Thai Movement is one of the most important turning points in Thai history. It is due to the efforts of its members that the people of Thailand have been able to enjoy autonomy since the end of World War II while the country's 'official' partners in the Axis camp suffered the fate of a defeated enemy. In addition, the Free Thai Movement shaped domestic political developments, and played a key role in mapping Thailand's diplomatic relations in the postwar world. Free Thai historiography has generally established that the movement was dictated by two important factors: its members' desire to restore national sovereignty and the involvement of the Allies. However, a close examination of the China mission in 1943 reveals a powerful undercurrent. Interpersonal politics within the movement, shaped by sociopolitical realities at home, not only greatly influenced the organization itself, but was also intimately linked to the Allies' effort to liberate Thailand.

Despite its significance, the Free Thai Movement remains a black hole in Thai history. Primary sources are extremely scarce.<sup>[2]</sup> Official documents are hardly anywhere to be found in Thailand, and published memoirs of members of the movement tend to be very generic and clinical; they reveal little about what authors felt or thought about their experiences during the movement. Primary sources written after the war also lack personal opinion and political voice. Lt. Dr. Chanai Reuangsiiri, one of the Free Thai officers sent to China, for instance, admitted that he had "filtered out things that would offend other people [in the movement], so much so that this has become almost like a guide book."<sup>[3]</sup> Furthermore, the little available Thai historiography on the subject is too much bathed in idealism and nationalism to offer an objective assessment. *Khabuankan Seri Thai*, the only official textbook about the movement, published by the Thai Ministry of Education, is a two-hundred page commemorative tale filled with romanticized patriotic heroism. It portrays the resistance as an ideologically unified anti-Japanese movement, separated only by geography, the lack of good communications during wartime, and political conflicts between (Allied) countries.<sup>[4]</sup> The text makes no mention of the conflicts among the Thais themselves.

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However, one Western-educated Thai scholar has taken a completely opposite line. Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, using prosopography, or collective biography, argued the Free Thai Movement was "more a response to the domestic politics than to the war or the Japanese occupation."<sup>[5]</sup> He concluded that the movement was "an alliance of those who opposed Phibun's military dictatorship" rather than the Japanese presence; the war merely "gave these leaders a perfect opportunity to take advantage of Phibun's wartime difficulties."<sup>[6]</sup> While I agree that "the democratic conflicts and changes of Thai domestic politics,"<sup>[7]</sup> had a tremendous impact on the dynamic of the Free Thai Movement, evidence has shown that it did so in a manner far more complex, subtle, and unwanted than Ngamcachonkulkid has argued. By emphasizing party politics in Thailand and turning the war into a mere background, Ngamcachonkulkid completely neglected the efforts of the overseas Free Thai groups, whose collaboration with the Allies were vital to the movement's success and to Thailand's independence.

E. Bruce Reynolds, the author of *Thailand's Secret War: OSS, SOE, and the Free Thai Underground during World War II*, the most comprehensive critical work on the subject, adopted a more balanced approach. He explored various factors that influenced the Free Thai Movement, including Thai politics, although with a tendency to concentrate on the race between the Allies to "promote their own influence in Bangkok after the war."<sup>[8]</sup> Still, because the Free Thai Movement was, to borrow Reynolds' words, "a very tangled skein,"<sup>[9]</sup> it is not enough to examine how the three factors, namely the goal to regain independence, the Allies and Thai politics, affected the movement. A better understanding of this chapter of Thai history requires, in addition, a careful analysis of the relationship between the factors themselves.

It was only a few hours after the Japanese invasion began when Phibun, the pro-Japanese premier, ordered surrender and subsequently signed an alliance pact with Japan, which included a declaration of war on the United States and Great Britain.<sup>[10]</sup> Residents who resented Phibun's decision immediately began to form underground resistance cells in Thailand. Meanwhile, in Washington, M.R. Seni Pramoj, Thai Minister to the United States, took a more public and radical stand against the Japanese-Thai alliance. He refused to hand over the declaration of war to the United States government and severed ties with his own, as he deemed it "no longer a free and responsible government for Thailand."<sup>[11]</sup> This proved to be one of the crucial moves that determined the fate of the country at the end of the war. Pramoj recalled Secretary of State Cordell Hull's response to his decision: "If you refuse to declare war, we can't declare war against you. You still represent Thailand to us," said Hull.<sup>[12]</sup> Accordingly, the United States government never declared war on Thailand and continued to recognize the country as "an independent state ... under the military occupation of Japan."<sup>[13]</sup>

Pramoj did not stop there. His goal was to protect his diplomatic standing as Thai Minister to the United States and maintain the official recognition of the Thai Legation in Washington, for he believed, "as long as there is still a Royal Thai Legation, then Thailand is still considered free."<sup>[14]</sup> Pramoj was also determined to establish a Free Thai movement in America (FTM), in order to show the Allies that Thai patriots were committed to the Allied cause, and by doing so, he hoped that Thailand would not be regarded as a defeated enemy when the Allies eventually win the war. The minister thus called for Thai volunteers in America, most of whom were college students, to fight for the Allies, so that when the Japanese were finally defeated, he said, "we will have a right to win back our independence."<sup>[15]</sup> In doing so, Pramoj won the sympathy and support of high officials in the State Department, including Hull, Maxwell Hamilton, head of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, and Assistant Secretary of State Adolph Berle Jr., who, according to the minister, patted him on the back and called him "our first ally."<sup>[16]</sup> Throughout the war, the State Department continued to regard Pramoj as the sole legal representative of Thailand. In addition, Thai funds in the United States, which had been frozen by the American government at the outbreak of the war in the Pacific, were also released to be appropriated for the purposes of the liberation

movement. Therefore, the FTM was, to an extent, an autonomous entity; it was supported by the United States government, but funded by Thailand's own financial assets. The movement received another major boost when it came under the auspices of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a US wartime intelligence agency that was planning to launch covert operations in Japanese-occupied Asia and wage psychological and guerilla warfare against Imperial Japan. The OSS would become the organizer of all FTM military operations. And in the spring of 1943, a group of Thai students trained by the agency, embarked on the Free Thai movement's first mission in war-ridden Nationalist China.

The FTM inspired the establishment of a British branch of the Free Thai, known as the Free Siamese movement (FSM). Nevertheless, despite the fact that the FSM shared the basic goals of the FTM and initially aspired to join its sister organization, the nature of the Britain-based organization was very different from the one that emerged in the United States and the two groups did not unite or collaborate until late in the war. This was mostly because Great Britain's wartime attitude and policy toward Thailand differed greatly from those of the United States. Unlike Pramoj, the minister in London handed over the Thai government's declaration of war to the British, and as a result, Britain declared war on Thailand. Thai citizens remaining in England were now considered "enemy aliens,"<sup>[17]</sup> and it gravely complicated the formation of a Thai resistance there. The British government considered that Thailand, by surrendering and allying with the Japanese, had betrayed the neutrality agreement previously made between them, and had caused British Malaya to fall into the hands of the enemy.<sup>[18]</sup> Sir Andrew Gilchrist, a British officer who had been stationed in Thailand before the war, observed contrarily that "the fullest resistance of which the Siamese were capable would not have slowed down the Japanese conquest of Malaya by two hours."<sup>[19]</sup> Nevertheless, the fall of Thailand made the British realize the strategic importance of Thailand as the key to the stability of their Southeast Asian Empire. Accordingly, Britain's policy now included a much greater influence in postwar Thailand and even a possible annexation of the southern portion of the country in order to safeguard British possessions in Malaya.

In August 1942, the British government finally permitted the Thais to officially establish the Free Siamese movement, but on the condition that they "agreed to join the Pioneer Corps," the manual labor unit in the British Army that the Thais dreaded and looked down upon.<sup>[20]</sup> The government also stressed that the recognition of the resistance was "not equivalent to the recognition of an exile government."<sup>[21]</sup> More importantly, the Free Siamese movement did not enjoy independence like the FTM in the United States. Free Siamese officers earned their salaries from the British Army as British soldiers and operated entirely under British command.

Britain's hostile policy toward Thailand had an effect on the Anglo-American alliance in the Pacific theater. British colonialist policy contradicted American political ideology, which painted the United States as the champion of Asian liberty. As a result, the British and the Americans would work in competition against one another, instead of in cooperation, until almost the end of the war, and it would hinder the progress of the Thai liberation movement.

Meanwhile, a powerful underground resistance was also established inside Thailand. This movement was headed by Pridi Banomyong, one of the most influential figures in Thai politics. Together with his close political allies, Pridi formed the National Liberation Movement (NLM), initially codenamed 'X.O. Group,' which eventually became the core of the entire Thai liberation effort and expanded into a nationwide network by the end of the war. The objectives of Pridi's resistance group were two-fold: to expel the Japanese and to ensure that the Allies would recognize Thailand's sovereignty after the war. Pramoj's success in the United States prompted the NLM leaders to send a delegate out via China to establish contact with the resistance groups in America and England and make the following requests to the Western Allies: 1) that the Allies consider the Thai government's declaration of war null and void, 2) that the non-aggression pact made between Thailand and the Allies before the war continues to be

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upheld, 3) that the United States and Great Britain lend funds and equipment to the Thai resistance's guerilla warfare against the Japanese forces occupying Thailand, 4) that the Allies facilitate the evacuation of the NLM leaders from Thailand, and 5) that they sanction and support the establishment of a Thai government in exile in British India.<sup>[22]</sup>

To that end, the NLM high command chose to send Chamkad Balankura, the twenty-eight year-old secretary of the X.O Group, who was to "exfiltrate" to China. Balankura was then to seek help from Nationalist Chinese, to act as a middleman for him to communicate with the British and Americans, until he could manage to get to either Washington or London. The NLM preferred to work with the Western Allies rather than the Chinese. The United States had shown its friendliness by dismissing the Thai declaration of war. Moreover, Pramoj's success in establishing the FTM indicated that the Americans were willing to support the Thais' cause. As for Great Britain, despite its declaration of war on Thailand, Pridi still hoped that the long-established friendship between the two countries would convince the British to consider the Thai resistance a worthwhile investment. Pridi also had personal connections with several British officials who had been in Bangkok before the war, particularly Sir Josiah Crosby, former British Minister to Thailand, whom the Thai leader was convinced knew of the movement's existence. In addition, Gilchrist received a secret message from the X.O. Group before he left for England. Gilchrist recalled in his book, *Bangkok Top Secret*, that "the note contained the first indication of the genuine existence inside Siam of the Free Siamese Movement."<sup>[23]</sup> Because of this, Pridi expected that when the time came for him to ask for help, Britain would respond positively.

On the other hand, even though it had not officially declared war on China, the Thai government had been increasingly hostile to the Chinese. In fact, Phibun had chosen to recognize Mao's government instead of that of Chiang Kai Shek even before he made a pact with the Japanese. Because of this, the NLM leaders feared that Nationalist China might not be willing to lend any substantial or genuine support to the Thai resistance movement. But they would soon be proven wrong; the situation in China was not at all what they had thought. In the meantime, back in the United States, conflicts within the Free Thai movement began to emerge, and they were mostly caused by the movement's leader, Minister Pramoj himself.

Seni Pramoj is one of the most debatable (but under-debated) characters in the Free Thai Movement. His effort to win the backing of the Americans yielded many successes. Some have considered him as the man to be credited for Thailand's postwar independence. He has even been dubbed by foreign observers as a 'man with a golden tongue.' Ironically, Pramoj's eloquence was never quite as successful in winning the hearts of his own countrymen. Instead, throughout the course of the war, the minister made many ill-calculated decisions that alienated allies and made more and more enemies among the members of the FTM. It caused a damaging and irreparable rift in the organization. Pramoj's disagreement with Lt. Col. Kharb Kunjara, the military attaché to the Thai Legation who later led the Free Thai military operation in China, was notoriously known as the dispute that almost destroyed the movement. Kunjara was seen in general as a shady, slippery character. He was a known gambler, womanizer, as well as an alcoholic. Worse still, he was a "trusted protégé of Premier Phibun,"<sup>[24]</sup> who had been sent by the latter to keep an eye on the Thai minister and was suspected to have pro-Axis tendencies. Pramoj summed up Kunjara as an "opportunist" incapable of "being pro anybody except himself.... with hardly enough backbone for any kind of conviction or ideal whatsoever."<sup>[25]</sup>

Yet, the minister allowed Kunjara to lead the operation in China. This was most likely because Pramoj wanted to remove the colonel from the movement's executive circle, where he could influence political decisions.<sup>[26]</sup> Pramoj assumed that all the important decision-making would take place in Washington with him at the center. Kunjara, who was soon to be sent far away on a mission, would be preoccupied with military and operational matters, and

thus would have little chance of meddling in the political aspects of the movement. Pramoj would soon discover, however, that he was wrong.

The rift between Pramoj and Kunjara had a damaging effect on the former's relationship with the Free Thai students-turned-officers who believed that the minister allowed his personal conflicts to interfere with their cause. Neither did it help that the Thai minister became extremely cautious, controlling, and by-the-book in every matter concerning the movement or Thailand's future. Pramoj's hands-on approach was detrimental not only to his relationship with the other members of the FTM, but also to the movement itself. The students decided to form the Free Thai Committee (FTC), a voting board that included two student representatives who would "act as intermediaries," since "M.R. Seni and M.L. Kharb, couldn't get along with each other," recalled Chok na Ranong, the most vocal student in the FTM.<sup>[27]</sup> The fact that the Free Thai officers had different leadership ideas caused more dissention between them and Pramoj. The students regarded the FTC as "the only entity to which we owe allegiance."<sup>[28]</sup> Accordingly, Chok related, the "Legation look on us as rivals, because with the [FTC] in existence, the Legation would no longer be our superior."<sup>[29]</sup> But the FTC, by giving the students voting power, also pulled them into the political arena -- a place that the Free Thais tried, but were never quite able to stay away from.

In the summer and fall of 1943, several developments in China created further conflicts among the Free Thai members that would threaten the success of the movement. Kunjara and a group of Free Thai officers were sent to China to find a way to "infiltrate" Thailand. However, insufficient equipment and reconnaissance, inter-Allied politics, as well as delays imposed by the Chinese put their operation on hold for months. It created a window for the young and eager officers to become involved in the politics and intrigue set up by the Chinese and Allied individuals who hoped to benefit from the movement. The Free Thai operation in China was under the supervision of the Sino-American Cooperative Organization (SACO).<sup>[30]</sup> Its joint chiefs, General Tai Li, head of Chiang Kai Shek's secret police, and United States Navy Captain Milton Miles, played key roles in delaying and diverting the progress of the Thai resistance in 1943. Tai Li, who saw great potential in the Thai liberation movement in helping China strengthen its position in postwar Asia, tried to steer the movement toward that direction. On the other hand, Miles, who enjoyed a great deal of power and prestige because of SACO and his personal relationship with Tai Li, tried to appease the Chinese rather than do what was needed to help the Thai liberation effort.

Meanwhile, Chamkad Balankura, the representative of the NLM, had reached Chungking and immediately tried to contact the FTM and the Western Allies. His most important objectives were to secure the Allies' support for the movement and the Thai exile government, which the NLM hoped to set up in India, and to ensure that they would guarantee Thailand's sovereignty after the war. However, Balankura and his leaders back home underestimated the difficulties that lay in establishing communication with the Allies and in persuading them to support the Free Thai cause. The NLM's greatest mistake was sending as its representative the young and inexperienced Balankura, who was virtually a nobody in the Thai political circle.<sup>[31]</sup> As a result, Sir Crosby, Pridi's longtime acquaintance, completely dismissed Balankura. The former British minister in Thailand insisted that he had never heard of the X.O. Group and refused to believe that an insignificant and unknown figure like Balankura really represented Pridi Banomyong.<sup>[32]</sup> In addition, the British Embassy in Chungking brushed the young delegate off, warning him to stop sending letters to the legation.<sup>[33]</sup>

The biggest blow to Balankura's hope came on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May when the British government sent a memo to the Chinese, informing them of its refusal to grant the demands of the NLM. The British Foreign Office argued on the behalf of His Majesty the King of England that "the time is not yet ripe to support an active Free Thai Movement." It, in addition, criticized Balankura for having "gone off at half cock and come out with no carefully laid-out plan," as well as stated, "the Siamese army will be a hindrance rather than a help" to the Allies. Most importantly, the

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memo emphasized, "there is no question at present of His Majesty's Government helping to affect the escape of the Free Thai leaders either by sea or by exfiltration. There is no question too of His Majesty's Government recognising the Free Thai Government or 'unfreezing' the Siamese Government's credit."<sup>[34]</sup> This message clearly demonstrates that the British were not ready to commit to the Thai resistance movement, especially if it would mean any political promise by their government regarding the status of postwar Thailand. Balankura was deeply upset by the British reply. It came as a total shock to him, for despite that the Thai military government had declared war on Britain, it was the British who had since been "broadcasting on BBC Radio and All-India-Radio, urging Thai people to fight alongside the Allies against the Japanese. But now that the Thais had organized an anti-Japanese movement, and were starting to put Phibun in a difficult position, the British refused to support them."<sup>[35]</sup> This caused Balankura to suspect that the British might be seeking to impose some sort of control over postwar Thailand, annex part of it, or colonize the country all together.

The situation became increasingly frustrating for Balankura, as his attempts to establish contact with the Free Thai movement in America were also met with great difficulty. Immediately after reaching China, with the 'help' of the Chinese authorities, Balankura sent several telegrams to Washington to try to establish his *bona fides* as a member of a genuine Thai resistance movement and ask Pramoj for funds and help get to the United States. But Pramoj refused to provide the capital at this point and, in his reply, was unclear whether he would help arrange for Balankura to travel to Washington or not. Kharb Kunjara informed Nicol Smith, an OSS liaison officer charged with the care of the Free Thai officers dispatched to China, that just before he left Washington, the Thai Legation received a message from a man named Balankura. However, Kunjara conveyed, "none of us had ever heard of such a person, and so no money was sent."<sup>[36]</sup>

Rejected by the British and alienated by the Free Thais in America, Balankura grew desperate and was forced to rely more and more on the Chinese, which he had tried to avoid; Balankura did not want to owe a debt to the Chinese, fearing the uncertainty of what they would ask of Thailand in return. But when it seemed that his best choices of allies had turned their backs on him, Balankura felt he was left with little choice. Accordingly, he sought to depend on the Nationalist Chinese to influence their American allies to help his cause. Unfortunately, the Chinese, especially Tai Li and his intelligence unit, caused more delays to his mission instead of expediting it. Malai Chuphinit pointed to confusion and the complex security in wartime China as the causes that delayed Balankura's communication with the Western Allies. Chuphinit explained, "it was impossible [for Balankura] to meet with [the American Free Thais] until they were certain over who was who."<sup>[37]</sup>

While difficult wartime communications contributed to the delays of the Free Thai Movement in 1943, it was not the only reason. Balankura's attempts to communicate with the FTM, the FSM, as well as with the British and American authorities were monitored, controlled, and more importantly, manipulated by the Chinese intelligence to suit the Nationalists' goals. Many of the messages Balankura sent out went missing under the supervision of Tai Li's men. Pridi and Balankura's wife, who had remained in Thailand, both recalled that the radio announcement of Balankura's arrival in Chungking was the only message from the delegate and the only news about him they received.<sup>[38]</sup> This, according to Chatthip Natsupha, resulted in the Thai resistance dispatching another group of representatives to Chungking in August 1943. Moreover, John B. Haseman argued that a number of messages, "especially one that should have established [Balankura's] *bona fides* beyond doubt, were never delivered" to Pramoj in Washington.<sup>[39]</sup>

So what was the Chinese goal? Why interrupt the communications between Balankura and the Western Allies? The Nationalist Chinese, sought to gain a permanent foothold in postwar Thailand and use it as a base from which to spread China's influence over the rest of Southeast Asia. Therefore, they wanted the Thais to establish their

government in exile in China instead of India, which was out of the Chinese control and under their rival's, the British. According to British intelligence, Chinese officials even bribed Balankura with \$500,000 of "comfort money," as well as promised to "advance up to \$100,000,000" for a Thai government and liberation movement based in Chungking.<sup>[40]</sup> Balankura, however, was reluctant to comply, since his instructions were to organize the exile government with the support of the British, in India.<sup>[41]</sup> As a result, he was put in isolation, or what the Chinese called 'protective custody.'

By late June 1943, Balankura's identity and the existence of the resistance in Thailand had been more or less established, and Pramoj had since been keen to have the delegate flown to Washington. Nonetheless, Balankura continued to be detained in Chungking and was not allowed to meet with the Free Thai unit from America. Phaisan Trakunli, who had accompanied Balankura from Thailand as his translator recalled, "We heard Kharb Kunjara had come from America. We wanted to see him, but [the Chinese authorities in] Chungking would not allow us to meet."<sup>[42]</sup> Kunjara also tried, without success, to arrange a meeting with Balankura despite the fact that he had established a close relationship with Tai Li. Kunjara related his frustration to Smith: "neither Captain Miles nor I have been able to get a thing out of him [Tai Li] on this. He won't deny that Balankura is here [but] refuses to produce him for us to question."<sup>[43]</sup> Pow Khamurai, a Thai officer in Kunjara's group voiced the same disappointment. He pointed out that it was not until Balankura "was very sick and about to die [that Kunjara] was finally permitted by the Chinese authorities to meet him."<sup>[44]</sup> According to Trakunli, the Chinese also made no plans to release Balankura to United States custody. They used the excuse that Balankura should meet and consult with Chiang Kai Shek before continuing to Washington. But, Trakunli stated, "the Chinese kept postponing our meeting with Generalissimo Chiang, that we felt we could not believe them anymore."<sup>[45]</sup>

What the Thais did not realize was that their efforts were also hindered by the US authorities' reluctance to help them. In fact, certain American officials in China got themselves entangled in the politics of Thai independence, assumed that they knew better, and decided to bypass the Thais, often even the State Department, and take matters into their own hands. John Carter Vincent, American Charge d'Affaires in Chungking, took the liberty to assess that Balankura was "not an entirely balanced person," and advised his government to "leave to the Chinese ... the matter of handling [him]."<sup>[46]</sup> What is worse, Miles, who thought he could score points with his superiors in Washington from a Free Thai success under his supervision, supported the Chinese plan to host the Thai government in exile in Chungking, and made use of the existing rift among the Thais to achieve this goal. He agreed with Tai Li not to let the pro-British Balankura meet the American Free Thai unit and reported to his government that it was "unnecessary," "General Tai and I ... decided that Balankura was not of sufficient importance to make any promises," he argued.<sup>[47]</sup> But it is more likely that Miles and Tai Li kept Balankura away from the Free Thais because Balankura still wished to establish the Thai exile government in India. Had Balankura been able to discuss these matters with Pramoj, who was more inclined toward the British than the Chinese, the plan for a Thai government in India might have materialized, and the control of the Thai resistance could slip out of the hands of both the Chinese and Miles. For that reason, the SACO chiefs planned to detain Balankura in China until the latter changed his mind.

In the fall of 1943, two developments forced Miles and Tai Li to change their tactics and led to increased interactions between the Thais from America and those from Thailand, resulting in further complications in the effort to liberate Thailand. The first was the meeting between Balankura and Prince Subha Svasti, one of the key players in the FSM. Notwithstanding the policy of the British Foreign Office to stay away from the business of the NLM, the Special Operations Executive (SOE), a British counterpart of the OSS which was in charge of the FSM, had shown an interest in Balankura ever since it was informed of his arrival in China. However, it had been unable to communicate with him for the Chinese lied that Balankura "was already working closely with the American Free



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Thai group and therefore had no interest in meeting British representatives." [48] But all of that changed when Prince Subha Svasti, who was working directly under the SOE commander in India, received a letter from Balankura on June 21<sup>st</sup> requesting to see him. Balankura was probably able to get around the Chinese and send word out to Subha Svasti through Trakunli, who had also been secretly contacting the British and American embassies on his behalf while he was placed under house arrest. Thus, the first face-to-face contact between a representative of the Thai resistance within the country and a representative of the movement abroad was made possible.

Balankura and Prince Subha Svasti met every day, from August 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, during which Subha Svasti assuaged Balankura's disappointment in the British, assuring him that the Atlantic Charter had made it clear that Britain would not seek territorial gains in Thailand after the war. The prince then explained that "without a concrete proof of the existence of this Free Siamese Movement [the NLM], supported by the majority of the Siamese population, it would be difficult to make the British Government give a support to it, since [she does not] undertake to do anything she feels she may not be able to carry out." [49] With this assurance, Balankura moved to rally for support from the prince and the British. He deliberately revealed that "he had received an invitation from the Chinese Government to set up the Siamese Provisional Government in China," and even lied that the United States had already thrown its support behind the establishment this government. [50] Balankura also played on British fears; he claimed that in return for guaranteeing Thailand's sovereignty, the Chinese planned to use the country "as a base to penetrate into British Malaya." [51] The young delegate's exaggeration that the Chinese and the Americans were already heavily involved with his liberation movement was convincing and disconcerting enough to evoke a response from the prince. Subha Svasti hurriedly tried to persuade Balankura "not to press for a Siamese Provisional Government in China prematurely," he said, "since such a Government would not really be free, and at best would be like the Provisional Korean Government, which is most undesirable." The Prince also promised, "the outlook is very bright with regard to the recognition of the Provisional Government [in British India]." [52]

Subha Svasti's promise to Balankura reflected only his own hopeful dreams. Despite that the meeting between the two ended on a very positive note, it resulted in no real political promise from the British. It did, however, provide the SOE with substantial information that allowed it to progress further toward the plan for the FSM officers to infiltrate Thailand. Moreover, the meeting, along with another development from Thailand, would prompt further involvement of certain Allied parties and heightened the rivalries within and between their agencies. The Thai liberation movement was slowly becoming the object of contention between the three Allies, each seeking to become the most favored nation of postwar Thailand.

In August, a new party of delegates, consisting of men who were prominent members of the Thai political scene, exfiltrated to China, bringing tangible proof that a substantial underground resistance was at work in Thailand. This encouraged more action on the Allies' part, but at the same time, the new delegates' presence in Chungking also aggravated the conflict between Pramoj and Kunjara. This was due in part to the fact that unlike Balankura, the new delegation, led by Sanguan Tularak, was much more receptive to the idea of a Sino-Thai collaboration. And thus, when they responded positively to establishing the exile government in China, Tai Li and Miles were suddenly keen to let them meet and bond with the Free Thai unit from America. However, things became exceedingly complicated as the Thais were full of mistrust of one another. Tularak himself distrusted Kunjara because of the latter's ties with Phibun, the dictatorial Thai premier. Furthermore, not only were the two men members of competing parties before the war, but more importantly, they believed in opposite political ideologies, one democratic, the other militaristic and dictatorial. Tularak also had doubts about Karun Kengradomying, another Free Thai officer, whose father he believed to be dishonest and involved in illegal activities with Phibun. [53] Balankura, too, suspected Kunjara. The latter's connection to the Thai dictator and his reputation as an

untrustworthy man and an opportunist had been well known to Balankura long before the war started. It did not help, either, that Pramoj had been sending him telegrams warning him not to trust the colonel.<sup>[54]</sup>

Despite all the petty politics among the Thais, it would be too hasty to assume that the relationships and conflicts between them were dictated by ambition, especially those relating to the rivalries between different political parties in Thailand, as Ngamcachonkulkid has argued. The dynamic between the Thais, in fact, depended more on political principles, personal loyalty, and family alliance. Most importantly, and somewhat ironically, it was characterized by political paranoia: the mutual distrust and fear of nearly every member of the Thai resistance that a fellow Thai in the movement had an ambition or a hidden agenda to exploit their noble cause for his own political gains. This was why Pramoj, Balankura and Tularak were reluctant to trust Kunjara, a man of a political belief incompatible to their own and a man who had been until the war broke out Phibun's loyal follower. It was also why the Thais in Chungking were so easily convinced that the FSM, supposedly led by Prince Subha Svasti, had a goal to return to absolutist Siam with the help of the British government, a monarchical institution itself. Even Balankura, the most pro-British person among the Thais in Chungking, did not think the idea was too farfetched. After being disillusioned by the British letter of May 25<sup>th</sup>, he told Chiang Kai Shek that he suspected Britain refused to support the pro-constitution NLM because it was planning on backing the Thai royalists in England, who desired to restore the monarchical rule in Thailand.<sup>[55]</sup> Though Balankura's suspicion was cleared up when Subha Svasti ensured him in their meetings that neither he nor the FSM had any intention of restoring the absolute monarchy, the rest of the American Free Thais and NLM members were not so easily convinced.

At a glance, Prince Subha Svasti seemed like a natural leader for the Free Siamese movement. He was a genuine patriot, whose resistance against the Japanese began as soon as the latter attacked the Allies and invaded Thailand. On December 8, 1941, he wrote a letter to Winston Churchill offering his service to the Allied cause.<sup>[56]</sup> From then on, he provided the British War Office with the most extensive geographical, military, and political information on Thailand. By the time the FSM gained recognition from the British government in mid-1942, a step forward that was partly the outcome of his effort, the prince had already earned the rank of major in the British Army. Gilchrist even argued that Thai citizens living in England avoided being "put into internment [during the war] due to the enthusiasm of Prince Subha Svasti."<sup>[57]</sup> The prince helped pave the way for the Free Siamese movement to emerge in England.

Moreover, as early as the first half of 1943, when no one outside of Thailand knew for sure yet whether an underground resistance really existed in the country, let alone whom it involved, Subha Svasti singled out Pridi Banomyong as the greatest potential ally for the FSM. Despite the fact that they belonged to opposite political camps, the prince considered Pridi to be "very sincere," "patriotic," and "a man of worth," and suspected him to be the leader of the Thai underground, for, Subha Svasti argued, "he is intensely anti-Japanese and [anti-Phibun's] administration up to a point that a man of his character cannot sit still and let the affairs go by without attempting anything." The prince further added that if he was right, if the underground was in fact led by Pridi, then the Thai liberation movement "will have a fair chance of success," and insisted to the British authorities that Pridi "is a man whom we must contact."<sup>[58]</sup> Therefore, had it not been for the unrelenting suspicion among liberation movement members against Thai royals, Prince Subha Svasti would have been the perfect candidate to lead the Free Siamese movement.<sup>[59]</sup>

Unfortunately, Subha Svasti had always been seen as a die-hard monarchist, and it made his motives questionable to his countrymen. The prince was a part of the old monarchical regime that was overthrown by the men of the ruling elite, which consisted of powerful political figures like Pridi and Phibun. He was also the brother-in-law, as well as one of the closest and most loyal advisors of King Prajadhipok, the last absolute monarch of Thailand. What

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is more, he was the son of Prince Svasti who, according to Sir Crosby, was "the most unpopular of all the Princes with the men who came into power.... after the coup d'etat." [60] Due to these reasons, many members of the FSM opposed the prince's leadership, for they believed that he had the agenda to revert Thailand back to the old feudal ways. Others, who saw him in a better light, rejected him because they feared, and as the attitude of the Thais in Chungking suggests rightly so, that the Free Siamese movement would be misconstrued as a political movement to restore absolutist rule in Thailand.[61]

Throughout the war, Subha Svasti tried determinedly but fruitlessly to convince fellow Thai patriots in the liberation movement that he had no political ambition or personal agenda. He repeatedly swore that his only motives were "national liberation and to see democracy truly prosper in Thailand.[62] The prince even went by a different name, 'Arun', in order to hide the fact that he was a prince. He told his British superiors that he "has no politics and does not want to appear as a monarchist." [63] Furthermore, although the SOE highly valued the prince's knowledge and admired his dedication, the Foreign Office never supported him or recognized him as the leader of the FSM. This was because the British government wanted to assert its influence on the Thais, both then and after the war, and backing someone who was as unpopular among his countrymen as Subha Svasti would frustrate this goal rather than promote it. Hence the suspicion of the Thais in Chungking that the British were backing a Thai royalist restoration was entirely unfounded.[64] And the prince became the victim, a perfect example of how the sociopolitical structure in Thailand shaped what went on in this movement to restore national sovereignty. [65] Ironically, Subha Svasti, probably the least appreciated and the most suspected member of the entire Thai liberation effort, was also most likely the least political of them all.

In the second half of 1943, Captain Miles of the United States Navy Intelligence was becoming more and more entangled in Thai politics. He saw that the establishment of a Thai exile government in Chungking equaled a Free Thai and OSS success under his supervision, as well as a strong cooperative relationship between the Chinese and the Americans as the product of his maneuvering. And Miles believed that achieving the aforementioned would substantially boost the esteem in which he was held by his superiors. As a result, he pushed to speed up the organization of a Free Thai base in China. Miles promoted the idea of a Thai government in Chungking to the Thais under his care and sought to eliminate the possibility that the said government would be set up elsewhere. Together with the Chinese, Miles had also rejected the British attempt to contact Balankura or cooperate with the American Free Thai group. Furthermore, he made use of the Free Thais' mistrust towards Prince Subha Svasti and the FSM to achieve further distance from the SOE. He reinforced their fear of absolute rule and advised the Free Thais against cooperating with the Free Siamese, implying that the latter were deeply under the "influence" of the British and were involved in "party politics" to support the royalist revival, and that was why they chose Prince Subha Svasti to be the leader of their group. [66] It did not seem to matter to Miles that none of this was true; he was determined to alienate anyone who opposed or threatened the establishment of the Chinese-centric Free Thai base and government.

At the same time, Miles encouraged unity between the NLM delegates and the American Free Thai unit in Chungking, all of whom now seemed to be in favor of forming the Thai exile government in Nationalist China. He told the Thais, "there must a single organization which is pulling together without any inharmonious power seeking individuals," and that their "differences must be settled after the war ... for war waits for nobody." [67] Miles ultimately threatened, "no recognition or action would be accorded to a Free Thai Government so long as there was more than one group in the organization competing for power." [68] In addition, he pushed for a decision to be made among the Thais in China, and in doing so, he encouraged political involvement of the Free Thai officers despite the fact that he himself had reassured Pramoj and the OSS many times that he understood that the duties

of the Free Thai agents, including Kunjara, were strictly military, and that they had no authority to make political decisions.

The tangled situation in China demonstrates that the Free Thai effort was stalled by division and uncertainty: the rivalry between the American military agencies and the British SOE, the Chinese agenda to take over the movement, and Miles' troublesome meddling. Moreover, the Free Thai movement made little progress with regard to cooperating with the NLM because the United States government was unwilling to fight for the custody of the delegates from Thailand at the expense of its relationship with Chiang Kai Shek's regime. But their reluctance was understandable, for while the Allies' efforts determined the fate of the FTM and of Thailand, they were, in turn, shaped not just by inter-Allied politics, but also by their interests in Thailand, as well as their perceptions of Thai politics. The United States authorities were unsure of the effectiveness of the Thai resistance, and the internal conflicts among the members only served to discourage their effort. It was only natural that the Americans were hesitant to take the FTM seriously, when even the Thais could not seem to reach any agreement among themselves. Prince Subha Svasti reflected in his memoir on the challenges facing the FSM. He wrote, "it was the Thais ourselves who disrupted the smooth sailing of our operation. The British merely ... exploited our disunity to suit their goals."<sup>[69]</sup> The debacle in China proved that this was true not only in the case of the FSM in Britain, but for the FTM as well.

In September 1943, Kunjara reported to the Thai Legation, "I have made certain that the Thai people [who] came out from Thailand are sincere. They have full co-operation of the Chinese authority. All our boys are confident in co-operating with them."<sup>[70]</sup> This deeply upset Pramoj, who then protested to the OSS that they had not kept their promise that Kunjara would be kept "under close surveillance, practically as if he were a prisoner,"<sup>[71]</sup> but instead the colonel, who was the least reliable person of all in the eyes of the minister, "was unwisely allowed to interrogate the members of [the] political delegation [from Thailand] and pass judgment on their political trustworthiness."<sup>[72]</sup> Pramoj told the OSS and Miles that he feared the delegates from Thailand would mistakenly "think Kunjara represents Thai movement in America. Whereas ... it has been repeatedly stated that Kunjara is not a political agent and should not be considered as one." Thus, the minister asked Miles to "advise [the] Thai groups as to [the] 'status' of Kunjara," and insisted that Balankura and Tularak be sent to Washington as soon as possible.<sup>[73]</sup> Unfortunately, Pramoj's requests fell on deaf ears; not only was Miles the person who promoted politics among the Thais in the first place, he and Tai Li also advocated a scheme to form a mighty Free Thai army to be made up of the Free Thai officers from America and Thai-born Chinese, who would be trained under Miles and Tai Li's supervision. This Sino-Thai army, as the SACO chiefs planned, was to invade from Southern China and drive out the Japanese military forces occupying Thailand.

This grand scheme, which entailed an extensive collaboration between the Chinese and the Thais, caused relations between Pramoj and Kunjara to plummet even further because it appeared to the former that the latter had much to benefit from all these China-based plans. On the one hand, Kunjara had been appeasing Pramoj, ensuring him that he would stick to his military duties and not interfere with politics. On September 24<sup>th</sup>, he wrote to the minister, "The boys and I are not anxious to be mixed up in politics unless absolutely forced upon us. Unity of Thai group is most essential to be able to liberate our country."<sup>[74]</sup> In another telegram, Kunjara further reassured Pramoj of his position: "I made it clear I am not a political representative and can only discuss fighting.... I will be in position only to execute the operation when it has been decided by you what we agree to do."<sup>[75]</sup> On the other hand, sneaking behind Pramoj's back, Kunjara put himself forth as a candidate to lead the new Chinese-sponsored core of the liberation movement by reporting to the Americans that Tularak had expressed his wish that he (Kunjara) be "the head of the Free Thai Fighting Forces," a.k.a. the proposed Sino-Thai army.<sup>[76]</sup> To make matters even more complicated, Miles also wrote to General William J. Donovan, head of the OSS, promoting the China

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scheme. Miles argued, "Kunjara and Balankura are each in full accord with [the] policies of Tularaksa [who] wants us [to] set up [a] Free Thai government in exile in Chungking ... and Free Thai troops in Southern China." The captain then recommended that "Kunjara be adequately promoted and given command of it [the Sino-Thai army] and also retain control of his present officers."<sup>[77]</sup> This means that had the Sino-Thai scheme turned out according to SACO's plan, Kunjara would have become the most important and most powerful person in the entire resistance.

All this time, Miles was probably unaware that the United States State Department had no intention to recognize a Free Thai government, and neither was it the intention of the OSS to create a Sino-Thai army. Hence, Miles' effort only caused increasing dissention among the Thais, while it did not benefit him personally at all. In fact, Miles landed himself in hot water because he meddled too much in the Free Thai business while failing to fulfill his other obligations to his superiors as the American chief of SACO. General Joseph Stilwell, who was in charge of the China-Burma-India Theater of the war, had been much displeased with Miles' work, or rather lack of work in China. As early as July 1943, Lt. Col. Richard P. Heppner reported to the OSS headquarters in Washington about Miles' incompetence. He wrote, "General [Stilwell] is thoroughly fed up with [Miles] who has and is producing nothing."<sup>[78]</sup>

However, for Pramoj, who could not be sure what exactly was going on within the inner circle of the US military command, the rumors he had heard from China and the idea of a massive Sino-Thai collaboration and an exile government in Chungking deeply troubled him. He informed Secretary of State Hull that he thought it was "unnecessary and unwise to establish a Thai Government-in-Exile anywhere."<sup>[79]</sup> In fact, Pramoj had wanted to set up an exile government, as he proposed to Phibun before the Japanese invasion, but one in Washington, not in China and definitely not under the maneuvers of the Chinese. Setting up a government in exile was also an extremely delicate matter that needed the approval and support of the United States, not to mention that the said government must be led by suitable people who had the support of the population back home. Pramoj most likely told Hull that he did not support "any" Thai government in exile to appease the State Department, which had not signed off on the idea. Pramoj feared, above all, that he and ergo the Free Thai movement, would lose the support of State Department officials, and thus tried ensure them that the Thai Legation had not gone behind their backs and carried out a plan that they had not approved.

Furthermore, Pramoj strongly opposed sending the Sino-Thai army into Thailand. The minister obviously did not want Kunjara to become any more powerful. But, more importantly, he feared, as he wrote in his postwar memoir, that the Chinese might "come into Thailand and try to assert their influence in the country after the war."<sup>[80]</sup> Accordingly, the minister firmly declared, "whenever Col. Kunjara leads the Sino-Thai troops into Thailand, that will be the day I dismiss him from his post."<sup>[81]</sup> What is more, the minister reemphasized that the colonel could not be trusted. He warned that if and when Kunjara reentered Thailand, he might "give the names of resistance members in Thailand to the Japanese."<sup>[82]</sup> However, Pramoj's protests seemed to have very little impact on what was going on out of his reach in Chungking.

It became Pramoj's worst fear that the movement which he had started was slipping out of his control, as Tularak and Kunjara, with Miles and Tai Li, continued to make important plans in Chungking without his consent. As long as the Thai delegates were detained in Chungking, Pramoj was kept out of the position to veto any plans made or endorsed by Kunjara or the Chinese. What is worse, in Washington, Pramoj had also been outvoted by Kunjara and the students-turned-officers in the Free Thai Committee,<sup>[83]</sup> even though in the minister's view, the committee had been created to settle internal matters only and should not have any power over the Thai Legation. In early

October, the sudden death of Balankura, Pramoj's only ally in China, supposedly of stomach cancer, finally pushed the Thai minister over the edge.

Pramoj lashed out in a series of accusations against Kunjara. He suspected that the colonel was involved in the mysterious death of Balankura, "who had previously condemned Lt. Col. Kunjara as a spy and an enemy of the Free Thai movement," and who had wanted to establish a Thai government in British India, and "was about to leave China on his way to see me in Washington."<sup>[84]</sup> He also accused Kunjara of having a hidden agenda that could be detrimental to the Free Thai movement and the Allied cause and reminded the American officials that the colonel had been proven guilty of swindling funds from the movement. Pramoj believed that Kunjara was an extremely ambitious man. He argued, "Kunjara [who] had concluded that post-war Thailand should be run by Free Thais," rather than by the people's elected government, "had his lines out for future politics [and] since he has been away he has been playing those lines."<sup>[85]</sup> Even "the soldiers of the Free Thai unit in China," Pramoj continued, "have been encouraged to play a part in politics through the intrigues carried on by Lt. Col. Kunjara."<sup>[86]</sup> The minister further alleged that Kunjara, in collaboration with the Chinese, had pressured Balankura and Tularak to agree to a Thai exile government in Chungking. He related to Major Carl Hoffman, Director of OSS Far Eastern operations, that "the purpose of the delegation ... was to set up a Thai government-in-exile in India. It was after Lt. Col. Kunjara's contact with its members that the original purpose ... was transformed into a proposal to establish a government-in-exile in China."<sup>[87]</sup> Finally, Pramoj demanded that the colonel be "recalled to be discharged and relieved of all his duties and functions in connection with the Free Thai movement."<sup>[88]</sup>

Political and diplomatic advisers in the OSS, who had extensive knowledge of Thailand's political situation and were aware of Kunjara's tarnished reputation, agreed with Pramoj. Frederic Dolbeare, a foreign affairs adviser to Thailand before the war, alleged that Kunjara had been connected to a scandal involving illegal military contracts before the war. He, like Pramoj, also believed that Kunjara was involved in Balankura's death. Dolbeare found a natural cause of death hard to believe, stating, "I cannot escape feeling that this was a very rapid development of a fatal cancerous growth for a young man, who, I understand to have not been over thirty years of age."<sup>[89]</sup> He added, "Kunjara has a doubtful record and a big stake in hand," and "Balankura was a potential threat to Kunjara's ambition and died suddenly."<sup>[90]</sup> Dolbeare concluded that Kunjara would not be "viewed with confidence by the men in Siam with whom we wish to deal," and warned that the colonel was "a potential threat to anyone sent there [to Thailand] who does not fit in with his schemes," as well as "a threat to the safety of the decent elements who are inside the country."<sup>[91]</sup> Herman Scholtz of the OSS Secret Intelligence branch pointed out similarly that as Kunjara's past record was "well known to the Thais," the Free Thai movement with his name as a leader would prompt the anti-Japanese elements in Thailand to "react unfavorably and support within the country [would] be lacking."<sup>[92]</sup> Scholtz was, on the other hand, very sympathetic towards Pramoj. He wrote to his superior, Milton Katz: "the Thai Minister who after the decision of the Thai Premier to cooperate with Japan, broke with his government and declared himself a Free Thai should have a voice in any decisions regarding the Free Thai Movement."<sup>[93]</sup>

On the contrary, a number of OSS military commanders viewed Kunjara in a much more positive light. On October 21<sup>st</sup>, Hoffman responded to Pramoj's accusations against the Thai colonel, all of which he deemed "unfounded." On the subject of Kunjara's misappropriation of funds, Hoffman claimed "no 'guilt' as appears from the documents."<sup>[94]</sup> He further pointed out that these "facts" about Kunjara had not been brought to the attention of the OSS from the start of the operation, and thus the minister, he assumed, must have "considered them of insufficient bearing on [Kunjara's] military qualifications, otherwise," Hoffman told Pramoj, "you would not have consented in the first instance to having Colonel Kunjara head up the project."<sup>[95]</sup> In his argument, Hoffman was, of course, implying that Pramoj had made up all these accusations because of jealousy and insecurity that Kunjara

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was gaining more influence and popularity in the Free Thai movement. Hoffman also clarified that the OSS had never promised to watch Kunjara "as though he were a prisoner."<sup>[96]</sup> They merely promised, Hoffman argued, to keep the colonel under close observation until his trustworthiness had been established. And according to the reports he received from OSS agents in China, Kunjara was "fit" as a Free Thai commander and the morale of his group was excellent. Hoffman argued that there was no report of Kunjara exercising his influence on the Thai personnel whatsoever.<sup>[97]</sup> He then said sarcastically to Pramoj: "It is unfortunate if the political differences of opinion between you and the Colonel have grown since ... However, it is beyond the scope of this organization [the OSS] to become involved in politics."<sup>[98]</sup> Hoffman, in the end, declined the minister's request to have Kunjara removed from the movement.

General Donovan, on the other hand, was less clear about where he stood on the matter of Kunjara's reliability. However, by the fall of 1943, he had become very much fed up with Pramoj's complaints, which he deemed disruptive to his work. Pramoj recalled in his memoir that he was called in to the general's office one morning, when the latter angrily "banged on his desk and yelled at me, warning me to stop interfering with the American war effort."<sup>[99]</sup> Donovan and his military commanders in the OSS would come to realize almost a year later that Pramoj was right about Kunjara being troublesome. But unfortunately, for the time being, Pramoj failed to get rid of Kunjara, for not all of the OSS officials agreed with him that the colonel's untrustworthiness and threat to the Thai movement and to the Americans' goals outweighed his usefulness in the field.

In his assessment of Kunjara, Dolbeare pointed out an interesting fact that turned out to be a critical problem in the Free Thai movement; he wrote, "If these suspicions [about Kunjara] are all completely unfounded, then they ought to be cleared up because no one who shares them can [work with him] with any peace of mind."<sup>[100]</sup> The American officials failed to make a decision whether to completely trust Kunjara, or dismiss him from his duty. This caused much delay and many complications in the China mission. At the same time, Pramoj refused to accept any proposal that came out of China, suspecting that Kunjara was behind it. Miles, on the other hand, saw that the colonel's attitude fit with his plans and continued to back him, giving him more power than the OSS would care for him to have. In turn, Kunjara, confident that his position was safeguarded by the Americans, continued to make plans with the Chinese and Miles to promote a scheme that in the end went nowhere. All in all the Free Thai movement was caught in a vicious cycle of distrust and indecisiveness; it was stuck in limbo.

Was there any truth to Pramoj's accusations against Kunjara? Or was it all made up because of one man's jealousy of the other? Despite what Pramoj and Dolbeare may have believed, it is very unlikely that Kunjara was involved in Balankura's death. Kunjara met Balankura for the first time in mid-September 1943, less than a month before the latter's death, and, according to Colonel L.T. Ride, a British officer who came into possession of his diary, Balankura had begun to feel pain in his stomach as early as May 2<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>[101]</sup> Nevertheless, it would be naïve to suggest that Kunjara was innocent of all charges the Thai minister laid against him. Documents consulted in this study have shown that Kunjara was making extensive plans with Miles and Tai Li without the approval, and sometimes without the knowledge of Pramoj, the State Department, or the OSS--although Pramoj seemed to be the only one aware of the fact at this point (mid-1943). Moreover, the colonel's behavior while in active duty rendered him to be a rather questionable leader.

While the Free Thai officers often favored Kunjara over Pramoj, they knew well that he was far from a perfect leader and even pointed out the colonel's lack of responsibility. Though it is uncertain whether or not Kunjara was guilty of the charge of illegal use of Free Thai funds, the colonel did have a bad spending habit and often seemed to be running into money problems. During the mission in China, he frequently borrowed from others. On October 18, 1943, he wrote to Nicol Smith, who was at the time in India procuring currency and equipment for the group's

operation in China and Thailand, "there had been quite a lot of expenses incurred around Chungking, especially for me." Kunjara then asked Smith, "if you have some American money in hand, I wish you would try and change them into Chinese money;" he requested 2,000,000 in Chinese currency, which he said would only last him six months.<sup>[102]</sup> The colonel had also been borrowing from a certain "skipper" a.k.a. Captain Miles. He confessed to Smith that "so far I have borrowed CNS 300,000 off of him."<sup>[103]</sup> Kunjara tried to convince Smith that he needed all that money for operational purposes. In spite of that, the latter, who was well aware of what and how much was required for the mission to succeed, questioned, "why he is having such heavy expenditure."<sup>[104]</sup>

In addition, Kunjara's absence from the Free Thai quarters began to agitate those under his command. According to Chok na Ranong, the Free Thai officers were billeted in "an ancient Chinese house, about 1.5 km away from the American quarters." The place was under the care of the Chinese secret service. Kunjara, on the other hand, decided to stay by himself "in a rented house in Chungking, which was not provided by the Chinese."<sup>[105]</sup> The colonel also had several mistresses in the city. It was probably his private house and mistresses that accounted for his ridiculous spending. In fact, Reynolds noted in his book that one of Smith's tasks in India was procuring cosmetics for Kunjara's mistress.<sup>[106]</sup> The colonel's lifestyle caused more problems as the Thai officers started to feel that his constant absence was hindering their operation. Chok complained that he saw Kunjara "only once in a great while. Some weeks he didn't come at all."<sup>[107]</sup> OSS agents stationed near the Free Thai living quarters also began to take note of the colonel's irresponsibility. Chok wrote in his memoir, "whenever the OSS send someone to contact us, our C.O. was never there. The OSS was so fed up that finally they asked: 'where's your f\*\*\*\*\* C.O.!'"<sup>[108]</sup> Besides that, Chok related, communication was difficult enough with the OSS without Kunjara being away all the time, and the security measures in China were far from 'secure,' especially since the colonel's "girlfriend" had turned out to be "a Japanese spy and had already been executed by a firing squad."<sup>[109]</sup>

But despite Kunjara's unfitting behavior, the Free Thai officers still felt closer ties to him than to Pramoj. This could be explained by the officers' sense of camaraderie; at least Kunjara, more or less, was making the same sacrifices and sharing the same hardship they were. Therefore, the officers were much more sympathetic towards him. Chintana Yossunthorn, a civilian member of the FTM who published numerous articles about the movement in a Thai magazine after the war, even dismissed Kunjara's drinking and adultery simply as a common practice among wartime military men. She wrote, "For a typical soldier, alcohol, women, and warfare are the things that go together."<sup>[110]</sup> Yossunthorn, more than others, admired Kunjara as the "hero" of the Free Thai movement, a man who was "decisive, a brave man, and a gentleman in every way."<sup>[111]</sup>

From the above, we can see that Kunjara, albeit being a most irresponsible leader, was probably not the evil mastermind Pramoj had made him out to be. Rather, he was the slippery kind, an opportunist who went with the flow. Kunjara genuinely wanted to regain Thailand's independence--even his inappropriate involvement in the scheme for the Sino-Thai cooperation has shown that much--but he certainly did not shy away from reaping the benefits when the opportunity presented itself. In addition, Kunjara did try to blacken the name of the man who had been so hostile toward him from the beginning and, at the same time, eliminate the competition. As his telegrams to Pramoj in the fall of 1943 have demonstrated, the colonel pretended to play nice, deferring to the minister's authority and ensuring him that he understood his role was strictly military. But in the meantime, in Chungking, Kunjara also tried to maintain in his own grasp, as well as in his allies', Miles and Tai Li, what he thought was the crucial decision-making for the Thai liberation movement. When Kunjara met Tularak in September, he implied that the course of the Free Thai Movement should be decided in Chungking because the Chinese, according to the colonel, "preferred to exclude [Pramoj] since he is very difficult to handle."<sup>[112]</sup>



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Furthermore, in a rather subtle way, Kunjara tried to worsen the views of the Free Thai officers towards Pramoj, and he succeeded; a great number of Free Thai officers blamed Pramoj for the setbacks in their cause. Chok na Ranong was one of them. He probably did not realize that Kunjara exaggerated when he wrote the following in his postwar memorandum: "M.L. Kharb [Kunjara] told us these people [Tularak and company] wished to go to Washington, as Balankura had wanted but that they had been turned down by M.R. Seni [Pramoj], who did not want to pay for their transportation. That was why they were stuck in Chungking without any prospects of completing their mission."<sup>[113]</sup> Kunjara cleverly took advantage of the fact that the Free Thai students had previously been embittered by Pramoj's refusal to authorize them reasonable pay. Throughout the movement, Pramoj tried to limit how much the members of the resistance spent and were paid, for the fear that they would be seen by the Americans, their key sponsor, as mercenaries. But Pramoj's tight grip on the FTM's treasury led Chok and the other students to believe that, just as in their case, the minister refused to help the Thai delegates because he was cheap and wanted to keep all the money to himself.

Despite how thrifty Pramoj was, he did not refuse to pay for the delegates' travels; in fact, that they were stuck in China had nothing to do with money. Pramoj wrote numerous letters complaining about Tularak's delayed trip and requesting the United States government's help to expedite the matter. Furthermore, the minister was anxious to get the Thai delegates out of China, away from the influences of Kunjara and the Chinese. On September 17<sup>th</sup>, immediately after Tularak reached Chungking, Pramoj expressed to Miles via Halliwell that he desired to have Tularak and Balankura arrive in Washington as soon as possible.<sup>[114]</sup> At the same time, he also asked Luang Dithakarn Bhakdi, one of his subordinates at the Thai Legation, to request the American authorities in Washington to help facilitate the delegates' travels. Bhakdi wrote to an OSS officer, "we should be extremely grateful if his [Tularak's] departure from China ... could be accelerated through your kind intervention."<sup>[115]</sup> In addition, in late November, Pramoj wrote to Mani Sanasen, his representative in London, complaining that despite the fact that "authorities here are doing everything possible to get them [the delegates] out of China, [their departure] has been delayed at the other end."<sup>[116]</sup>

But in spite of what has been revealed by declassified documents, many Free Thai officers believed then and continued to do so long after the war that Balankura failed and Tularak was delayed because of Pramoj. Decades after the war, when Chok wrote his memorandum, he was still convinced that Tularak and company were able to go to Washington only because he and the Free Thai officers in Chungking had offered to pay for their trip. Chintana Yossunthorn believed that Pramoj refused to help Balankura and Tularak because he "had resented Pridi Banomyong for a long time ... and thus refused to cooperate with Pridi's liberation party."<sup>[117]</sup> Sawat Sisuk, an officer in the FSM, thought similarly. He wrote in his book, which was a commentary on Balankura's diary, that Balankura could not go to Washington because Pramoj did not want him there; the United States government merely followed the minister's wish.<sup>[118]</sup>

Pramoj's inept diplomacy and clumsy leadership played right into Kunjara's hand. Instead of trying to patch things between himself and the Free Thai officers in order to sway them from Kunjara's influence, he accused them of being "[the colonel's] satellites" and behaving like "mercenaries, hired soldiers trying to make money out of this war."<sup>[119]</sup> What is more, he alleged that they were "setting up a committee [in Chungking] illegally" to decide by themselves matters of the movement and Thailand's political future.<sup>[120]</sup> The students felt deeply betrayed. They volunteered for this great cause, knowing full well the risks, without expecting anything in return. They certainly did not deserve to be accused of trying to benefit from this great and noble cause which was as much their own as it was Pramoj's. Chok's letter to Bunmag Desabutra, dated October 30<sup>th</sup>, revealed that he was hurt and found it hard to believe that Pramoj, a man who was "smart and has a moral code [would] play such a dirty trick as to say

nasty things about us when we are not there."<sup>[121]</sup> Moreover, he was angry; Pramoj had no right to judge the men in China when he was "sitting behind a desk [and] sleeping in a comfortable bed [while] we have left all comfort behind us, all the love ones, we are doing to real sacrifice."<sup>[122]</sup> A few months later, Chok wrote a bitter letter to Pramoj, reiterating that the minister was wrong to accuse the men:

"We could have pushed on with our studies with the prewar pay and could still have our automobiles. We could have worked in the States and get as much pay as we are getting now if not more. We could easily out-live the war and spend our vacations in nice places as you do now ... But we gave all that up by our own free will."<sup>[123]</sup>

The other officers in Chungking as well as back in Washington were equally upset by Pramoj's attack. Bundit Kantabutra called it "nothing less than a foul play."<sup>[124]</sup> Pao Khamurai, who was also in China at the time, was so angry that he called Pramoj a "son of a b\*\*\*\*."<sup>[125]</sup>

By attacking the Free Thai officers, Pramoj was not only being vicious and petty, he was also being incredibly stupid. Even Chok, who was just a college student at the time, understood that "it is 'impolitic' to make us his enemies."<sup>[126]</sup> Within less than two years, Pramoj had managed to go from being a hero to a self-isolated, unwanted dictator; Kunjara hardly had to lift a finger. By early 1944, Chok had come to compare Pramoj to the "Führer," indisputably the most hated man in World War II.<sup>[127]</sup> What is more, the officers suspected that the minister was eyeing political power after the war, despite the fact that he had repeatedly stated, "I disclaimed all political ambitions in postwar Thailand."<sup>[128]</sup> The students' skepticism was not completely unfounded for Pramoj exhibited certain dictator-like behavior. When he made the accusations against Kunjara and the students, Pramoj demanded that they be kept secret from the accused. However, the news was leaked by someone in Washington who was in regular contact with the men in China. The minister, hell bent on finding the culprit, called Kunjara's wife "on the carpet" and interrogated her.<sup>[129]</sup> Furthermore, in October 1943, after learning that Kunjara and the Free Thai officers in Chungking had been making political plans with Tularak and after being repeatedly overruled in the FTC, Pramoj told the OSS he wished to be directly involved "in censorship of personal correspondence to the Thais in the field from those in this country [United States]." The minister argued, "that was the way to keep the minds of the Thais on fighting rather than on politics and factions."<sup>[130]</sup>

Pramoj's actions suggest that he had gone completely overboard in his handling of this volunteer-based movement. Still, they seemed more like the symptoms of an extremely nervous and politically paranoid leader--whose paranoia increased the more he cared about the movement--rather than a politically ambitious one. Pramoj was by no means an idiot; he did almost single-handedly win the support of the United States government. Had he wanted power in postwar Thailand, like Chok said, he would have known better not to offend potential allies and supporters. Pramoj's mistakes stemmed partially from his arrogance and the fact that he viewed himself as the Thai minister and the Free Thai officers as merely students. He was also extremely uptight, scared that if he did not take complete control of the movement something was going to go wrong and he would be held responsible. In addition, Pramoj was in constant fear that the world would view the Free Thai movement as a profiteering organization, and that would discourage their support, as well as jeopardize the chance of Thailand regaining its sovereign status after the war. This was a major factor why he was so cautious about the money the organization spent and worried about the students meddling in politics. Although Pramoj personally had quite surpassed a mild case of paranoia, the fear of negative public opinion, especially of the Allied countries, was not uncommon among Thai liberation fighters during World War II. It was, as has been demonstrated earlier, the very reason why the members of the Free Siamese movement rejected Prince Subha Svasti.

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According to the wartime documents, it is very unlikely that Pramoj was using the Free Thai movement to benefit his future political career. First of all, Pramoj knew he was no politician and that he, at the time, did not stand a chance against his competition in Bangkok, be it the current premier Phibun or Pridi Banomyong, who had been known to the people back home as the father of Thai democracy. This was not to say that Pramoj had no ambition at all, for he did become Thailand's Prime Minister after the war.<sup>[131]</sup> Nonetheless, it did not seem that Pramoj's wartime decisions were calculated moves that he made in order to get to the top of the Thai political ladder. It does seem, however, that the power Pramoj enjoyed as the leader of the FTM, coupled with his over-cautious character, not to mention his desperation to gain and maintain the support of the United States government for the security of Thailand's postwar autonomy, caused him to become increasingly controlling.

The conflict between Pramoj and the Free Thai officers ultimately resulted in Pramoj's resignation from the FTC. Pramoj subsequently wrote a letter to the Free Thai officers, reprimanding them for "negotiating for the establishment of a Thai Government in exile [and thus] acted against our previous understanding." He also maintained, "I am not responsible for the present regrettable impairment of your military efficiency and morale."<sup>[132]</sup> Furthermore, the minister reminded the officers of his status: "the United States Government will not recognize [the FTC], but will deal only with me, who, by accident of position, happen to be the only legal representative of the Thai nation accredited to this country."<sup>[133]</sup> Pramoj's belief about his diplomatic position, not his political ambition, explains his need to control everything that went on in the movement. Though he had good intentions, Pramoj went about ensuring that the FTM stayed on the right course poorly. It suggests, as Tularak described, that Pramoj was "a true Thai, patriotic," but unfortunately was "not experienced as a diplomat and not a good politician."<sup>[134]</sup> In that respect, Pramoj's shortcomings cost the movement.

All through 1943, the Free Thai mission was delayed by mutual mistrust and petty quarrels between the key players. The members of the resistance could not dispel the suspicion that certain individuals among their comrades had ulterior political motives. It is both ironic and tragic that despite the fact that they had all sworn equally strongly that they would not seek personal gains from their involvement in the liberation movement, all were still preoccupied with their distrust of one another. Failing to create mutual trust, the Free Thai work could not move forward.

What made matters worse was the fact that the Free Thai operation and the OSS ventures in China remained under the control of Miles' and Tai Li's SACO. As the delegates from Thailand continued to be detained in Chungking, and as the Free Thais agents were further delayed from executing their mission, it became increasing clear to the OSS and the Thais that the Nationalist Chinese were seeking to exploit the Thai resistance movement for their own postwar goals. One indication of this was the Sino-Thai army. According to Reynolds, "attaching Sino-Thai agents to the OSS Free Thai teams" would not only allow the Chinese to "keep tabs on the activities of the US-backed group," but the Chinese also wished to make use of the "social standing and Bangkok connections of the Free Thai officers from America," in order to establish a foothold in the country in preparation for China's postwar dominance over Southeast Asia, just as Pramoj feared.<sup>[135]</sup> As time progressed, the Chinese ulterior motive became more apparent to the Free Thai officers operating in China. The Chinese seemed to be more uncooperative than they were willing to really help. Pow Khamurai made the following comment about the Chinese cooperation in a 1986 interview:

Moderate accommodation was provided for us by the Chinese secret police, but they permitted us no access to information on Thailand. It seemed that we were barred from doing any task that would gain credit for our country.<sup>[136]</sup>

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Khamurai understood, however, that the Chinese were not the only obstacle preventing the progress of the Free Thai movement. He reflected, "We wasted our time staying at Chungking for eight months because of the state of uncertainty of Sino-Thai politics and also that among the Thais ourselves."<sup>[137]</sup> Khamurai further expressed his regret in getting involved in the politics in the movement: "I developed a hatred for politics and do not want to meddle in politics. Once you enter politics you cannot stay away from dirt!"<sup>[138]</sup>

Chok na Ranong, who had previously held Pramoj responsible for the movement's delays, including the Tularak's trip to Washington and the fact that Balankura never made it out of China, reflected later that it was more "the Chinese policy that kept them there."<sup>[139]</sup> Chok also observed that initially, Kunjara "hit it off very well" with the head of Chinese secret police, Tai Li. He described that when Tai Li and Kunjara were first introduced to one another by Miles at a party, the captain hosted for the two, "it was love at first sight."<sup>[140]</sup> He further recalled that Tai Li "invited Kunjara to the endless games of 'bottoms up' and even took off his Rolex Oyster and presented it to the Thai colonel in front of all the guests at the party."<sup>[141]</sup> Tai Li then promised to help Kunjara make contact with the likely anti-Japanese military elements in northeastern Thailand. Chok wrote, "[Kunjara] believed him but nothing materialized after that conversation."<sup>[142]</sup>

Later on, Chok left Chungking to carry on the plan to infiltrate Thailand. During this time, he developed a very hostile attitude towards the Chinese because he believed that he had uncovered the Chinese plan to betray the Free Thai movement and exploit Thailand after the war. The Sino-Thais were less than friendly to the Free Thai agents they were attached to. According to Chok, the Chinese commanders, who had been assigned by Tai Li to accompany the Free Thai agents through Southern China, instructed their Thai-born subordinates not to speak Thai with them. Chok also started to notice that the Chinese made up various excuses to delay their journey to Thailand. The Free Thai officer found out that Japanese soldiers had somehow learned about their projected path to Thailand and were waiting to intercept his party. Luckily, Chok came down with stomach flu and his group's journey was delayed. It made him realize, however, "I had been deceived and almost killed by a Japanese agent, I had to be more careful and try to find out the motive" of the Chinese.<sup>[143]</sup> Chok eventually found out, by getting a Chinese lieutenant drunk, that they had been trying to sabotage the Free Thai operation all along. He recalled that the intoxicated lieutenant confessed that he had been ordered by a general who was a close subordinate of Tai Li "to prevent the Free Thai officers from infiltrating Thailand and, if they could not be stopped, to let the Japanese know so that they would be duly taken care of."<sup>[144]</sup> Chok believed that he had uncovered a conspiracy by two of the Allied powers that the Thais depended upon to win back their independence. He wrote,

China and England had been coordinating a plan to divide Thailand after the war. China would disarm the Japanese in the north and northeast region while England would disarm the Japanese from the central region southward. If the Free Thai movement was allowed to operate successfully, the agreement with England would become void.<sup>[145]</sup>

Chok certainly presented an interesting theory, one that was quite possible and, in fact, made a lot of sense. However, no further concrete evidence could solidify his claim, and Chok's argument remained only a conspiracy theory.

Nonetheless, the Chinese half-hearted effort to cooperate with the Free Thais and the OSS did not go unnoticed by the Americans. In fact, the Army, OSS and State Department echelons held Captain Miles responsible for this. Miles was the only United States official in China who had a close relationship with Tai Li, but he failed to use his influence on the general to the benefit of United States interests. Miles' possessiveness of the Free Thai movement and the American ventures in China in general landed him at odds with his superiors. In a report to Donovan, an OSS officer named John Davies criticized Miles for getting involved in Thai politics. He wrote, "Miles proposed to

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play a triangular game: Balankura, the Thai Military Attache (heading the OSS group) and the Vice President [Sanguan Tularak]. Miles seemingly intended to set up his own Free Thai movement without reference to the Embassy [the Thai Legation] or the State Department."<sup>[146]</sup> In September 1943, Miles was warned by G. Edward Buxton, Donovan's aide, to steer clear from making unapproved promises to the Thais or the Chinese on behalf of the United States government. Buxton stressed that "recognition of governments-in-exile ... and Lend Lease were beyond the province of the OSS." He ordered Miles to "avoid further discussion of such matters, adding that the State Department would make the final decision."<sup>[147]</sup> In spite of this, not much changed in terms of the Sino-Thai scheme, and the plan to build a Sino-Thai army moved forward.

Finally, in December, Donovan decided to come down to Chungking himself to deal with Miles and Tai Li, and set a new course for OSS operations in the Far East, including those in conjunction with the FTM. Donovan fired Miles for incompetence and ordered a stop to be put to the far-fetched Sino-Thai army scheme. He wrote to Carl Hoffman,

I had no idea that Miles had gone to such lengths in commitments before consulting us. This you will stop at once. The whole conception [Sino-Thai army] is cock-eyed even if it were not beyond our directive ... I entirely disapprove the larger scheme [which is] politically and militarily unsound, logistically impossible and economically stupid.<sup>[148]</sup>

The OSS's problems in China, however, were not solved by getting rid of Miles alone. In fact, the relationship between the OSS and Tai Li had taken a turn for the worse. Donovan himself could not seem to get along with the Chinese general.<sup>[149]</sup> He, thus, decided that the command of the OSS and the Free Thai operation were to be moved to India once the team in China had successfully infiltrated Thailand. Donovan, in fact, had been building cooperative working relationship with Lord Louis Mountbatten of Burma, who, as agreed by Donovan, "would retain full operational control over a new OSS unit in his theater, but the latter ... would not be integrated with nor placed under the command of any purely British unit."<sup>[150]</sup>

Kunjara, on the other hand, remained in China until late summer of 1944, when his OSS superiors finally realized how deeply involved he was with the Chinese and the Sino-Thai scheme. Even after Miles' expulsion, Kunjara was still heavily involved in the Sino-Thai plans. In 1944, British intelligence apparently intercepted "letters from Kunjara to the Chinese offering to lead a pro-Chinese Free Thai Group at Chungking."<sup>[151]</sup> In September that year, Col. John Coughlin, who had replaced Miles as commander of the OSS unit in China, finally wrote to Donovan: "I doubt that [Kunjara] can be trusted.... I feel he will make deals with Tai Li of which I will not be informed."<sup>[152]</sup> Subsequently, the Sino-Thai scheme was shut down and Kunjara was called back to Washington. Although the complete takeover of Free Thai military operations by the OSS in early 1944 limited Pramroj and Kunjara's roles for the remainder of the war, the damage that had been inflicted on the relationships and morale of the Free Thai members was irreversible.

The goal of independence, the Allies, and interpersonal politics among Free Thai members were the interconnected factors that shaped the dynamic of the Free Thai movement. The Allies played an important part in both forging and breaking bonds between the Free Thais, but the relationships among the Thais themselves were what mainly influenced the Allies' perceptions of Thai politics and, in turn, determined their support, or lack thereof, for the resistance. Moreover, the operation in China illustrates that Thailand's sociopolitical structure wielded a tremendous influence on the dynamic of the liberation movement. The mission in 1943 was delayed and the Free Thai Movement as a whole suffered because its members had been swept into a whirlwind of politics, rivalries, and conspiracies. Their trust issues, which stemmed from their nation's complex political past and their

preoccupation with the prospects of Thailand's political future, distracted them from their immediate and most important task: to free their country from foreign domination.

*"I have learnt that in fighting a war and bringing an orderly life to the Nation successfully, personal animosity and grudge have no room in it. They blind you to the real facts which are the only thing that leads one to the correct interpretations of events."*

H.S.H. Prince Subha Svasti<sup>[153]</sup>

[1] Three Thai liberation groups are mentioned in this paper. They are now all known as one Free Thai Movement. However, back in 1943, the group in the United States was the only one universally known as the Free Thai movement (FTM). The group in Britain was a branch of the FTM. However, to avoid confusion and because the two groups hardly worked together during the war, I will refer to the group as the British called it, the Free Siamese movement (FSM). The underground resistance in Thailand initially called itself the National Liberation Movement (NLM), so I would like to refer to it as such here. As for the Thai liberation effort as a whole, for the lack of a better term, I will call it the Free Thai Movement with a capital M.

[2] When I began researching about the Free Thai Movement in Thailand, I was shocked by the little amount of sources that I was able to find. I then learned that the Free Thai Movement is probably the least appreciated period in modern Thai history. In fact, the younger generation in Thailand has very vague ideas of what the movement was about. The scarcity of documents and scholarly works on the subject was partly a result of the postwar political turmoil that involved most of the Free Thai leaders. Due to the very complex and conflicted nature of Thailand's postwar sociopolitical structure, sources written by members of the movement after the war lack discussion of conflicts among Thai players and political issues.

Fortunately, declassified documents from the US and British national archives have made it possible to gain insight into the mindsets of and the relationships between Free Thai members in the context of the war, untainted by the memories of the political upheaval in Thailand during the postwar years. I myself was unable to gain access to these documents, because they were only available to be viewed at the two national archives' facilities. For this reason, I am greatly indebted to Dr. E. Bruce Reynolds, a professor of History at San Jose State University, whose generosity has made it possible for me to write this paper. I am truly grateful that he was willing to share his research with me and took the time to make copies of copious amount of documents and send them to me. Please note that all USNA (United States National Archives) and PRO (British Publish Record Office) documents used in this paper were provided to me by Dr. Reynolds, unless noted otherwise.

[3] Chintana Yossunthorn, *Chak wannan theung wann* (Bangkok: Thana Press and Graphic, 2002), 60. Translated from Thai: "เรื่องที่เขียนนี้ ได้ตัดตอนที่แสงใจคนส่วนมากออกไป จนเกือบจะเป็นหนังสือน่าเที่ยวอยู่แล้ว"

[4] Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development, The Ministry of Education of Thailand, *Khabuankan Seri Thai* [The Free Thai Movement] (Bangkok: The Ministry of Education of Thailand, 1995), 55. Translated from Thai: "กลุ่มคนไทยเหล่านี้ ต่างได้ดำเนินการเคลื่อนไหวอย่างลับๆ โดยไม่ได้ประสานงานติดต่อระหว่างกัน ทั้งนี้เนื่องจากสถานการณ์ทางด้านสงครามในยุโรปและเอเชีย ทำให้การสื่อสารเป็นไปด้วยความยากลำบาก นอกจากนั้นปัญหาทางการเมืองระหว่างประเทศ ยังเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญทำให้การดำเนินงาน 'ต่อต้านญี่ปุ่น' เป็น ไปในลักษณะต่างกลุ่มต่างดำเนินการ"

[5] Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, "The Seri Thai Movement: The First Alliance against Military Authoritarianism in Modern Thai History" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 1.

Ngamcachonkulkid was influenced by the methods of German sociologist Max Weber. He applied the theory to the structure of the new Thai urban and political society that began to emerge during the early 1930s alongside the overthrow of the old system of absolute monarchy. But Ngamcachonkulkid perhaps sought too close a tie to the

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revolutionary past, and, in turned, isolated the Free Thai movement from the global context of World War II that, just as much as the revolution of 1932, had a tremendous impact on the Thai wartime political developments.

By painting such a negative image of the Free Thai Movement, Ngamcachonkulkid's dissertation also came under heavy fire by a fellow Thai scholar who was a member of the NLM, based in Thailand. In Suphot Dantrakul, *The Truth About the Free Thai Movement and Resistance Against Japan* [ข้อเท็จจริงเกี่ยวกับขบวนการเสรีไทยและการต่อต้านญี่ปุ่น] (Institute of Social Science of Thailand, 2000), 155 -- the author protested that Ngamcachonkulkid, "by claiming that this movement was formed because of [Thailand's] internal political conflicts, which is a lie, is distorting history and is ungrateful to all that the Free Thai Movement has done for the nation." Dantrakul further argued that the "movement was formed ... because Japan invaded Thailand. Thai patriots both in Thailand and overseas, though had different ideals and political viewpoints, were unified in their love for the country and its independence, and thus, together, formed a movement to resist the Japanese and liberate the nation."

The original statement in Thai is the following: สรศักดิ์ งามขจรกุลกิจ "อ้างว่าขบวนการนี้เกิดขึ้นเพราะความขัดแย้งทางการเมืองภายใน อันเป็นความเท็จ เป็นการบิดเบือน ประวัติศาสตร์ และเป็นการอกตัญญูต่อคุณูปการของขบวนการเสรีไทยที่มีต่อชาติ ... ขบวนการนี้เกิดขึ้น ... เพราะญี่ปุ่นบุกไทย คนไทยผู้รักชาติทั้งที่อยู่ภายในประเทศ และต่างประเทศ และทั้งที่มีอุดมคติ และทัศนคติทางการเมืองที่แตกต่างกัน แต่มีความเป็นหนึ่งเดียวกันในความรักชาติรักแผ่นดิน มีความเป็นหนึ่งเดียวกันในการเชิดชูเอกราชแห่งชาติและอธิปไตยแห่งชาติ จึงได้ร่วมกันจัดตั้งขบวนการต่อต้านญี่ปุ่น เพื่อทำการปลดปล่อยชาติ"

[6] Ngamcachonkulkid, 2 and 3.

[7] Ibid., 577-8.

[8] E. Bruce Reynolds, *Thailand's Secret War: OSS, SOE, and the Free Thai Underground During World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1.

Reynolds further explained that while the British wished to punish Thailand and annex part of country, the Americans, though they promised to recognize Thailand's sovereignty, were not helping the Thais out of the pure goodness of their hearts either. Despite the fact that the United States projected itself as the champion of freedom, in opposition to British imperialism, Reynolds argued that the US policy towards Thailand during World War II was somewhat a prelude to its Cold War era "'free world' imperialism in Southeast Asia, one that recognized independence and offered financial aid in return for the economic 'open door' and military facilities" (457).

[9] Ibid., xvi. Reynolds was actually quoting a commander in the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) named Colin Mackenzie.

[10] The Japanese-Thai alliance pact was signed on 21 December 1941. The Thai military government subsequently declared war on the United States and Great Britain on 25 January 1942.

[11] David Van Praagh, *Thailand's Struggle for Democracy: The Life and Times of M.R. Seni Pramoj* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996), 51.

[12] Ibid., 53.

[13] For the complete statement regarding the US government's wartime policy toward Thailand, see Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Col. M. Preston Goodfellow, Deputy Director of the Office of Strategic Services, 26 August 1943, 892.01/32, reproduced in Pridi Banomyong, *Political and Military Tasks of the Free Thai Movement to Regain National Sovereignty and Independence* (Bangkok: Pridi Banomyong Institute, 2001), 13-14.

[14] M.R. Seni Pramoj, *Chiwa likit* (Bangkok: M.R. Seni Pramoj Foundation, 2005), 75. Translated from Thai: "หลักสำคัญคือ เราจะต้องรักษาสถานะของทูตไทยและสถานทูตไทยไว้ ... ถ้ายังมีสถานทูตไทยอยู่ ก็เท่ากับไทยยังเป็นเอกราช"

[15] Ibid. Translated from Thai: "ต้อง จัดตั้งขบวนการเสรีไทย ... เพื่อว่าเมื่อเสร็จสงครามเมื่อญี่ปุ่นแพ้ เราจะไม่มีสิทธิ์มีเสียงในการกู่หรือรักษาเอกราชของชาติ"

[16] Pramoj, interviewed by the author in Van Praagh, *Thailand's Struggle for Democracy*, 52.

[17] Puey Ungphakorn, "Temporary Soldier," in *Thai Politics: Extracts and Documents, 1932-1957*, ed. Thak Chaloemtiarana (Bangkok: Thammasat University Printing Office, 1978), 406.

[18] The British argument of 'betrayal' by Thailand has been contested by many historians of the Anglo-Thai relations. Throughout 1941, as the Thais sensed that the Japanese threat was imminent, they repeatedly requested

military aid from both their British and American allies. The Americans were still restricted by their isolationist policy. On the other hand, the British, occupied with defending their homeland and colonies, had no capacity to help and asked the Thais to defend themselves, though they knew well that Thailand did not have the capacity to resist the Japanese army either. Without outside assistance, the capitulation of Thailand to Japanese demands was inevitable.

[19] Sir Andrew Gilchrist, *Bangkok Top Secret: Being the Experience of a British Officer in the Siam Country Section of Force 136* (London: Hutchinson, 1970), 15. Gilchrist further pointed out that Thailand's declaration of war on Britain "was never followed up by any action by Siamese armed forces against the British."

[20] Thamsook Numnonda, *Thailand and the Japanese Presence, 1941-1945* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1977), 67.

[21] Ungphakon, "Temporary Soldier," 409.

[22] John B. Haseman, *The Thai Resistance Movement during World War II* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2002), 43.

[23] Gilchrist, *Bangkok Top Secret*, 20.

[24] Thai Minister to Lt. Colonel Sin-Ju Pu Hsiao, 30 June 1943, 'Thailand' Folder, Box 364, Entry 210, RG 226, USNA.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Pramoj also had little choice in the matter. Most Free Thai members had been merely college students before the war; they had no prior military training at the time the movement was formed. Therefore, Kunjara was the only one with appropriate military experience to lead the Free Thais in their military operations.

[27] Chok na Ranong, "Memorandum from Chok na Ranong to Chintana Yossunthorn," in *Free Thai: Personal Recollections and Official Documents*, compiled by Wimon Wiriyawit (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1997), 39. This is the English translation of a letter Chok wrote to Chintana Yossunthorn in 1987, when the latter, a civilian member of the FTM, was writing a series of short accounts about the movement. The Thai version was published in Yossunthorn's cremation volume, Chintana Yossunthorn, *Chak wannan theung wanni* (Bangkok: Thana Press and Graphic, 2002), 279: "การตั้งนักเรียน เป็นกรรมการ ก็เพราะความว่าหัวหน้าของเรา หม่อมเสนีย์ และม.ล.ขาบ ไม่ถูกกัน ... การขัดแย้งของเขาทั้งสองอาจจะทำให้งานของเราเสีย"

[28] Free Thai Officers to S. Tularak, 15 October 1943, Folder 2994, Box 173, Entry 154, RG 226, USNA.

[29] Chok na Ranong, "Memorandum," 39. Translated from Yossunthorn, 279: "การตั้งเสรีไทยและกรรมการนี้แหละที่ทำให้สถานทูตมองพวกเราเป็นศัตรู ทำให้สถานทูตไม่ได้เป็นผู้นำหรือหัวหน้าของเราต่อไป"

[30] The supervision over the Thai operation and all other OSS ventures was entrusted to SACO because the OSS had yet to set up a base or hold any legal jurisdiction in China.

[31] The NLM leaders had chosen to send Balankura to China for three main reasons. One, because Balankura was relatively unknown in the Thai political scene and did not hold any prominent position, his absence from Bangkok would have easily gone unnoticed. Two, Balankura had two brothers: one in the US and the other in Britain. Balankura and the NLM high command assumed they had joined the FTM and FSM in their respective countries, and thus would have made Balankura's *bona fides* easily known to their group leaders. Three, being the secretary of the NLM's executive circle, the young Thai knew just about every essential detail about the movement. This, the NLM leaders believed, was crucial in such an important and covert mission in which carrying documents was too risky (Reynolds, *Thailand's Secret War*, 86).

[32] Reynolds, *Thailand's Secret War*, 89.



- [33] Sawat Sisuk, *Kosangket patibatkan Chamkad Phalangkun lae patibatkan thahan bang reuang* (Bangkok: Tironasan, 1995), 42. Translated from Thai: "สถานทูตอังกฤษได้ขอให้คุณจำกัดเล็กติดต่อ"
- [34] Memo from the Foreign Office, London, 25 May 1943, in H.S.H. Prince Subha Svasti, *Neung sattawat Subha Svasti* (Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing, 2000), 280.
- [35] Chatthip Natsupha, *Pheua chat pheua humanity* [For nation for humanity] (Bangkok: Samnakphim sangsan, 2006), 83. Translated from Thai: "จำกัดกิจกรรมที่ได้รับคำตบเช่นนี้ เพราะอังกฤษได้ประกาศทางวิทยุบีบีซี และวิทยุ All-India-Radio ชักชวนให้คนไทยลุก ขึ้นสู้กับญี่ปุ่นร่วมกับสัมพันธมิตร แต่พอคนไทยจัดองค์กรลุกขึ้นสู้อย่างแข็งขัน จนทำให้จอมพลเริ่มจะอยู่ในฐานะ ล้ามาก อังกฤษก็กลับไม่สนับสนุน."
- [36] Nicol Smith and Blake Clark, *Into Siam, Underground Kingdom* (Indianapolis; New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1946), 67. The Free Thai group left the United States for China in the spring of 1943. They travelled by sea, in one of the slow-moving cargo carriers. It took months for them to reach Chungking. Kunjara stayed behind, and so was there in Washington to hear the first news about Balankura around late April. He later followed to China by plane and ended up reaching Chungking on June 7<sup>th</sup>, nearly a month before his men. As for Balankura's brother, who was supposedly in the American FTM (see footnote 31), none of the documents I have come across during this research has ever mentioned him.
- [37] Haseman, 45, quoted from Malai Chuphinit, *X.O. Group: Reuang phainai khabuankan Seri Thai* [The inside story of the Free Thai Movement] (Bangkok: Khao Na Printers, 1964), 131. Malai Chuphinit or Nai Chantana (pseudonym) was a member of the NLM, who, after the war, wrote a book about the movement's executive circle, the X.O. Group, and Balankura's ordeal in China.
- [38] Natsupha, *Pheua chat pheua humanity*, 81. Translated from Thai: "วิทยุจงกิงภาคภาษาไทยได้ออกกระจายข่าวคลื่นสั้นการมาของจำกัดและไพศาลในคืนวันที่ นี้เป็นชาวเดียว ... เมษายน 16 นางฉลบชล้ยย์ได้รับจากจำกัดที่นายปรีดีและ"
- [39] Haseman, 44.
- [40] O.125 to B/B 100, 25 August 1943, HS1-72, PRO.
- [41] Notes on H.M.A.'s Conversation with K. Balankura on 6 August, 1943, reproduced in Subha Svasti, *Neung sattawat*, 310.
- [42] Phaisan Trakunli, *Wiraburut niranam* (Bangkok: Samnakphim reuangsilpa, 1978), 170-171. Translated from Thai: "เราได้ข่าวว่า พ.ท.หม่อมหลวงขาบ ฤกษ์ มาจากอเมริกา พวกเราอยากจะพบ แต่ทางจงกิงไม่ยอมให้เราได้พบกัน"
- [43] Smith, *Into Siam*, 68.
- [44] Pow Khamurai, "Interview with Pow Khamurai," in *Free Thai: Personal Recollections and Official Documents*, compiled by Wimon Wiriyawit (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1997), 81. This was a translation of Pow Khamurai's interview with Thailand Mining Engineer Association, first published in the association's journal in 1986.
- [45] Trakunli, 165. Translated from Thai: "การรพบจอมพลเจียง ได้ผลัดวันประกันพรุ่งจนพวกเราไม่เชื่อหน้า"
- [46] Vincent to Hull, 6 May 1943, Folder XL36004, RG 226, USNA.
- [47] "General Summary of the Thailer Situation as of 15 August 1943," Folder 2, Box 68, Entry 99, RG 226, USNA.
- [48] Reynolds, 100.
- [49] Memorandum on a visit to Balankura by B/B 299, in Subha Svasti, *Neung sattawat*, 275.
- [50] Notes on H.M.A.'s Conversation with K. Balankura, in Subha Svasti, 310; and Sawat Sisuk, *Kosangket*, 49.
- [51] Memorandum on a visit to Balankura by B/B 299, in Subha Svasti, 277.
- [52] Prince Subha Svasti to Balankura, 18 August 1943, in Subha Svasti, 296-297.

[53] "Talk between Arnold and Tularaksa and Balankura as told by Arnold to Colonel Kunjara," 12 September 1943, Box 42, RG 38, USNA.

[54] Memorandum on a visit to Balankura by B/B 299, in Subha Svasti, 278.

[55] Natsupha, 85. Translated from Thai: "จำกัดคิดวารัฐบาล

อังกฤษมีจุดมุ่งหมายแบบจักรวรรดินิยมอยู่เบื้องหลังจึงไม่สนับสนุนคณะเสรีไทย

จำกัดคิดว่าอังกฤษกำลังสนับสนุนคณะเจ้าซึ่งมีความปรารถนาจะสถาปนาระบอบ สมบูรณาญาสิทธิราชย์ขึ้นมาใหม่"

[56] The reply letter from Churchill's office accepting Prince Subha Svasti's offer is reproduced in Subha Svasti, 66.

[57] Gilchrist, 29-30.

[58] Situation in Siam No.2 by B/B 299 (Subha Svasti), May 1943, in Subha Svasti, 137-8.

[59] Judith A. Stowe, author of *Siam becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue* (London: Hurst & Company, 1991), observed that "As part of the post-1932 generation, [the young officers of the liberation movement] had been educated to believe that the aim of the royal family was to restore the absolute monarchy" (p. 262).

[60] Crosby memorandum of 4 October 1943, HS1-70, PRO.

[61] In "Temporary Soldier," Puey Ungphakon, a member of the FSM, wrote: "most Thais felt that if one of them [the Thai princes] became a leader, there might be a misunderstanding especially with regard to Thai political movements" (405).

[62] Subha Svasti, *Neung sattawat Subha Svasti*, 228. Translated from Thai: "ข้าพเจ้าไม่มีแผนการอื่นใดนอกจากการกู้ชาติ และการที่จะได้พบเห็นประชาธิปไตยสมบูรณ์แบบในประเทศไทย"

Subha Svasti was, indeed, very loyal to King Prajadhipok. But he believed that the former king had wanted Thailand to gradually become a democratic nation. According to the prince, the king was overthrown before he could achieve this goal. Subha Svasti even argued that members of the royal family should remain "above politics" [ม.จ.ศุภสวัสดิ์ฯ บอกว่าไม่ควรเลิก ... มาตรา ๑๐ ของรัฐธรรมนูญที่ห้ามพระบรมวงศานุวงศ์ตั้งแต่ชั้นหม่อมเจ้าขึ้นไปดำรงตำแหน่งทางการเมือง] (in Chatthip Natsupha, *Pheua chat pheua humanity*, 93).

[63] "Free Siamese," 25 May 1943, HS1-163, PRO.

[64] To elaborate this point, John Keswick of the SOE had clarified to the OSS that although the British "Siamese Group is composed of members of various classes of political thoughts ... it is in no way our intention to allow the political enthusiasms of any of them to intrude in the main purpose of our plans" (in Keswick to Bruce, 11 August 1943, Folder 4, Box 64, Entry 99, RG 226, USNA).

[65] One must place Subha Svasti, as well as the mutual mistrust among members of the Free Thai Movement in general, in the context of Thailand as a newly emerging (democratic...?) nation. The coup of 1932, the establishment of the Thai constitution, and the emergence of 'Thailand' as a modern nation happened not ten years before the war broke out in the Pacific. So in 1941-1945, while the concepts of democracy and constitution were highly revered among the educated in Thailand, they were also a reality that was fragile, unstable, and most vulnerable.

Tracing back to a few years after the revolution, the Boworadet Rebellion, a royalist coup which Subha Svasti himself supposedly had been linked to, threatened to destroy democracy and put Thailand back under authoritarian rule. Then, conflict broke out between the military faction, led by the now-premier Phibun, and the civilian faction, led by Pridi. In the end, as Phibun won out, Thailand strayed away from democracy and became ruled by military dictatorship.

This was why I believe Ngamcachonkulkid has made a mistake by looking at Thailand's independence and Thai politics as separate factors shaping the Free Thai Movement, and thus forcing himself to choose one or the other. The autonomy of Thailand and the country's political stability are two interconnected factors. They cannot be viewed apart because Thai democratists during World War II, who made up most of the members in the Thai liberation effort, were determined to liberate Thailand not only from the Japanese, but also from the current

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tyrannical rule. They saw a truly free Thailand as one that was not only free from foreign domination, but also governed by a constitutionally-based and democratically-elected government.

[66] Secret War Diary, 1 October 1943, Box 36, RG 38, USNA.

[67] Chok na Ranong, "What I Know of Tularak and His Group," report on 17 September 1943 meeting by Lt. Charles, Folder 2994, Box 173, Entry 154, RG 226; and Secret War Diary, 1 October 1943, Box 36, RG 38, USNA.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Subha Svasti, *Neung sattawat*, 234. Translated from Thai: "คณะไทยเราด้วยกันเองเป็นผู้ขัดขวางไม่ให้กิจการเดินสะดวก รัฐบาล อังกฤษ ... ก็ เป็นธรรมดาที่จะต้องฉวยโอกาสที่จะ... ใช้การแตกสามัคคีของพวกเขาเป็นเครื่องมือ ... เพิ่ม พุผลให้เหมาะสมกับความประสงค์ของเขา"

[70] Kunjara to Pramoj, 24 September 1943, Folder 2999, Box 173, Entry 154, RG 226, USNA.

[71] Pramoj memorandum of 18 October 1943, Box 36, Record Group 38, USNA.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Halliwell to Miles, 17 September 1943, Box 37, RG 38, USNA.

[74] Kunjara to Pramoj, 24 September 1943, Folder 2999, Box 173, Entry 154, RG 226, USNA.

[75] Kunjara to Pramoj, 27 December 1943, Box 37, RG 38, USNA.

[76] "Conversation between S. Tularaksa & Col. Kunjara," 13 September 1943, Folder 2994, Box 173, Entry 154, RG 226, USNA.

[77] Miles to Donovan, 16 September 1943, Box 37, RG 38, USNA.

[78] Reynolds, 117, quoted from Heppner to Donovan, 20 and 27 July 1943, Reel 91, M1642, USNA.

[79] Washington to Chungking, 11 October 1943, Box 37, RG 38, USNA.

[80] Pramoj, *Chiwa likit*, 82. Translated from Thai: "เกรงว่าถ้าเอาลูก จีนเข้ามาเกี่ยว เสรีสงครามคนเหล่านี้จะเข้าไปทำใหญ่ในเมืองไทย อันเป็นสิ่งที่ต้องหลีกเลี่ยง"

[81] Ibid., 83. Translated from Thai: "ในฐานะที่เป็นทูต ไทยที่อเมริการับรอง เมื่อใดพันโทขามนำทหารลูกจีนเข้าเมืองไทย เมื่อนั้นก็จะปลดพันโทขามออกจากตำแหน่งทูตทหาร"

[82] Moffat memorandum of meeting with Pramoj, n.d., 892.01/9-1344, RG 59, USNA.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Pramoj memorandum of 18 October 1943, Box 36, RG 38; see also Lt. George Demas, "13 October 1943 Conference with Thai Minister," 18 October 1943, 'Thailand' Folder, Box 364, Entry 210, RG 226, USNA.

[85] Lt. George Demas, "13 October 1943 Conference with Thai Minister."

[86] Pramoj memorandum of 18 October 1943, Box 36, RG 38, USNA

[87] Ibid.

[88] Moffat memorandum of meeting with Pramoj, n.d., 892.01/9-1344, RG 59; and Pramoj memorandum of 18 October 1943, Box 36, RG 38, USNA.

[89] Frederic R. Dolbear to Mr. Whitney Shepardson, 4 December 1943, Folder 15, Box 412, Entry 92, RG 226, USNA.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Scholtz to Katz, 27 September 1943, Folder 15, Box 412, Entry 92, RG 226, USNA

[93] Ibid.

[94] Hoffman to Pramoj, 21 October 1943, Box 36, RG 38, USNA.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid. See also Pramoj memorandum of 18 October 1943, Box 36, Record Group 38, USNA.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Pramoj, *Chiwa likit*, 83. Translated from Thai: "[Donovan]ทบทวนโต๊ะเปรี๊ยะง่า  
หาว่าทูตไทยขัดขวางการสงครามของอเมริกา"

[100] Frederic R. Dolbeare to Mr. Whitney Shepardson, 4 December 1943, Folder 15, Box 412, Entry 92, RG 226, USNA.

[101] Edwin Ride, *BAAG: Hong Kong Resistance, 1942-1945* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1981), 232-233.

[102] Kunjara to Smith, 18 October 1943, Folder 3004, Box 173, Entry 154, RG 226, USNA.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Reynolds, 115, quoted from Smith to Miles, 22 October 1943, Box 36, RG 38, USNA. Kunjara reportedly owed so much money that he had to go through much trouble to settle his debts with both the United States and Thai governments after the war.

[105] Chok na Ranong, "Memorandum," 45.

[106] Reynolds, 111.

[107] Chok na Ranong, "Memorandum," 47.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Chintana Yossunthorn, *Chak wannan*, 63. Translated from Thai: "นาย ทหารทั่วไป สุรา นารีและสงคราม เป็นสิ่งที่ยอมไปด้วยกันได้"

[111] Ibid. Translated from Thai: "เด็ด ขาด เป็นลูกผู้ชายและเป็นสภาพบุรุษในทุกด้าน"

[112] Reynolds, 129, quoted from "Interview Chamkad Balankura," 14 September 1943, Folder 2994, Box 173, Entry 154, RG 226, USNA.

[113] Chok na Ranong, "Memorandum," 46.

[114] Halliwell to Miles, 17 September 1943, Box 37, RG 38, USNA.

[115] L. D. Bhakdi to Charles N. Fisher, 16 September 1943, 'Thailand' Folder, Box 364, Entry 210, RG 226, USNA.

[116] Pramoj to Sanasen, 23 November 1943, HS1-72, PRO.

[117] Chintana Yossunthorn, 61, 62. Translated from Thai: "ม.ร.ว.เสนีย์ ไม่ชอบนายปรีดี พนมยงค์ มานานแล้ว ... และปฏิเสธว่าไม่ได้ดำเนินงานร่วมกับหน่วยเสรีไทยของนายปรีดี"

[118] Sawat Sisuk, *Kosangket*, 52-53. Translated from Thai: "ที่ไม่ต้องการให้ คุณเจ้ากัด เดินทางมายังกรุงวอชิงตัน ย่อมมีต้นตออยู่ที่วงการของไทยที่กรุงวอชิงตันเอง และสหรัฐก็ได้ปฏิบัติตามความประสงค์"

[119] Chok na Ranong to Pramoj, 30 October 1943, Box 37, RG 38, USNA.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Chok na Ranong to Bunmag Desabutra, 30 October 1943, Box 37, RG 38, USNA.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Chok to Seni, 20 April 1944, Folder 2999, Box 173, Entry 154, RG 226, USNA -- quoted in Reynolds, 177.

[124] Bundhit Kantabutra to Pow, 14 December 1943, Folder 2999, Box 173, Entry 154, RG 226, USNA.

[125] Pao Khamurai to Kunjara, 13 January 1944, Folder 2999, Box 173, Entry 154, RG 226, USNA.

[126] Chok na Ranong to Bunmag Desabutra, 30 October 1943, Box 37, RG 38, USNA.

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- [127] Chok to Seni, 20 April 1944 -- quoted in Reynolds, 177.
- [128] Pramoj memorandum to State Department, 29 November 1943, Reel 115, M1642, USNA.
- [129] Reynolds, 142.
- [130] Lt. George Demas, "13 October 1943 Conference with Thai Minister," 18 October 1943, 'Thailand' Folder, Box 364, Entry 210, RG 226, USNA.
- [131] It should be pointed out that every liberation member had sworn that he would not seek political gains from the movement. However, most of the leaders in all three movements eventually gained some sort of political position in postwar Thailand.
- [132] Thai Minister to Free Thai Officers, n.d., Folder 2999, Box 173, Entry 154, RG 226, USNA.
- [133] Ibid.
- [134] Scholtz to Katz, "Interview with Tularaksa and Tilaka," 13 December 1943, Folder 31, Box 475, Entry 92, RG 226, USNA. On the other hand, Tularak informed Scholtz that Kunjara "gambles, drinks excessively, and has a strong weakness for women."
- [135] Reynolds, 122. See also Pramoj, *Chiwa likit*, 82. Translated from Thai (see footnote 80).
- [136] Pow Khamurai, "Interview," 81.
- [137] Ibid.
- [138] Ibid., 78, 81.
- [139] Chok na Ranong, "Memorandum," 47.
- [140] Chok na Ranong, in Yossunthorn, *Chak wannan*, 286. Translated from Thai: "เมื่อ ม.ล.ขาบ ไปพบนายพลไต้หลิในงานเลี้ยงที่ Captain Miles จัดขึ้นเพื่อแนะนำคนทั้งสอง เกิด love at first sight ขึ้นมา นายพลไต้หลิชวนเชิญ ม.ล.ขาบ bottoms up ถ้วยแล้วถ้วยเล่า และยังถอดนาฬิกา Rolex จากข้อมือมอบให้ ม.ล.ขาบ ต่อหน้าทุกคนในงานด้วยความรักยิ่ง"
- [141] Ibid. For the original Thai quote, see the previous footnote. Kunjara himself related to Nicol Smith that he admired Tai Li: "You know, I get along well with the general. I think he's an A-1 fellow and is really on the level with us" (in Nicol Smith, *Into Siam*, 68).
- [142] Chok na Ranong, "Memorandum," 47.
- [143] Ibid., 54.
- [144] Ibid., 55.
- [145] Ibid.
- [146] Davies to Donovan, 6 October 1943, Reel 91, M1642, USNA.
- [147] Reynolds, 133 -- original document: Buxton to Miles, 20 September 1943, Box 37, RG 38, USNA.
- [148] Ibid., 156, quoted from Donovan to Hoffman, 10 December 1943?, Reel 91, M1642, USNA. It should be noted here that Miles was only fired from the post of commander of the OSS unit in China. He retained his control of SACO.
- [149] During this visit, Donovan was reportedly engaged in a violent verbal match with Tai Li which involved yelling and cursing at one another, as well as both sides making death threats.
- [150] Reynolds, 126.
- [151] Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 295 -- original document: Conversation between Mani Sanasen, Moffat, and Landon, 27 July 1944, 892.01/7-2744, RG 59, USNA.

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[152] Coughlin to Donovan, Cheston and Hoffman, "Kunjara", 19 September 1944, File 660, Box 44, Entry 148, RG 226, USNA -- quoted in Aldrich, *Intelligence*, 294.

[153] Subha Svasti, *Neung sattawat*, 518.

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