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TOP COPY

TO IMMEDIATE FCO TEL NO 418 OF 9/10/76.
AND TO IMMEDIATE MODUK (D12).
INFOR ROUTINE TO KUALA LUMPUR, SINGAPORE, JAKARTA, VIENTIANE,
AND WASHINGTON.
SAVING TO MANILA AND HANOI.

122

MY TEL 412, NOT TO ALL.

1. BY GOOD FORTUNE I WAS ABLE TO TAKE MALCOLM MACDONALD TO CALL ON THE KING TODAY. HIS MAJESTY WAS CLEARLY GLAD TO SEE MALCOLM AND ALSO GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WANTED HIS PICTURE OF EVENTS HERE TO BE UNDERSTOOD WITH APPROPRIATE DISCRETION IN INFLUENTIAL QUARTERS ABROAD. THE AUDIENCE, DESPITE THE KING'S PREOCCUPATIONS, LASTED AN HOUR. HE SPOKE FRANKLY, CLEARLY INDICATING THROUGHOUT HIS GENERAL APPROVAL OF THE MILITARY TAKE-OVER.
2. THE KING MADE THE FOLLOWING GENERAL POINTS:
 - A. WHILE HE HAD RESPECTED THE IDEALISM OF THE STUDENTS AND THEIR RIGHT TO DEVELOP "ACTIVITIES" OF VARIOUS KINDS (INCLUDING AN INTEREST IN POLITICS) IN ADDITION TO THEIR STUDIES, SOME OF THE STUDENTS HAD INCREASINGLY ABSORBED THEMSELVES FULL TIME IN POLITICS TO THE EXCLUSION OF THEIR STUDIES; AND HAD SOUGHT ABOVE ALL ELSE POWER FOR ITS OWN SAKE AND HAD SPENT THEIR TIME SEARCHING FOR ISSUES ON WHICH TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT.
 - B. IN THIS THE STUDENTS HAD BEEN ENCOURAGED BY OUTSIDERS. HOW ELSE COULD THEIR LEADERS HAVE GOT THE MONEY TO BUY CARS ETC.
 - C. THE STUDENTS HAD DEVELOPED RELATIONS WITH OTHER ASSOCIATIONS SUCH AS THE LABOUR UNIONS, NOT TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS, BUT SIMPLY TO INCREASE THEIR POWER.
 - D. IF THE CHOICE LAY BETWEEN MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND STUDENT POWER, HE, THE KING, THOUGH NO LOVER OF DICTATORSHIP, WOULD MUCH PREFER THE MILITARY. THE STUDENTS MIGHT HAVE SOME IDEALS, BUT THEY HAD NO EXPERIENCE OR RESPONSIBILITY, AND THEY WERE BADLY INFLUENCED FROM OUTSIDE. THE MILITARY ON THE OTHER HAND HAD A SENSE OF DISCIPLINE AND RESPONSIBILITY, WERE CONCERNED FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE COUNTRY AND HAD EXPERIENCE OF GOVERNMENT.
 - E. IF THE THAI PEOPLE REALLY WANTED COMMUNISM, SO BE IT, BUT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THAT THEY DID. THE LAST ELECTIONS IN

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/THE NORTH

THE NORTH EAST AND HIS OWN CONVERSATIONS WITH VILLAGERS THERE FOLLOWING THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER IN LAOS SHOWED THAT THE THAIS DID NOT LIKE WHAT THEY HAD HEARD ABOUT PEOPLES DEMOCRACY.

3. COMING CLOSER TO RECENT EVENTS, THE KING SAID:

A. HE HAD INCREASINGLY FOR SOME TIME BEEN FORCED TO THE VIEW THAT A MILITARY SUPPORTED TAKE OVER WAS INEVITABLE.

THE SANYA CARETAKER GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN HONEST BUT SLOW IN PRODUCING AN OVERELABORATE (AND, HE IMPLIED, OVER-LIBERAL) CONSTITUTION. THEN HAD COME THE FIRST ELECTIONS, PRODUCING THE FIRST WEAK AND UNSTABLE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT: THEN MORE ELECTIONS FOLLOWED BY AN EVEN WEAKER GOVERNMENT WHICH PROVED INCAPABLE OF ANY ACTION AT ALL.

B. THE TAKEOVER, GIVEN THIS GENERAL STATE OF AFFAIRS, HAD THEREFORE NOT TAKEN HIM BY SURPRISE.

C. THE STORY WAS GOING ROUND THAT HE HAD ENCOURAGED THE COUP IN ADVANCE: THIS WAS NOT TRUE. THE LEADERS OF THE TAKEOVER HAD INFORMED HIM OF WHAT THEY WERE DOING AND HE HAD MADE NO COMMENT: CLEARLY IF HE HAD OBJECTED (WHICH BY IMPLICATION HE CERTAINLY HAD NOT DONE) HE COULD NOT HAVE CHANGED THE COURSE OF EVENTS AND ANY COMMENT ON HIS PART COULD HAVE COMPLICATED MATTERS.

D. ALL SORTS OF FORCES HAD BEEN AT WORK IN THE EVENTS AT THAMMASAT, INCLUDING EXTERNAL AND COMMUNIST INFLUENCES, BUT THERE HAD BEEN VERY LITTLE IF ANY ACTUAL EVIDENCE OF EG VIETNAMESE INVOLVEMENT.

E. THE REFORM COUNCIL WERE GOOD MEN, CONSERVATIVE BUT LOYAL TO THEIR COUNTRY. THE NEW CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD COME INTO BEING IN TWO WEEKS. THEREAFTER THE RETURN TO DEMOCRACY SHOULD BE SLOW, STEP BY STEP, THAILAND MUST FOLLOW ITS OWN WAY FORWARD. HE WAS IN FAVOUR THIS TIME OF A CONSTITUTION, MORE LIKE THE BRITISH UNWRITTEN ONE, IN WHICH RELATIVELY FEW MAJOR FEATURES WOULD BE SPELLED OUT, BUT OTHERWISE THERE WOULD BE ROOM FOR LATER DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE.

4. THEREAFTER THE DISCUSSION TURNED TO OTHER MATTERS EG AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT WHICH CAN BE REPORTED SEPERATELY.
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