THAILAND

Before we get into the individual events which occurred during my tenure as ambassador to Thailand (1981-1985), permit me to describe the political and psychological atmosphere that prevailed at the time in the area. Only six years earlier - 1975 - the United States had withdrawn from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Some less friendly observers would say that the United States had suffered a severe defeat in South-East Asia in its effort to contain the spread of communism to that part of the world. Mainland China was in the process of reasserting her identity, unity, and growing political and economic power in East Asia. Thailand had militarily supported U.S. efforts in Vietnam and probably did not like to be perceived as on the side of "the loser". On the other hand, Thailand had a long record — more than 300 years — of balancing the influence of foreign countries which had permitted Thailand to escape the clutches of colonialism. Hence, nationalism and the will of individual countries to be independent and to be in charge of their own destinies was also a strain in Thai national policies. Finally, Thailand also had its own agenda over the last couple of hundred years, especially as it concerned Thailand's relations with her neighbors, Burma on the west, and Cambodia and Laos to the east. One must also add that the Thai people came originally from southern China into what is today Thailand in the 13th century, and that they consider themselves very much part of East Asia, where China plays a leading role.

As for the United States, the reverse suffered in Indochina increased the need for the U.S. military to have access to facilities which would permit the U.S. to project power in East Asia. In that period, the Asian governments not under communist control were told that making available to American military authorities naval or air bases would

help the U.S. to better protect their countries against communist encroachment. While this was the official line, it also reflected the need of U.S. military planners to project military powers for strictly U.S. national strategy and objectives.

Hence, I believe that by the time I was named U.S. Ambassador to Thailand in 1981, U.S. primary interest in Thailand was U.S. access to certain Thai military installations, and secondly, maintaining a friendly government in power in Thailand with an economic system which permitted U.S. corporations access to the Thai market. Add to this a rather long-standing U.S. tradition of helping Thailand to develop economically, socially, scientifically, and in the field of education, and you had in 1981 an atmosphere propitious to mutually beneficial U.S.-Thai cooperation. I honestly believe that my four-year tenure in Bangkok helped to promote this policy.

Q: All right. You went directly from Lebanon to Thailand. Is that right?

DEAN: Yes.

Q: This was from when to when?

DEAN: I was in Thailand from 1981 to 1985.

Q: How did your assignment to Bangkok come about?

DEAN: When I came back from Lebanon, I was a Foreign Service Officer who was quite well known to the Washington foreign affairs community. Having made peace in Laos, taking the flag out from Cambodia, speaking in Danish on Danish T.V. defending U.S. positions in Copenhagen, having

survived Lebanon and having helped to increase U.S. influence in the Near East, was known to both Republicans and Democrats. One day, I was asked to meet a personality quite close to the Republican foreign affairs establishment who was highly regarded by the newly elected President, Ronald Reagan. The gentleman in question was impressed with the fact that I had worked successfully with the Palestinians in Lebanon, that I had survived two assassination attempts, and probably also that I had not spoken to the media about my experiences in Lebanon.

Q: Who was this?

DEAN: I don't think it is a good idea to mention his name. He told me: "John, you are going to get another assignment abroad. It will be another challenging posting. In view of your extensive experience in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, we think you are the right man for Thailand."

We had an able ambassador in Thailand at the time. Mort Abramowitz, whom I knew well. In many ways, I built on his legacy, just like I would like to believe others built on my achievements.

Abramowitz had done something very good. In early 1981, there was some kind of brouhaha in Bangkok. Mort sided with the Prime Minister, General Prem, who was a bachelor and an honest man. He did not have any family members needing jobs or wives greedy for jewelry. He was an honest servant of the King. He had been Commander of the Thai army before being designated Prime Minister by the King. Mort had supported General Prem's efforts to remain in office when challenged by some politicians. When I arrived, General Prem had been Prime Minister for about two years. During my four years in Thailand, I got to know

General Prem very well and we became good friends. All I can say is that I inherited from Mort a very good relationship with the Thai Prime Minister, for which I was grateful.

Having said this, I would like to recall that Thailand had been during the war quite acquiescent in the Japanese occupation.

Q: It's called bending bamboo.

DEAN: Yes. In the immediate post World War Two period, the United States had a very knowledgeable ambassador in Bangkok. In about 1948, he made Thailand an "honorary neutral" during the war period, in return for Thailand giving a significant political role to those Thai who had been fighting alongside the Allies, known as the Free Thai. The latter had been recruited and worked with the OSS during the war. This small group of pro-western Thai would become an important element on the political scene in Thailand, taking positions as prime minister, key ministers, etc. During the Second World War, Lord Mountbatten had on his staff in India a group which followed events in Southeast Asia. People like Dillon Ripley, who became our eminent head of the Smithsonian, and his wife, Mary Livingston Ripley who played a role in the OSS. Ripley was among those who were sent or dropped into Thailand and helped to create an anti-Japanese resistance movement. These Free Thai continued to play a key role in Thailand all during the fifties, the sixties, seventies and eighties. This also permitted the United States to maintain a close relationship with the King of Thailand, with the government, with the armed forces, and with the Thai security establishment. U.S.-Thai relations blossomed as Thailand became the country closest to the U.S. in Southeast Asia. We started making Thailand the

center for our activities in that part of the world. Thais adjust easily to new circumstances, and our relationship was close and mutually beneficial. Our diplomatic mission became very large. Every branch of the U.S. government was represented in Bangkok. Every agency wanted its regional representative to be stationed there. Gradually, some regional representatives moved to Singapore.

After World War Two, a new threat became important which heretofore had not been much of a problem: drugs. We worked extremely closely with the Thai in order to stop the growing of opium poppies in the northern part of Thailand, offering replacement crops to permit farmers to earn a living. We found full support for these ideas in the projects carried out by His Majesty the King. Thai and American experts persuaded Thai farmers to plant substitutes for poppies but which would be financially rewarding for those who enrolled in the poppy destruction program.

The problem of the poppy culture exceeded Thailand and reached into northern Burma. The northeastern part of Burma, known today as Myanmar, was a no man's land ruled at the time by Chinese War Lords, remnants of Chiang Kai-shek's army who had withdrawn from mainland China into Burma where they had found refuge. That area of Burma was a haven for poppy growing and heroin refineries. The area was then referred to as "the Golden Triangle". To coordinate the efforts of various U.S. departments and agencies in fighting drugs with our Thai friends, interdicting the movement of drugs, the growing of poppies, and the destruction of heroin refineries, was part of the ambassador's duties. Fighting drugs with our Thai colleagues meant, at times, going beyond the national borders of Thailand.

It was also in Thailand that I began to realize that some of the worst wars are not with foreign enemies, but internal strife among American agencies and departments battling for turf. If you read "Newsweek" or one of the other magazines or newspapers published during my tenure in Thailand, you will find that at one point I had to throw out (reassign to Washington) regional heads of one agency and also the regional chief of the competing agency. But turf battles were not confined to drugs. Within the Embassy, the military and U.S. Intelligence agencies may have differences. The Department of Agriculture and the Treasury Department may have different views on financing U.S. agricultural exports, etc… Sooner or later, these differences landed on the Ambassador's desk. One example was rice exports to Thailand, from the U.S., a problem for Thailand, one of the world's leading rice exporting nations.

Q: Basically, we are talking about Louisiana, California, and Arkansas.

DEAN: Yes. Obviously, these senators considered it as their duty and saw it as their responsibility to defend the local American rice growers.

Then, we also had to ascertain for our U.S. military to have access in Thailand to places where we could preposition equipment and supplies. These facilities were inherited from the days of the build-up during the Vietnam War, and our military wanted to maintain some access to them. For example, we had built airfields which were not really fully used by the Thai after our withdrawal from Vietnam. Our navy needed access to ports to use for repairs and R&R for the U.S. Air Force and fleet. Thailand remained a strategic location in our overall global approach to the Pacific and East Asia, well after the end of our military presence in Vietnam.

The single most important policy maker for Thailand, in the field of foreign affairs, had been Dr. Thanat Khoman who was Foreign Minister for 14 years. It was he who had negotiated with Dean Rusk the Agreement creating ASEAN. For all practical purposes, Thanat Khoman was the "father of ASEAN". Thanat Khoman was a convinced nationalist and worked well with the United States, as long as he felt the relationship was mutually beneficial. As time went on, Thanat's close relationship with the United States became progressively more strained and he became vocally critical of the U.S. on many subjects. When I was in Bangkok as Ambassador, Thanat was Deputy Prime Minister. Since Thanat and I had attended the same French Institute for International Law in Paris – at 10 years interval – we had a common bond and I always tried to work with him. I continued to work with Thanat until the year 2000 on foundations and regional university centers, as for example the Asian Institute of Technology, after my retirement. For a total of 19 years I worked with Dr. Thanat. As Foreign Minister and as Deputy Prime Minister, Thanat played a great role in Thai foreign affairs. Most of the Thai ambassadors and diplomats who had something to do with foreign affairs until very recently were Dr. Thanat's protégés. As his relationship with the United States became for him a disappointment…

Q: What was the cause of this?

DEAN: He saw the United States as a power that sought hegemony in Asia. As a nationalist. Dr. Thanat saw the United States behind efforts to limit Thailand's role in Southeast Asia. Thanat favored Asians working together in their own national interest and not relying on one single foreign power for leadership. This concept was basically

accepted by a number of people in his own country. Some of our people felt that Thanat was at times pursuing an unfriendly policy toward the United States.

Q: Do you think there was any validity to his concern?

DEAN: Let me put it this way. We had emerged from World War Two as the world's leading power and we accepted that role. The Thai have a long history of independence and pride in their identity. Thailand was never colonized. The Thai retained their independence by playing off the two leading foreign powers in their area against each other. The Thai had diplomatic relations with France since Louis XIV and in this way balanced British influence as Britain was pursuing its drive eastward towards Malaysia and Burma. In order to stay out of these two western orbits and be colonized as Burma was on the western side of Thailand, as Malaysia was in the south, as Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam were in the east, the Thai tried to play one off against the other. For centuries, the British and the French were balanced. In the late 19th century, the Thai began to modernize their country by bringing in foreign advisers from small countries to help them on issues such as internal security. The Danes were put in charge of that field. The Danes had been great traders. The Oriental Hotel was owned by them. The Danes owned the East Asia Company which played a role all over the Far East. The Belgians were advisers on legal matters. A small country like the United States at the end of the 19th century provided foreign affairs advisers. We would send somebody from Harvard to advise the Foreign Office. The Thai kept their balance this way, by staying out of the orbit of great powers.

The American foreign affairs advisers stayed on in Thailand until the 1930s. During the Second World War, when Singapore fell to the Japanese and the Japanese promoted independence movements in Southeast Asia, they also occupied Thailand. While Thailand was not part of the Japanese orbit, the Thai bent in the wind as a bamboo does. When the war ended and we had this bright American chief of mission who made the Thai "honorary neutrals", the United States emerged as the most important single foreign power influencing Thailand. Some Thai accepted the United States as the major foreign influence in Thailand. Others favored balancing U.S. power with other foreign Influences – specifically, the Japanese became more and more respected in Thailand in the economic field. Economic assistance, exports, establishment of Japanese factories in Thailand, became more important during the 1980s. Japanese cars replaced American cars, Japanese television replaced other foreign televisions, Japanese tourists rubbed shoulders with American tourists, etc. Japan was the first foreign country to balance U.S. economic influence in Thailand.

Then, came the gaining of importance of Mainland China in East Asia. The rise of communist Mainland China in the 1950s, 60s. 70s. and 80s was for the Thai a new phenomenon (although they had close links with China for centuries). They had worked highly effectively with Taiwan since the 1950s. From the Thai point of view, the new Chinese mainland giant required balancing and they invited the Presidents and Chiefs of Governments of the European Union to come to Bangkok to increase their trade and influence in Thailand. The European Union has become the fourth balancing element in Thailand -- this time to balance Mainland China. Already during my time, it was apparent that Thailand was

returning to the old policy of balancing foreign influence in Thailand. Perhaps one major exception, still at the time of my tour of duty, was that U.S. strategic and military influence remained unchallenged. Thailand sent its officers to the United States for specialized military training and bought U.S. military equipment -- army, navy, and air force.

Q: You as an ambassador understood this, but how did you see your role? Did you want to change this or play with the game?

DEAN: I think this will come out as we go along. You are not going to change the Thai. Originally, Thailand was inhabited by Mon people. They had a Hindu-type culture. Then, the Thai came down from southern China in the 14th century. At that time, eastern Thailand was under Khmer control and influence. Gradually, the Thai replaced or absorbed the Khmers in eastern Thailand and from Ayutia Thai Buddhist culture radiated to the rest of the country. In the 19th century, many Chinese left their homes to emigrate to Southeast Asia. Most of the emigrants from China were poor. The ethnic Chinese became traders and merchants, while the Thai, who were slightly darker in complexion, remained military or servants of the state. Above all, they remained farmers in the provinces, while the Chinese had a tendency to settle in urban centers. Basically, Thailand had been governed for many centuries by the military and later they also established banks and businesses, in short entered the business world. When I took my first trip with Prime Minister Prem to the United States in 1982, I had suggested to him that he takes along business people who would constitute a new link between American business and Thai business. This idea was new at the time because the social status of the merchants or businessmen was not

equal to the Thai military or the civil servants. It took time for the Chinese from China to take a Thai name, to honor the King (which was the key), and be part of the Buddhist Thai establishment and become fully integrated into the Thai establishment. My initiative to invite Thai businessmen to accompany General Prem to the United States certainly promoted U.S.-Thai relations.

Q: I am told that many of the Chinese made a point of marrying Thai women.

DEAN: They did. Everybody did. As a matter of fact. my former Thai colleague in Washington had ancestors who came from Persia. There had always been people coming to Thailand who were attracted by the relative richness of the land, the outgoing nature of the Thai people, and the pleasant Thai lifestyle. The Thai are good-looking people. The Chinese immigrants often intermarried, took Thai names, and little by little were assimilated.

The Chinese Thai took to business like ducks to water, not only in their country of adoption but also in their dealings with the Chinese in Taipei, the Chinese in Singapore, with the Chinese in their country of origin, China itself. They became an element in the 20th century of also making known Thailand outside the borders of Thailand itself.

When I arrived in 1981, I followed a number of outstanding American ambassadors who had preceded me. Among them was Wild Bill Donovan, the founder of OSS. Another was U. Alexis Johnson who became undersecretary of State. It was one of the more important posts of our Foreign Service in the second half of the 20th century. It was a Class-One Embassy. Part of the job was coordinating the work of 500-600 Americans in the

embassy so that there would be no infighting among different U.S. agencies and departments.

Let me be more specific. Our U.S. military in 1981 wanted to use the base of Udapao which had been a huge air base for B-52 bombers used during the Vietnam War. It had an excellent runway and large warehouse facilities in good condition. After 1975 - the end of the Vietnam War - we could not use Udapao. After the collapse in 1975, the Thai had a somewhat standoffish policy towards the United States, about access to former U.S. military bases. I was asked by Washington to explore whether the Thai authorities might find a way for us to use that facility for American military aircraft flying from Japan westward. We also suggested to stock spare parts for repair at Udapao. The Thai inquired whether we could modernize the fueling facilities for aircraft. This would require a fairly important investment. I started working with Prime Minister Prem, whom I found to be a very straight, honest, hard working individual with close links to the King, whose confidence he enjoyed. I suggested that a Thai flag be hoisted over the base since it was Thai territory and also a Thai facility. But I suggested that the U.S. might use this facility when we needed it. I also agreed that we would install a new refueling system for the planes. Obviously, the Thai could also use the new refueling system for their planes, both civilian and military. The new refueling system would permit any aircraft to be refueled within an hour. We also received permission to stock spare parts and equipment needed for the revision of aircraft. We agreed that the base could be used by Thai and U.S. planes and that Udapao was definitely under Thai jurisdiction. It was on that basis that the agreement was reached with Prime Minister Prem. Also, crews

would be able to go for R&R into town while their aircraft was being fixed.

This agreement was respected by both parties. By the way, the Udapao air base played a major role in the war against Iraq, as U.S. aircraft from East Asia was flown eastward to be used in the Iraq conflict.

Q: This would be 1990 - 1991,

DEAN: Exactly right. I was no longer there, but I was reading with interest in the international media that Udapao was prepared for emergencies. The American strategy always remains to be prepared for emergencies.

Another priority for our military was that we wanted to continue working closely with the armed forces of Thailand. We trained Thai officers and enlisted personnel for the Air Force, the Navy, and the Army. As I said earlier, the Thai military always played a significant role in their country, sometimes also on the political scene. Traditionally, the Thai military had been the power brokers in the selection of governments before the civilian political parties got to play a more important role. One of the great contributions made by General Prem was that, as a civilian, he was eight and a half years Prime Minister, and during that period there were no coups. He was a civilian from a military background. He was able to work both with the Thai civilian sector and with the Thai military. He had the full confidence of His Majesty, the King. General Prem gave continuity to the Thai political system which had been known previously for frequent changes of governments.

The Thai navy needed ships. Well, our Embassy helped the Thai to get ships

built at the Tacoma shipyards, in Washington State. These vessels, built in the United States, were equipped with advanced technology, including certain missiles. In short, the Thai navy was modernized. It became an up-to-date navy.

Another reason for good military to military relations was that the Thai army played a role still in the 1980s in Thailand, coping imaginatively with insurgencies in far-off places which had not benefitted yet from the rapid growth and progress of the Thai economy, as in other parts of Thailand. The Thai army built roads into these areas so that these dissatisfied elements - mostly farmers - could get their produce to the market. As roads came in, schools were built, television reached the boondocks, teachers, health officers, doctors arrived in those regions, and those small elements which were in revolt, rejoined the mainstream in Thailand. The reasons for dissent had been addressed by the Thai government. To the extent the U.S. could, we helped the Thai authorities in their development efforts to erase the reasons for opposition to Bangkok. U.S. aid programs assisted in many areas. Not all U.S. assistance was government supplied. For example, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund had provided for 60 years professors to Thailand's leading Medical School: Mahidon University. Missionaries from the United States also had established clinics in Thailand. Graduates of Thai medical schools - which were free of charge - had to serve as doctors in Thai government clinics in the provinces, for 2-3 years, before setting themselves up in their own private practice. In this way, the population up country also received adequate health care. The United States was very closely linked to the development by the Thai of a modern, social, economic, and educational infrastructure in their country, and this was recognized by the Thai. In return, the Thai were understanding of our

needs as a global power for facilities to support our role in Asia.

But there were elements also in Thailand who felt that our influence overtly and covertly was perhaps too large. So, there were some elements like Dr, Thanat who thought it would be better to diversify the influence of foreign countries, and above all develop Thailand's own potentials. Today, you can buy fax machines made in Thailand. Scientifically advanced projects in remote sensing are done jointly with the United States and France. Over the years, the United States and the American ambassadors in Bangkok played a very constructive role in working with Thai authorities in modernizing and developing Thailand. I felt that if it's good for Thailand, it's also good for us, provided we are somehow involved, and we were.

Q; Let's talk about some of the turf battles within the Embassy, What Agencies were they?

DEAN: One example was the difference between the Drug Enforcement Agency and the CIA. Both agencies were very much involved in trying to curb poppy growing, destroying of refineries, regardless where they were located. Sometimes there was a race to determine who would get there first to destroy the refinery. Such competition could take on very nasty proportions. Both the CIA and DEA worked closely with Thai military forces to carry out their programs. At times, it could be the Thai Air Force that worked with the CIA and the Thai Army might be working with DEA, or vice-versa. Thai and U.S. authorities had a well thought out program on interdicting drug trafficking, destroying refineries, crop substitution for growing poppies, in short, U.S. - Thai cooperation in that field was good. Rivalry between agencies involved In

the struggle could complicate the task. I might also mention that at times, those involved in destroying refineries might have to go into areas somewhat beyond the territorial bounderies of Thailand,

Q: You are talking about what was Burma.

DEAN: Yes, There were refineries in northeastern Burma which were not under the control of the authorities of Rangoon.

There were also people in the United States who believed that there were still American prisoners held in adjacent Laos during my tenure in Thailand, i.e., 1981-85.

Q: You are talking about the MIA (Missing In Action) and some movements in the U.S. determined to search on their own for POWs, a group that continues to be active still today.

DEAN: Yes. I had the visit in Bangkok of people searching for POWs in Laos. For example, a certain Mrs. Chapman whose husband had flown Air America planes in Laos, came to see me in Bangkok. Some years earlier, it had been my sad duty in Laos to give her the bad news that the plane her husband had piloted had crashed. Since the plane was carrying ammunitions, the plane not only crashed but exploded. There were no survivors. When Mrs. Chapman came to my embassy in Bangkok years later, she said: "Mr. Ambassador, I am sure that my husband is still alive and he is held prisoner in Laos." There had been some people in the United States who had made her believe that her husband was still alive and was a prisoner in Laos. These people often were soldiers of fortune, treasure hunters, who were misleading people that their loved ones were still alive and they could help them to recover either their remains in some distant place, or bring them back alive from a prison camp.

Q: Confidence men.

DEAN: Yes - con people. Exactly. I said: "But, Mrs. Chapman, you know me. I had to give you the bad news that your husband had been flying a plane with ammunition and that it exploded." At that point, she broke down in tears and said:" You know, these people who talk with me give me hope and I live on hope. They say maybe he is still alive and I believed it." She left my office, perhaps better informed, but I don't think I made a friend being truthful.

Other people – often former military – came to Thailand with the sole purpose of searching for MIAs or POWs in Laos. They brought with them very sophisticated communications equipment which they carried with them into Laos. They had a backup group in Thailand with whom they stayed in contact while in the bush in Laos. They were going into Laos to look and free the American prisoners of war held against their will in Laos, according to their story. Having served in Laos twice, having been involved in the Vietnam War, I knew that there had always been in every conflict a number of dissatisfied people who went AWOL and found a local gal and they deserted - stayed behind. I did not believe that more than six years after the end of the Vietnam War there were Americans in Laos held against their will. As for MIAs I thought this was an honorable U.S. Government supported program.

Q: Saigon had a sizeable community of these people.

DEAN: I don't know that much about Saigon itself. I know that I heard about some deserters - after the war - usually in far-off places in the Dalat region. In Laos, in 1981, there were still some Americans who, for some reason or other, had not cared to return to the U.S. and had found a quite comfortable life in the bush and had stayed there.

Personally, I thought at that time that there were no Americans held against their will in Laos. On the other hand, there were definitely still men missing in action and a U.S. Government supported program was active in searching for MIAs because in our vision of life, having the remains of somebody who had fallen in battle was an important factor for our society and I supported that effort fully. But this group of people searching for POWs in Laos in the 1980s was a private organization and not government supported. This particular group was going to get paid for the bones they brought back, allegedly the remains of American soldiers missing in action! In this particular case, this group of American adventurers got into trouble with the Lao army and were wounded as they tried to escape capture by the regular Lao army for entering Lao territory without authorization. One of the Americans and one of the Lao who came with the group were wounded. They used their communications equipment to get a message back to Bangkok that they needed help. Their message was addressed to the clandestine Thai group supporting them, They did not contact the U.S. Embassy directly but an American came to me and said: 'Mr. Ambassador, this gentleman and his party are in serious trouble. They are surrounded. They need to be extracted from there. Since they are in a foreign country, could you ask the Prime Minister of Thailand to insert Thai special forces to get the Americans and a few Lao out and back to Thailand." Thailand recognized Laos as an independent sovereign country. Invading a foreign country with Thai paratroopers was not exactly their idea of a neighborly policy. But I went to the Thai Prime Minister - General Prem - late at night and asked if the Thai military could insert special forces to extract the intruders. Some people on my staff also approached the Thai military to obtain their assistance. We gave the Thai military the exact location of the group

awaiting extraction, information which had been transmitted by the sophisticated communications equipment the group had brought with them. Thai Special Forces extracted two Americans and some Lao and brought them back to Thailand. The Thai action was certainly a sign of friendship and loyalty by the Thai military and by the Thai Prime Minister towards the United States. When the Americans who were rescued came back to Bangkok, I suggested to the Consul General on my staff to pick up their passports, to get them medical attention and send them back to the States on the first flight back. That same afternoon, the Consul General came back to me and said: "I don' think we should do that." Well, I found out by talking to my counselors that my suggestion was difficult to execute. Apparently, the two Americans had some pretty high protection back in the States, who supported ventures searching for POWs held over from the Vietnam War.

Q: We are probably talking about Ross Perot and his organization, aren't we?

DEAN: Since you mentioned it, I will continue with the story because Mr. Perot does enter.

Q: I might add that Ross Perot was the presidential candidate of the Independence Party or something, and has been a perpetual supporter of the conspiracy theory or whatever you want to call it, that there are prisoners of war still in camps in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

DEAN: Since our own American Consul General was reluctant to act, I went to see Prime Minister Prem and suggested that perhaps the Thai authorities could curtail the visa of stay of these intruders, thereby forcing them to leave Thailand. This was done by Thai police and immigration officers so that the gentlemen in question and their wounded colleagues were put on a plane without too much delay. But I learned that my power of control as Ambassador over these American troublemakers was limited.

Q: I might add, I am a professional consular officer. It used to be that we could take somebody's passport away, get them out of the country if they were a little bit crazy. Somebody would give them a shot of something and put them on a plane with a nurse or something, and we would just get rid of them. Those days, particularly by the mid-1970s, have gone forever. However, what you just said... We could usually go to the host government and say: "Look, you have a trouble-maker here. Get them the hell out of here. But we can't do it; you do it." Sometimes there would be fights. But this became sort of the remedy. Where there is a will, there is a way.

DEAN: That's exactly it. Let us close this particular chapter by relating a related incident. One Friday afternoon, the manager of one of the large American banks in Bangkok came to me with a large envelope with $50,000 in cash in it. He said: "John, I have been asked by somebody to give this envelope to you because you would support efforts to recoup the remains of Americans killed in action (MIAs). These Americans are infiltrating Laos and are bringing back the remains for the families back home. Please give them this money when they return with the remains." I replied, "Look, we have had these guys come to the Embassy and they came back from Laos with chicken bones - all kinds of animal bones. But most of these guys were just interested in the money they might get. I have no instructions from the government on these ventures. They are private initiatives. I don't want to be involved in this transaction. It's Friday afternoon, and I don't want to have this money in a government safe over the week-end. Please take it back. This was the end of that story. At the Embassy, we had a section that was in charge of looking for the remains of MIAs and after they had located the spot, they would make an official request to the foreign authorities to explore the site. Our Embassy fully supported this important operation. It was an official, overt, U.S. Government operation. I was not convinced that the U.S. Embassy should be involved in private efforts to find MIA remains, especially if they violated the law and were primarily motivated by financial gain for the treasure hunter.

Q: The official U.S. effort to identify remains of U.S. MIAs is legitimate. But this idea that somehow, for some reason, the Lao, the Cambodians, or the Vietnamese were holding people did not make any sense.

DEAN: One should add that, allegedly, these Americans were held against their will, i.e., there were still POWs in the early 1980s. I think this thesis has not been proven.

But what was proven, as time went on, was that there were in Laos, and in Vietnam soldiers who had deserted. As they got homesick, as they got older, or as they got sick, they would walk out of the bush, out of the jungle, and turn themselves in and then ask to be repatriated. I think, on the whole, the armed forces of the United States dealt very fairly and humanely with these cases. They were not prisoners of war held against their will, but people who for one reason or another had left the armed services and stayed on. At first, they were probably known as deserters. Perhaps, as time went on, they were seen somewhat differently. That did occur. But still today, anything that can be done by the United States, in conjunction with local authorities, on identifying the remains of MIAs and getting them to the children or the widows of those who fought in this conflict, remains an important duty and responsibility of U.S. government officials serving overseas.

I would like to change the subject for a while. Since we were talking about the important role of the Drug Enforcement Agency, the various intelligence agencies, and the military, in fighting the flow of drugs and the production of drugs in that region, ever so often, the local Thai authorities would arrest what we call a "mule" - a carrier of drugs - who would bring heroin from Bangkok by plane to the West. He or she might be paid $3,000 - $4,000 for such a service. A number of them were caught.

Also, a number of users and dealers, including Americans, were caught by the Thai, as part of an international effort to interdict the flow of drugs. Sometimes, the local authorities would not arrest the Thai, but the guy working the street would be an American or he was involved in the movement of drugs from up-country to Bangkok, but he was caught with large quantities of drugs on him. They always got, as we had requested for all drug dealers, pretty stiff sentences from the Thai courts. I received a number of requests from American Senators or high-ranking Executive Branch officials for their liberation. Most of the time, the request took the form of asking me to obtain a Royal Pardon for an American who was caught in the drug trade. The sentences were severe. In Singapore, it was even death. In Thailand, it could be 20-30 years, depending on the size and nature of the offense.

I remember in one particular case an American Sergeant, who had been working in the U.S. Military Mission attached to the Embassy, was caught having hidden drugs in his household effects as he was leaving Thailand to return to the United States. The Sergeant had served in Thailand with his wife. In his household effects, as they were being assembled and crated, they found that he had in that shipment fairly significant amounts of drugs. Was he responsible for hiding the drugs? Were they placed there by somebody else who wanted to get rid of him, somebody who did not like him? The end result was: he was put in jail and he received a stiff sentence. I received a personal note from the Secretary of Defense asking me to intervene on his behalf and he suggested a Royal Pardon.

My relationship with His Majesty was excellent. His Majesty was one of the finest human beings I ever had the chance of working with. We could ask for a royal pardon when high-ranking Americans intervened for an American drug offender. But soon, requests from Congressmen, Senators, Generals, Admirals, for royal pardons would be so numerous that It would be impossible for the King to grant a pardon every time. Furthermore, what about all the Americans in Thai prisons who had nobody to intervene for him or her? The problem was how to protect American citizens and at the same time be fair to all Americans who were in prison?

Once, while on vacation in France, I was introduced to a distinguished Frenchman who said to me; "Mr. Ambassador, I made a terrible mistake in my life. Many years ago I married a much younger wife who was part of the hippie generation and she was deeply into drugs. A couple of years ago, she took our three children to Thailand and all of them are now deeply into the drug culture. They have all been arrested In Thailand and now are serving long-term sentences in Thai jails. Can you do something? I am willing to pay any amount of money to get them out." I replied: "Look, I am soon flying back to Bangkok and will consult with my French colleague. The latter spoke fluent Thai and was much appreciated by the Thai authorities. When I spoke to my French colleague. Ambassador Jean Soulier, I explained my meeting in Paris and added that the Frenchman had offered money to use in Bangkok to get his wife and children released. Jean Soulier replied: "Look, that's the last thing you want. Don't ever get involved in this sordid case. There is a story around in some countries that the Thai judges are corrupt. Most of them are not. They are just applying the law. If you offer them money, you will be accused of corrupting them."

He suggested that we ask for an audience with His Majesty the King and ask whether instead of asking for a royal pardon for our citizens In jail for drug offences, we could negotiate a Prisoner Exchange Treaty. The treaty would specify that after the convicted persons had served one year in the local jail, they would be eligible to be exchanged, i.e., sent to their country of origin (U.S. or France), and serve the rest of the sentence in their own country, or whatever sentence the legal system of their own country would impose on them. My colleague thought that such an agreement would be acceptable to the Thai authorities and would not undermine the Thai legal system nor the Thai effort to fight drugs -- a program the United States had promoted in Thailand. We did go separately to His Majesty and asked for His Majesty's advice. As always, he was of good counsel and said that he would support a Prisoner Exchange Treaty with the United States and France. Afterwards, we discussed the subject with the Thai Government. Both the United States and France signed a Prisoner Exchange Treaty with Thailand that year. That took care of the royal pardon problem for our drug offenders and we did not have to distinguish between the Americans who "had pull" in high places, and those who were forgotten and rotted in Thai jails. This solution also permitted the Thai to be even-handed with all offenders, regardless of nationality, as long as the foreign government had signed a similar treaty with the Thai authorities.

Now that I have mentioned His Majesty the King, let me say that he was an extremely able Chief of State. I am not talking about chiefs of Governments. His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen had long standing ties with the United States. The King was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where his father attended Harvard Medical School. His mother had gone to Simmons College in Boston. When I was in Thailand,

the King's mother, known as "The Prince's Mother", was still extremely active, flying all around the country, in spite of her advanced age, and dispensing assistance (medicine, blankets, clothing..) to the hill tribes. She was a wonderful old lady, an excellent role model for the Thai elite. The King had come on the throne as a very young man and he had to Impose himself, which was not easy. He had an older brother who died before the present King mounted the throne as a young man of 19 years of age or so. King Bhumibol of Thailand is today one of the longest living rulers. The King married the Queen whose father was military attaché in France. She was a very accomplished, very beautiful young lady. They truly became, as time went on, the cement that binds the entire country together. They are the common bond for the ethnic groupings and religions (Muslims in the south, Buddhists all over, Christian minorities, etc.) that make them all part of the Thai community. People from the left, from the right, politicians and statesmen, the rich and the poor, for all of them, the unifying cement is above all His Majesty. When I presented credentials to the King In 1981, I was known In Southeast Asia for my work In Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Not everybody had agreed with my approach to diplomacy. Little by little, my wife and I established a direct, personal relationship with Their Majesties, which helped solving many problems which arose in U.S.-Thai relations. My work was facilitated by the invitations we received every three or four months to visit Their Majesties at the various palaces they had at their disposal around the country. Sometimes, we would go for the week-end. During these audiences away from Bangkok, I would ask for His Majesty's advice on issues of national interest. "What is feasible? What is not feasible? What is right? What is wrong?" His Majesty might ask me: "Is this person loyal? Is he or she honest?" The American Ambassador has so many assets at his disposal, knowing what

is going on in the world, and Their Majesties knew their own country so well, that these exchanges were usually mutually beneficial. I am still today grateful for the friendly reception Their Majesties gave me during my four years as Ambassador to Thailand.

Within the Embassy, I was the coordinator of all U.S. activities in Thailand. If we did undertake covert operations, I insisted on being advised. But on many issues, other members of the Embassy played key roles. The head of the CIA section at the Embassy continued to be an important official. The head of the U.S. military mission had a close relationship with his Thai counterpart. I was blessed with an outstanding team of very professional officials in every section of the U.S. Mission to Thailand. Perhaps I was a lucky guy: my deputies were Stapelton Roy and Chas Freeman, two of our best Foreign Service Officers, who made major contributions to our country as Ambassadors to China and Saudi Arabia respectively. Certainly my success in Thailand was largely the result of the efforts of our team. If I differed with representatives of other departments or agencies on my staff, I would first try to enlist the support of the Department of State. If this did not help, I would contact members of the National Security Council at the White House. Often, it would also require a telephone call to heads of departments or agencies in Washington to achieve a common U.S. position.

What did I discuss with His Majesty? The drug problem, local politics, or the problems and needs of the people of Thailand. Getting American universities to cooperate with Thai universities in the fields of science and technology was another subject. At least twice a year my

wife and I, joined by all the other chiefs of mission and their wives, were invited to accompany Their Majesties when they travelled around Thailand to see for themselves the needs and problems of the rural people. We would see the King and the Queen sitting on the ground with the farmers, asking: "What do you need?" The answer might be "A water pump. Your Majesty." There usually were 50 aides around him. The command from His Majesty might be: "Water pump for village so and so." Then, another woman might come up and plead: "We haven't got a dentist within 100 miles. Could somebody come and take care of our problems and pain with our teeth." The Queen would speak up and one of her assistants would get the order "to get some dentists to come to the village within 14 days." At the request of Their Majesties, Thai dentists would volunteer their services free of charge 2 or 3 times a year to visit outlying villages, to comply with Their Majesties' requests. From time to time, His Majesty the King, or the Queen, would do me the honor to visit an American aid project. Although it was no longer the period of intensive U.S. economic aid programs, we still worked closely with the Thai on rural development. When the new annual calendar came out one year printed by the Thai Government, it had on the cover the picture of His Majesty with John Gunther Dean next to him. In the picture, His Majesty was pointing into the distance as if he was suggesting a site for a development project. Some years later, well after my departure from Thailand, the Thai Government printed new 500 baht bank notes. The same picture of His Majesty was used on the bank note, with the King in exactly the same posture as in the picture on the calendar. When I visited the American Embassy in Bangkok after retirement, a Thai employee came up to me holding up a 500 baht bank note and reminding me that it was the same image of the King as the picture

from the calendar taken with me a few years earlier. In December 1999, "TIME" Magazine reproduced the same picture of His Majesty with John Gunther Dean next to him. Thai Airways published the same photograph in its publication in early 2000. Perhaps it was the symbol of the golden age in U.S.-Thai relations.

At one point, His Majesty asked me whether his son, the Crown Prince, could go to the United States, perhaps for one year, for pilot training, flying F-16s and helicopters, in addition to some exposure to the education of general staff officers. The U.S. military assigned a Lt.Colonel to the Crown Prince, who sent monthly reports on the Prince's training also to the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, which I turned them over personally to His Majesty. I would like to believe that the year spent in the United States by the Crown Prince was beneficial and helped to perfect him in some of the military arts as well as some of the civilian virtues needed for those holding high office. Since the Crown Prince today is playing a more important role than ever before, I would like to believe that the year he spent in the States was in the long-term interest of Thailand and our relationship with that country.

During my tenure, we also tried to be helpful to two of the daughters of Their Majesties, Princess Sirinthorn and Princess Choulaporn. Princess Maha Chakri Sirinthorn attended courses at the Asian Institute of Technology where she received a Master's degree in remote sensing. The Asian Institute of Technology (A.I.T.) near Bangkok was founded by President Johnson in 1962. It looks like an American University campus and has an outstanding international faculty with a student body from more than 25 countries. Remote sensing is a tough science, but Princess Sirinthorn is very gifted and she got her degree with flying colors.

By the way. Princess Sirinthorn is truly beloved by the people of Thailand. We also had a chance of working with the youngest daughter, Princess Choulaporn, who was then married to a Thai air force officer. She is also a good scientist, in addition to being a well-known singer of Thai songs.

Much of my interest was directed to promoting linkages between the United States and Thailand in science, technology, and education. As a member of the Board of Directors of A.I.T., I was able to bring students from all over Asia to the Institute. Funding for U.S. sponsored Asian students was provided by the U.S. Economic Aid Mission. The students came to study for the Master's or Doctor's degree and most of them returned to their native country where they were able to pass on their knowledge gained at A.I.T. to their fellow countrymen. (Today, this program is largely financed by Japan.) Especially smaller countries, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, benefitted from that regional educational Center. Later, in the early 1990s, I was instrumental to have Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma rejoin that organization. But I also helped to promote bi-lateral links between U.S. and Thai universities in fields as diverse as business administration, medicine, and science. The Fullbright Scholarship program educated many leading Thai personalities and the American Alumni Association of Thailand Is still today one of the best examples of constructive U.S. cooperation with Thailand. Let me say at this point that I was blessed with excellent colleagues at the Economic Aid Mission who were the motor in our policy of helping the host country on their road to development. Our military mission attached to the Embassy did the same good job in training Thai officers in the army, navy, air force in the ever more technical aspects of their work.

Q: It was also a difficult period. This was the first part of the Reagan Administration. Reagan came in with a strong right-wing, nationalistic, reputation. Things change, as they do in all administrations after they have been through the mill. But this was still pretty hard-edged.

DEAN: I was a Reagan appointee.

Q: I know that.

DEAN: I had never been involved in domestic politics. I had served as Chief of Mission under Presidents Reagan, Carter, Ford, Nixon, and Eisenhower. I was neither a Democrat nor a Republican. The new factor that emerged in 1979 in our relationship with Thailand was the flight of hundreds of thousands of Cambodians to Thailand, a problem which had already occupied my predecessor Ambassador Mort Abramowiz and was going to play a significant role during my tenure in Thailand. Let me explain.

In 1979 (hence, two years before I arrived), the Vietnamese had intervened in Cambodia and had thrown out the Pol Pot wing of the Khmer Rouge. The Vietnamese were concerned and were already adversely affected by the excesses of the Khmer Rouge regime, both in their own country and by their attacks into Vietnamese territory near the border and against Vietnamese communities living in Cambodia. In 1979, the Vietnamese army threw out from Phnom Penh and eastern Cambodia the brutal government of Pol Pot and his cronies. The Vietnamese supported and installed a government of dissident Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh who had realized that the excesses of Pol Pot had harmed the Cambodians and their neighbors, the Vietnamese. Without Vietnamese military intervention this could not have happened. This new situation caused a dilemma for the United States: the Vietnamese in 1979 had invaded Cambodia to help the Cambodians rid themselves of Pol Pot. It also expanded Vietnamese influence westward beyond their borders. Not knowing whether the

Vietnamese military support for the Cambodian anti-Pol Pot forces would lead to a better life for themselves, many Cambodians fled the fighting and moved westward to the Thai-Khmer border. They entered Thailand where they became refugees in large camps set up for them. These camps became a humanitarian problem for Thailand and a resettlement problem for the international community. At that point in history, the Cambodian government was still perceived by the United States to be Khmer Rouge and anti-American. The new government in Phnom Penh was clearly close to Vietnam and relied on Chinese and Russian assistance. As for the Thai, they were being submerged on their eastern border by the flow of Cambodian refugees and by attacks from remnants of Pol Pot forces hiding in the northwestern border region of Cambodia. Some of the Cambodians in the refugee camps joined the armed struggle against the regime in power in Phnom Penh which had replaced Pol Pot. In their struggle, they received the support of Thai and U.S. organizations. The real victims were the people in the middle who had chosen to be refugees in the camps at the Thai border. But at that time in history — both for the Thai and the U.S. — the adversary remained the rump forces of Pol Pot and the government installed by the Vietnamese in Phnom Penh. The Cambodian anti-communist resistance at the Thai - Cambodian border was not united. Among them was Prince Ranarith. Sihanouk's oldest son, and various Khmer generals and officers who had been part of Long Nol's army. Some were decent people, but they could not prevail militarily against the Vietnamese-backed regime in Phnom Penh. Meanwhile, the refugee camps continued to grow in population, and the only hope for the refugees was resettlement in other countries. Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians. hill tribes, and to a lesser extent Vietnamese, were resettled with the help of both government services and NGOs, in North America, South America, Europe, Australia, and to a lesser

extent, in Asia. The role of the international community and of the United States was an example of humanitarian concern for our less fortunate fellowmen. Perhaps, we can today be sufficiently honest to admit that many of these refugees became homeless and in need of help because of the political, military, and strategic struggle between two different ideologies in Southeast Asia. Most of the refugees just wanted to find a place to live in peace and raise a family who will live a better life than they had, as a result of half a century of warfare In Southeast Asia.

The refugee problem, the camps at the Thai-Khmer border, the expansion of Vietnamese influence beyond its borders, also Impacted on U.S. relations with Thailand. The Thai needed us, and we in turn needed the Thai more than ever. The Thai had a special unit on the border whose job it was to ascertain that the Cambodian refugees would not slip surreptitiously into Thailand. The refugees were processed In the camps in an orderly manner by the immigration services of various countries to determine whether they could be admitted to some foreign country for resettlement. The refugees lived in these camps which were like a no man's land, with Thai troops stationed on the western side, NGOs working within the camps, and on the eastern side Vietnamese supported Cambodian troops from the Phnom Penh government keeping the refugees from drifting back. On top of that, groups loyal to Pol Pot tried to get food or whatever they could from relatives or sympathizers within these camps. The refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border added an international dimension to the bi-lateral relationship with Thailand.

Q: Let's talk about the role of the Chinese, the role of the CIA, the whole thing. Also, we might mention here that we will talk a bit about dealing first with Alexander Haig, and then George Schulz, and your relations with the State Department.

DEAN: At my posting in Thailand, my relationship with George Schultz appeared to me to have been always good. Before George Schultz came to the State Department, he was a very senior President of Bechtel in California. I had a good personal relationship with the Head of Bechtel for Southeast Asia who was stationed in Indonesia. He was a very nice gentleman with an attractive Afro-American wife. Both were competent. Bechtel received a contract putting up wire fences around certain U.S. military installations in Thailand. Furthermore, I had met George Schultz before he was named Secretary of State. At the time, we talked about my previous posting - Lebanon - and he seemed to know a lot about my work in Lebanon. Little did I know at that time that I was going to be working for him as Ambassador both in Thailand and in India.

As for Alexander Haig. I had worked for him in previous postings, I worked with Alexander Haig when he was Supreme Commander of NATO. At that time I was U.S. Ambassador to Denmark. With Denmark in NATO, we sometimes had his visit to inspect the northern flank of NATO. I should also mention that I had known Alexander Haig prior to Denmark, when he was Deputy to Dr. Kissinger and we did the peace negotiations in Laos. Later, as U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, I was grateful to Haig and his wife Pat for having adopted in the U.S. two Cambodian orphans. Also, Alexander Haig's father had played a significant role in the Catholic Relief Services in New York. You may recall that I worked very closely with the Catholic Relief Services in order to get their humanitarian help in Cambodia and Lebanon. I had known Alexander Haig's fathers past links to that organization. I got along well with Haig. This does not mean that we agreed on all subjects. But I think it was a comfortable relationship based on mutual respect. When I was

in Thailand, I went at least twice on official visits with Prime Minister Prem to the United States. One of them, I remember very distinctly. We were invited by President Reagan for lunch at the White House. The President was flanked on one side by General Haig, then Secretary of State, and on the other side by Mr. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense. At the table, I was the lowest-ranking man and I was expected to take notes on the discussion during the meal. Prime Minister Prem's English at that time was not yet perfect and he would sometimes ask for one of the Thai Ministers to whisper to him a translation. At one point during the meal, the President received a note from an American assistant who had entered the room. After a second message was handed to the President, Mr Reagan rose to his feet and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I have the sad duty to announce that the President of Egypt has been assassinated."

Q: Oh yes, Anwar Sadat.

DEAN: Anwar Sadat. As soon as the President sat down, Secretary of State Haig stood up and said: "Mr. President, we must move the Mediterranean fleet forward." There was silence. I don't remember what happened thereafter, but we finished the meal and briefly resumed our discussion of United States - Thai relations. The meeting broke up shortly after coffee. In my opinion, Haig's spontaneous reaction was motivated by his efforts to limit the possible political fall-out

both within Egypt and on the international scene - caused by Sadat's assassination. A few years earlier, when I was Ambassador to Lebanon and Haig was Secretary of State, Haig had called a regional ambassadorial conference in Jordan. At that meeting he was trying to obtain ideas on how to move forward in the Middle East. He asked for ideas on how to reduce tension between Palestinians and Israelis. My impression then was that Secretary Haig was more favorably disposed to the Israelis than to the Palestinians.

Q: We will pick this up. You have covered the background of the problems in Cambodia. We will talk about what you did dealing with the Cambodian problem, the Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge, the Free Cambodians, and the Vietnamese, and what your particular concerns and dealings with that were. We have covered Thailand pretty completely. Did you get involved in the great tobacco controversy about selling American cigarettes?

DEAN: I did. It was not an easy task. On the one hand, every cigarette package had a warning printed on its packaging that tobacco is not good for your health, while at the same time we were pushing cigarette sales for exports. My answer was to leave this job to the Economic Section which handled this hot potato very efficiently.

Q: I have interviewed Bob Duncan, who at one point had to do this. Bob is a heavy smoker, so he was able to...

DEAN: I guess everybody had to deal with this problem in his own way. Another example was American rice sales to Thailand. It was difficult to explain to the Thai why we had to sell subsidized rice from the United States into Thailand when the Thai themselves were selling their own rice, not subsidized, to the rest of the world.

Q: Also, it was different rice. It tasted different.

DEAN: Out trade problems were just beginning at that time. They are much worse today. In those days, it was our 301 legislation which permitted us to put quotas on imports from certain countries and/or impose tariffs on a strictly unilateral basis. This U.S. legislation caused a lot of grief in many developing countries and their doubtful legality made free trade more difficult as countries became more conscious of their own identity and sovereignty, and the need to compete on a fair basis with more powerful nations. It is obviously much more interesting for the American ambassador to assist an American telephone company to sell their switches, promote American advanced communications technology and biotechnology to enter the Thai market which help the development and modernization process of Thailand, than selling cigarettes or rice to Thailand. Quite often I would take my trade problems to His Majesty the King for advice. At one point, we were selling F-16s to the Thai military establishment; His Majesty said: "Mr. Ambassador, it would be better for Thailand if you would sell more bulldozers to our Corps of Engineers rather than more military aircraft. The Corps of Engineers, with their bulldozers to build roads, markets, schools, etc., might actually be a better way of fighting communism and insurgencies than Thailand acquiring more advanced aircraft." I tried to provide both. Yes, when you also represent U.S. manufacturing industries, there are some industries which are easier to defend and promote abroad than others. I ran into a similar problem in India with the movie industry. The Indians make more movies in India than Hollywood does in the United States.

Q: Let us turn to the problem of Thailand's reputation as the preferred destination of sex tourism. The fact that Bangkok by this time had a reputation of being the sex capital of the world, did this cause a problem for your embassy?

DEAN: It did not cause a problem for our Embassy but the Thai elite was very upset with this image. Some Thai ladies had started organizations to reeducate young prostitutes and teach them a trade with which they could earn a living. Many years later, I supported personally the sending of Thai cultural exhibitions to Europe and the United States, as for example, "Fifteen Centuries of Thai Buddhist Art". The idea was to promote a different image of Thailand around the world to replace the prominent role of sex in attracting world tourism to Thailand. We must also keep in mind that Bangkok's reputation for easy sex with attractive young Thai ladies was greatly enhanced during the Vietnam War when U.S. troops would be allowed to travel from Vietnam to Thailand for R&R. There is no doubt that Thailand was a great attraction for U.S. soldiers - many bachelors - as a break in the fighting where many soldiers risked their lives and their tomorrow. In this way, the U.S. military is no different from other fighting forces around the world. But let me return to this subject a little later, because the attitude toward sex, monogamy, and prostitution differs in different societies and time also brings about a change in attitude on these important issues.

Q: Today is September 15, 2000. How did Cambodia impact on your Embassy and on what you were doing?

DEAN: The largest number of people at the Embassy were involved in working with Cambodian refugees who had come from 1979 onward into Thailand. They were fleeing what was then the Khmer Rouge regime in Phnom Penh, which in turn was supported by the Vietnamese government. Above all, they fled the excesses of the ousted Pol Pot regime which had killed more than one million Cambodians between 1975 and 1979.

The American Embassy in Thailand joined other governments and Non-Governmental Agencies from many different countries in providing roofing, food, medicine, and even starting schooling for the refugees

in the border camps. These ad hoc refugee centers became fairly well established little agglomerations, towns, where youngsters went to school, mothers were helped by midwives, and medical care for all ages was available. Food rations were handed out to families. Unfortunately, the men did not know what to do. Some of them were carving small wooden artifacts which they sold. Some enlisted in the Cambodian anti-communist fighting force. The true nature of the Hun Sen regime in Phnom Penh was not known by the refugees in the camps, and often not by those supporting them.

Q: Hun Sen was anti-Vietnamese.

DEAN: No. Hun Sen had split with the Khmer Rouge of Pol Pot. One of the problems was that the brutal Pol Pot regime was highly nationalistic, claiming to be a modern successor to those who created the great Khmer Empire one thousand years ago. They recalled that South Vietnam had once been part of Cambodia and the Vietnamese only settled the southern tip of South Vietnam some 200 years ago. It is true that the Vietnamese had moved southward from Tonkin and little by little had settled South Vietnam (what the French called Cochin-China). The Cambodians under Pol Pot had harassed the Vietnamese on the Cambodian-Vietnamese border, something the Vietnamese resented. When the Vietnamese moved into Cambodia in 1979 in order to drive out Pol Pot and his henchmen, it was not perceived in the United States as an effort to punish the Pol Pot regime for their brutalities committed at home, or for attacking Vietnam, but as a Vietnamese effort to grab Cambodian land and expand their influence. Some critics even saw Hun Sen as a Vietnamese puppet

ruling in the exclusive interest of Vietnam. Personally, I think that one of the Vietnamese considerations for invading Cambodia was to kick out Pol Pot from the area near the Vietnamese border and to punish this regime for the brutalities committed against the Vietnamese living in Cambodia. Once Pol Pot had been kicked out of Phnom Penh and he had retreated to the hills in western Cambodia, the Vietnamese backed a breakaway group of Cambodians who were also Khmer Rouge but who had opposed the outrages committed by Pol Pot against his own people. In 1979, this pro-Vietnamese group of Cambodians were able, with the support of the Vietnamese Armed Forces, to gradually assert control over much of Cambodia. In 1979, when the refugees stumbled over the border into Thailand, they were sick with malaria; they were hungry, undernourished. Many had lost their loved ones - children, parents... In 1979, it also became evident to the whole world what had happened to the people of Cambodia under Pol Pot from 1975 to 1979. To some extent, it made U.S. support for the Long Nol regime before 1975 more understandable and the struggle against the Khmer Rouge more acceptable to the world. Critics of America no longer harped on U.S. bombing of "non-aligned" Cambodia before 1975, but focused on what followed the withdrawal of the United States from Southeast Asia in April 1975. Pol Pot and his gang had committed such atrocities and caused such unbelievable suffering among the Cambodians that the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1979 was approved by a number of countries around the world. The United States was not among them. We continued to oppose those who ruled Phnom Penh, especially since the U.S. saw Vietnam behind them. The fact that we had lost the war in Vietnam, and that the Vietnamese had installed a friendly regime in Phnom Penh did not sit well with American authorities, in Washington. We centered our effort in Thailand on helping the refugees on the border and in opposing the new masters in

Phnom Penh. The latter group included some of the senior officers who were still around from the Long Nol era. General Dindel was one of them whom I had known in Cambodia in 1974-75 and who continued struggling from the border camps against Cambodian communism. Since Prince Sihanouk was nominally the Head of the Khmer Rouge movement, I was personally more willing to help those Cambodians who favored putting an end to the tragic warfare which had devastated Cambodia for so many years.

Q: Am I correct that essentially it was a three-way thing? You had the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot. You had the Hun Sen Vietnamese-supported regime in Phnom Penh who also considered themselves to have been Khmer Rouge. Then, you had the anti-communist movement and groups from the refugee camps who fought both the rump Pol Pot followers in western Cambodia and the Vietnamese-supported regime in Phnom Penh whose forces had extended some control over Cambodian land, up to the Thai border.

DEAN: Yes. Basically, this explanation is correct. At the time, the division and separation between Pol Pot and his followers on the one hand, and the Hun Sen people supported by the Vietnamese on the other hand, was not that evident. The Khmer Rouge were nominally under Prince Sihanouk. One of the problems which I explained in an earlier chapter was that we did not have a good relationship with Sihanouk who was still residing in Beijing at the time. Sihanouk was still the symbol who rallied international support for the Phnom Penh regime and also gave any regime in Phnom Penh support among the masses in Cambodia. To a large extent, The Khmer Rouge were hiding under the umbrella of Prince Sihanouk. After all, Sihanouk had been on the throne off and on, and the real power in Cambodia since 1941! He either was King himself or he chose his mother or father to mount the throne. In real terms, he remained the Head of the Monarchy for the last 60 years. During my tenure in Thailand, some elements in Washington gave some support to one of Sihanouk's sons: Prince Ranarith, in the hope that he could give some legitimacy to the Khmer opposition in exile against the regime in Phnom Penh.

Prince Ranarith was a highly Frenchified Cambodian. He had been an assistant professor at a French University. He looked a great deal like his father, King Sihanouk. The relationship between Ranarith and his father was not always good.

At one point, Sihanouk left Beijing to travel in order to gain support for the Cambodian regime in Phnom Penh. He also came to Bangkok, where I was Ambassador. Knowing him from a previous era, I invited him to come to a big dinner in his honor at our home. For the occasion, I had invited Chiefs of Missions of the diplomatic corps whose governments recognized Sihanouk as the Head of Cambodia. It was also a way of showing my personal support for Sihanouk. You may remember, from previous chapters, that I had tried in December 1974 to have Sihanouk return to Phnom Penh to head a coalition government.

Q; What was our official... Did we recognize him?

DEAN: We certainty did not. I had known the man for many years, and many governments around the world had recognized him as the legal Head of Cambodia. When I gave a dinner for Sihanouk at my house in Bangkok, I would like to point out that the Thai Government had given him a visa to come to Thailand. While in Thailand, Sihanouk acted as Chief of State for Cambodia. Specifically, he went to the Thai-Khmer border and stepped about one mile inside Cambodian territory. There, he received the letters of credence of the foreign ambassadors who wanted to be accredited to his regime. He would receive the envoys in the jungle, on Cambodian soil, but he would serve cold champagne as he would have done in his royal palace in Phnom Penh. After the presentation of credentials in the middle of the jungle, near the Thai-Khmer border, he would toast the foreign ambassador who had presented credentials. Quite

a number of countries took the opportunity of Sihanouk's presence in Thailand to accredit their envoy to Thailand, also to Sihanouk, Chief of State of Cambodia. The period was 1983-84 and most people knew what the Khmer Rouge had done to their own citizens. Sihanouk quite openly criticized some of the acts perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge. But in the eyes of his countrymen, he always remained the father of his country. At certain meetings, Sihanouk even asked himself whether the Monarchy had a future in the long run in Cambodia. As for the question of succession, when Sihanouk came to our house in Bangkok, he was accompanied by his current wife, Monique, and a son from her. Sihanouk had many wives in his lifetime, and many children. His current wife, Princess Monique at the time, had a European father and a Khmer mother. She was a very beautiful, intelligent, woman and she continues still today to be active on behalf of many good causes in Cambodia. The son of Sihanouk and Monique became in the 1990s the Cambodian Ambassador to UNESCO.

Since we are on the subject of UNESCO, I might mention that upon my retirement from the Foreign Service In 1989, I was named by the Director General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor, his personal Ambassador for Cambodia. In that capacity, I returned to Cambodia in 1992 with the Director General of UNESCO for the purpose of protecting the cultural heritage and monuments of that country. In the course of a luncheon offered by Sihanouk, then King again, in honor of the Director General of UNESCO, Sihanouk spoke about who might succeed him on the throne. While expressing uncertainty over the future of the monarchy in Cambodia after his demise, Sihanouk opined that if a King was to remain a symbol of the unity of the country, he thought Prince Ranarith would be the wrong person. In his opinion, "Ranarith will never succeed me". I should add

that the Khmers at the border, fighting against the Vietnamese-supported government in Phnom Penh, were very much under the influence of a special Thai military force, that Thai military unit provided food, medicine, ammunitions, and weapons to the anti-communist Khmers, which in turn was supplied in large part by the United States. Prince Ranarith was a political symbol for that group.

Q: I am confused. We were opposed - or maybe not - to the Pol Pot group.

DEAN: Oh, very much so, and still today.

Q: But we were not fostering rebellion within Vietnam itself. We said: "Okay, You won. That's that." Is that right?

DEAN: No. The Cambodians in Phnom Penh were there with the military assistance and full support of the Vietnamese. As seen by Washington, the Vietnamese were expanding their zone of influence, promoting Marxism all the way to the Thai border. We opposed in the early 1980s the Vietnamese-supported Cambodian government in Phnom Penh. At one point, the Cambodian Government in Phnom Penh was sufficiently strong and self-confident that the Vietnamese military were able to withdraw their troops and only leave behind advisers. When I visited Cambodia in 1990 on my own, without anybody's blessing or support, Hun Sen was Prime Minister and it appeared to me to be an independent regime, probably marxist-oriented, but willing to work with everybody who respected their sovereignty and independence. In 1990, most of the support came from Russia and China. The Vietnamese armed forces or military were not visible. I travelled all around Cambodia in 1990. I was taken by helicopter to Sihanoukville, a port on the southern coast of Cambodia. I also travelled to various other towns in different parts of the country.

The Pol Pot diehards were still entrenched in the hills of northwestern Cambodia and in Pailin, near the Thai border, best known for being the mining center for blue saphires in Cambodia, renowned for their color and purity. The Khmer Rouge of Pol Pot had kept control over that area as a source of financing themselves. The role of the Thai military on the border was absolutely of cardinal importance to all parties. I do believe that during my tenure, the Thai were in support of what we were doing, but they also did not break off all of their links with the other side in Cambodia. I don't blame them, and such a policy was very much part of the Thai political tradition.

Q: In their support of the Cambodian Freedom Fighters - or whatever you want to call them - the Thai were obviously helping. But was this basically a Thai operation or an American operation? Who was the instigator saying: "Let's support this?"

DEAN: Generally speaking, the driving force behind the anti-communist policy in Southeast Asia was the United States. The Thai went along with it as long as it suited their interest (which I find normal). They always left a door open to a change in Thai policy if they found that U.S. strategy was leading nowhere. In addition, U.S.-Thai military links were close and mutually profitable. The Thai units on the border, supporting the anti-communist Cambodians, received U.S. material support, plus training, and at the same time they also protected their own country from unwanted immigrants or intruders.

But let us not underestimate the will of the Cambodian refugees and fighters who wanted to see their country under a more open, less oppressive regime. After all, many Cambodians on the border needed work and some of them volunteered for military service against the Vietnamese-supported, marxist, Cambodian regime. Conditions inside Cambodia

remained difficult for the average Cambodian under the Hun Sen government, until the Paris Peace Agreements brought calm and foreign assistance on a broad scale to Cambodia.

The fact that the anti-communist Cambodian resistance received food and pay in joining the fight also made a difference. Furthermore, a number of foreign countries felt that the Vietnamese occupation of part of Cambodia was against the interests of the Free World and had to be pushed back. This encouraged the anti-communist opposition. After the Vietnamese military had withdrawn from Cambodia, more and more foreign countries felt that the Hun Sen regime was much less harsh on the Cambodian people than the Pol Pot regime. Foreign observers inside Cambodia noted that the new masters of Phnom Penh wanted, above all, to reconstruct the country and to let people live. But since most western countries did not respond to Hun Sen's plea for help in the reconstruction of the country, the Phnom Penh authorities continued to rely on those countries which wanted to help them, i.e., Russia and China. When at one point foreign countries began to realize that the Hun Sen regime included many elements which were primarily interested in trying to find a way of dressing the wounds of a horrible genocide which had occurred under Pol Pot, some nations began to recognize the Hun Sen Government and send NGOs to help in that endeavor. When I returned to Cambodia in 1992, there were already a number of countries, including western countries, which had relations with the Hun Sen Government. The United States did not establish direct relations with Phnom Penh until after the signing of the Paris Agreement.

Q: What was our attitude towards Sihanouk? You don't have a dinner with somebody in diplomatic terms if you don't recognize him.

DEAN: I am not sure that I agree. After all, the host country, Thailand,

had a working relationship with Sihanouk. I had known Sihanouk since 1953 and I remained his friend even after the political situation changed. I don't think I am a "fair weather friend". I always felt that Sihanouk was a major figure on the East Asian political scene, and just because he opposed U.S. policy and was co-founder of the Non-Aligned movement was not a reason for me to take my distance from him after so many years of working with him.

Q: I can understand.

DEAN: So, I invited him for a dinner party at my house. We had lots of ambassadors there. The Thai authorities preferred Sihanouk to spend his time in southern Thailand, in one of the resorts, rather than in Bangkok. When Sihanouk arrived in southern Thailand, I sent him a couple of cases of American wine and some whiskey, with a note welcoming him to Thailand. Whether this was U.S. Government policy, I cannot say. But I was convinced that my friendly relationship with Sihanouk would help the United States in the long run. It did. At the end of the meal. Sihanouk stood up and said in French: "and now, Mr. Ambassador, I would like to sing for you." Sihanouk loves to sing. He sang "The White Lotus" which is a well-known Thai song. Usually, he sang sweet, romantic, melodious, tunes. He had a pleasant voice.

When I attended his 75th birthday party in Paris years later, where you had Khmer Rouge leaders rubbing shoulders with foreign diplomats and anti-communist Cambodians, His Majesty Sihanouk got up and said: "and for my friend, the American Ambassador, I would like to sing for him "The White Lotus". I dedicate this song to my friend, Ambassador John Gunther Dean." I would like to believe that the Paris Accord on Cambodia signed in Paris in the early 1990s is really another compromise

solution, as I had found in Laos in 1973, i.e., a coalition government in which Sihanouk plays an important role.

To those who criticize U.S. ambassadors who maintain contact with adversaries, let me cite here that, at one point during my tenure in Thailand, when we had no direct diplomatic relations with Vietnam, I received word from Washington to meet with the Vietnamese Ambassador to Thailand on a subject of great importance to PANAM Airways. The flight of PANAM from Bangkok to Hong Kong flew around Vietnam and therefore it took one hour longer to fly the distance. If PANAM could cross the Vietnamese airspace, it would shorten the flight by one hour. The cost of fuel for one hour for a large aircraft is considerable. I was able to negotiate directly with my Vietnamese colleague so that PANAM flew over Vietnam, i.e.. the shortest route to reach Hong Kong from Bangkok. It cost PANAM two used Boing-707 planes which were given in exchange for flying through Vietnamese airspace. Everybody was happy, including the U.S. Government.

When I left Bangkok in 1985, we were still very stand-offish with Vietnam and Cambodia, but not with Laos. We had maintained diplomatic relations with Laos ever since the arrangement I had helped to broker in 1973. Diplomatic links with Laos were never broken, even after our withdrawal from Vietnam and Cambodia in April 1975: The French and other countries who did have diplomatic relations in Phnom Penh began to say to us in the late 1980s: "Look, we've got to do something with Cambodia." I would like to believe it may have been a collective guilt feeling of many countries, that what had happened in Cambodia under Pol Pot was in part due to the failure of the civilized world to oppose the Khmer Rouge in the crucial years of the 1970s and they felt something had to be done

to get Cambodia back into the community of nations, with a future for the survivors of the Pol Pot genocide. Perhaps out of that feeling and out of that sentiment came the Paris Peace Negotiations on Cambodia in the early 1990s. The first effort which was made to bring the parties to a conference table failed. One year later, the peace negotiations on Cambodia got started in Paris. The key foreign diplomats were Pickering for the United States, and Levitte for France. These two diplomats held the pen on this entire negotiation. The agreement called for foreign troops to come in to maintain law and order. Also, a coalition government was established. Most of the money which was pledged went to pay for the foreign troops who did establish some order in the country. They also tried to fix the potholes in the roads, string communications lines which permitted contact between the different areas of the country, and brought back Phnom Penh as the control center for Cambodia. The Pol Pot regime had truly come to an end for most Cambodians. One of the first ambassadors to be sent by the United States to Cambodia was one of my former colleagues who started his career in CORDS, in Military Region One, as a District Adviser. His name is Quinn. Basically, the Paris Peace Accords did what I had done in Laos nearly 20 years earlier: establish a coalition government in Cambodia, with all factions represented.

Q: Let's get back to the time you were in Thailand.

DEAN: While Ambassador to Thailand, I started a number of projects which are still very much part of the Thai scene today. As a matter of fact, I am still involved in some of these institutions more than 15 years after my departure from Thailand. One of them was the Petroleum Institute of Thailand. I helped in its establishment with the support of the

President of the Union Oil Company of California, which was very successful in the exploitation and development of gas and oil fields in the Gulf of Siam. Our assistance took the form of providing funds, bringing American petroleum engineers to train Thais in that discipline, forming Thai technicians to work on platforms, and setting up a technical library for the Institute. The training program included also how to market the precious oil and gas, how to administer one of Thailand's largest industries. The Petroleum Institute of Thailand is today housed in a skyscraper of 34 floors. When we started this Institute with our Thai friends, this was a one-room operation. Obviously, whatever I did was inspired, financed, and supported by the very able Economic Aid Mission which was part of my Embassy. As I have stated so many times above, for the U.S. Government to be of assistance to countries in developing their own institutions so that they can become partners with foreign governments or corporations, used to be part of U.S. foreign policy in the post World War Two period. The developing world particularly appreciated that policy and usually responded with supporting U.S. initiatives on the world scene.

With another group of Thais I started the Management Institute of Thailand. The purpose of this Management Institute was not to teach accounting at university level, but to have Thai speakers go to the countryside and small towns and get shopkeepers and small businessmen to attend elementary courses on bookeeping. With this knowledge, they could then apply for loans from banks or government institutions, to modernize or make their businesses more profitable. The Institute was also a successful organization. It was, in part, financed by the U.S. Economic Aid Mission, but most of the funding came from Thais convinced of the need to reduce the economic differences between the urban and rural areas. The teachers of that Institution were able to reach Thais

who spoke no foreign languages, had relatively little formal education, but quickly learned how bookkeeping gave them access to the instruments of modem business.

Q: I just wanted to mention that how you keep books... There is a Marxist way of keeping books and you might say a western way of keeping books. By creating this Management Institute, it meant that we were making sure that Thais were looking at their economy in a rational way, without a political agenda.

DEAN: You are very right. I would like to use this opportunity to again pay tribute to our Economic Aid people at the Embassy who were imaginative in helping with limited U.S. means to assist in the development of Thailand's economy and human potential.

Q: Before we leave Cambodia completely behind, there was a book that came out (I think it was called "Betrayal") by Shawcross which had quite an impact. It concentrated on Cambodia. What was your feeling about it and its importance.

DEAN: Shawcross was very much involved in trying to sort out and explain the impact of the foreign policies of foreign countries on Cambodia and the Cambodian people. It is an excellent book on the background leading to the collapse of the Long Nol regime, the coming to power of the Khmer Rouge, and the responsibilities of the various actors or countries in this tragedy. It was written very shortly after the coming to power of the Pol Pot regime and without the benefit of the knowledge what Pol Pot was going to perpetrate. The movie "The Killing Fields", based on the manuscript by the New York Times journalist Sidney Schanberg, was an equally gripping book. The Dutch novelist Dieudonnee Tan Berge wrote in Dutch a book entitled " The Fall of Phnom Penh" which also was turned into a documentary on these fateful years. In 1975, Shawcross was critical of certain U.S. policies in Cambodia. It is my understanding that in his later writings he changed some of his views. In his book

written shortly after the fall of Phnom Penh in 1975, Shawcross gave pretty high marks to the American Embassy in Phnom Penh for trying to find a negotiated solution, but that Washington, and Dr. Kissinger in particular, were not interested in finding a "controlled" solution which I advocated. I met with Shawcross shortly after coming out of Cambodia, and he interviewed me. I admit that I was not particularly helpful to him because I had had differences with Washington on Cambodia and I felt it was not the time to wash our dirty linen in public. Shawcross did talk to other members of my team. As time went on, Mr. Shawcross became much more critical of North Vietnam and their policies.

Q: The wounds were a little too raw?

DEAN: I never did talk about Cambodia, except for helping a Dutch lady, Ms. Dieudonnee Tan Berge, to write a book on "The Fall of Phnom Penh" which she had witnessed as a Dutch journalist. Today is the first time I have talked on the record. There are people in Washington who hold completely different views from those advanced by Embassy-Phnom Penh and who are quite critical of U.S. policies in Cambodia and in Southeast Asia in general. These critics are both on the extreme right and on the far left. Some of the young critics and dissenters active in the early 1970s may have realized twenty/thirty years later that their position in 1975 was perhaps too radical and there was truth on both sides. As for some of the extreme American hawks, perhaps they still maintain today a certain nostalgia for war and the use of force to obtain their policy goals.

During my tenure in Thailand, I got to know a key person in the Reagan White House Mike Deaver.

Q: Deaver left at a certain point.

DEAN: He left towards the middle of the second term of President Reagan. I worked with him in Thailand during Reagan's first term. At one point, President Reagan announced that he was travelling to Thailand and to other countries, members of ASEAN. It was billed as a major trip, and the Presidential advance party came to Thailand to determine the exact program, where to go, with whom, and where was the best place for a "photo opportunity". I went to see the King and the Queen in order to ascertain in which events they planned to be involved. While I was back in the United States for final preparations for this Presidential tour of ASEAN, the President - for reasons that I was not privy to - decided to cancel the trip.

Q: I think part of the problem was the Marcos regime in the Philippines. The odor was coming up from that area. I think it was a factor.

DEAN: It could be. I don't know. As Ambassador to Thailand, I just knew the problems in my jurisdiction. It was decided in Washington that a team of Americans would fly to the area to limit the damage caused by the last minute cancellation of the President's trip. Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs, John Holdridge, Presidential Assistant Mike Deaver, and others climbed on Air Force One near Washington, and we all flew to Singapore. From there, most people went to the post they knew best. From Singapore, I caught a commercial flight to Bangkok. Shortly after my arrival back at post, I asked for an audience with Their Majesties in order to explain that President Reagan would not be able to come to East Asia, and the visit would have to be indefinitely postponed. In order to avoid bad feeling because the Thai had made elaborate preparations for the visit, and that the

cancellation would not be misinterpreted as a lack of interest in ASEAN countries, I went out of my way to highlight U.S. efforts to support the economic, social, and military development of Thailand. With the Petroleum Institute, and with the Thai Petroleum Authority, I helped them find a compromise solution with the Malaysians to sharing the offshore petroleum/gas deposits in the Gulf of Siam. The problem was that the oil/gas deposits in the Gulf of Thailand were partially in Thai waters, partially in Malaysian waters. The solution carried out by the Union Oil Company of California was that the two countries shared the production 50/50. This formula is still in effect today.

Q: Several questions. During the time you were there, how were the Thai viewed? How were their relations with China, with India, with Vietnam, with Burma?

DEAN: Thailand has always been the balancer. In the period 1981-1985, the Thai began to look at China as a market. Up to that time, they had worked exclusively with Taiwan to the mutual interest of both parties. Then, gradually, the Thai made a few investments in mainland China. Some of the Chinese-Thai business people started corporations in mainland China and began to balance their relationship with Taiwan. The Thai see mainland China as a huge colossus and they have to live with that giant. They have done so for over a thousand years and will continue to do so in the future.

As for India, Thailand was not a non-aligned country, while India was the leader of that political orientation. The Thai considered themselves, ethnically, closer to China than to India. The rather large Indian community in Thailand was largely involved in the textile trade. Indians mostly married among themselves. On the other hand, the Thai intermarried

quite freely with the Chinese.

Burma was an enemy of Thailand at one point in their history. Many of their famous drawings and pictures depict fighting between Burma and Thais on elephant back. As Thailand developed more rapidly than Burma after the Second World War, Burma no longer loomed as an adversary, but more as an economic competitor. The Thai remained always a little leary of Burma because Burma, unlike Thailand, is a country of many ethnic groupings and does not have a royalty to give unity to the various populations. This made the Burmese military believe, since independence from Britain, that a firm hand is needed to keep the internal situation under control. In America, we are inclined to criticize military regimes as undemocratic. I am not an expert on Burma, nor am I an apologist for the military, but there are many different ethnic groupings in Burma resisting control from Rangoon. In the northern part of Burma, the remnants of Chiang Kai Shek's army had taken control. The Shan people in northern Burma had been granted by the British a certain amount of autonomy and were ethnically and culturally different from the Burmese. You also had significant Indian influence in Burma who had been brought to Burma by the British colonial administration. People in the south of Burma are different again. The Thai-Burmese relationship was also adversely affected by Burma's inability to stop certain elements in opium refining and drug trading. But the Thai are realists. They know that Burma will be Thailand's western neighbor for eternity. As a result, I would say that both countries wish to avoid a deterioration in their relationship which could be mutually disadvantageous.

I have said a great deal about Thailand's relationship with Cambodia. But It must be remembered that many centuries ago Khmer influence permeated eastern Thailand. Khmer temples and ruins In Lopburi remain a reminder of that period. After the decline of the Khmer Empire, Thailand considered the Khmer province of Battambang and parts of western Cambodia to be vassals of the King of Thailand. The Paris Peace Agreement in the early 1990s brought some degree of law and order back to Cambodia. From that point, the Thai saw western Cambodia as their zone of influence. Many investments in the tourist centers of Siem Reap and Angkor Wat are Thai. In today's relationship with Cambodia, Thailand sees itself to be Cambodia's big brother.

In Vietnam, Thailand had provided troops in support of the U.S./South Vietnamese effort to stem the advance of communism In Southeast Asia. Thailand has always had a free economy. Vietnam only started moving in that direction in the 1990s. Thailand has been moving towards democracy for the last few decades. Vietnam has still some way to go. In Thailand, the civilian sector has come a long way in taking power away from the formerly all-powerful military. In Vietnam, the Party still runs the country, supported by the military. But, having been on the side of the losers in Vietnam, the Thai politicians did not take kindly to that. The United States withdrew from Indochina in 1975, and the Thai had to face the Vietnamese by themselves. I think at this point there developed a feeling in Thailand and other countries of Southeast Asia that they were first and foremost Asians and that they had to find a way of co-existing with each other. Colonialism and Imperialism are often based on the principle of "divide and rule". The defeat of "powerful America" by a small Southeast Asian country probably contributed to greater respect for the traditional Thai policy of balancing foreign Influences, and trying to work with all countries, regardless of orientation, provided it is also in the Asian country's interest.

After the end of the Vietnam War, the Thai political establishment also began to think in terms of developing ASEAN. The Thai supported Burma's entry into ASEAN. On the other hand, Burma being under military rule, was often criticized by Western countries for human rights violations. Thai foreign policy is often based on long-range considerations. Hence, in the post Vietnam War period, balancing the influence of the West with the growing power of China and Japan became an objective for Thailand.

ASEAN was another instrument for the small countries of Southeast Asia to stand up to the "Big Guys". From this point of view, Burma's membership in ASEAN made sense to the Thai. They spoke up for Cambodia's joining ASEAN. The Thai also supported Vietnam' s membership in ASEAN. I can only assume that the smaller East Asian countries felt that in unity lies strength and it also gave the individual members more clout working with big countries. ASEAN also gave individual members more self-confidence in their own national identity. While Thailand had never been colonized, Burma, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, and Indonesia had been under colonial influence for decades, if not centuries. By banding together under ASEAN, and maintaining their own national identity, they created a larger market, attractive to both domestic and foreign investors. The ASEAN idea, which had been around for some years, really took off after the United States withdrawal from Indochina. At first, ASEAN gave certain Western countries associate status, but quickly Japan and other Asian powers, for example South Korea, were asked to join the annual ministerial meetings. I realized during my tenure from 1981-85 that, while the United States still had a great deal of influence in Thailand resulting from our constructive role in the past, the time had come for Thailand also to work with other countries, and to reduce the American predominance. We encouraged the Japanese to be generous in their economic development aid to Thailand. More and more U.S.-Thai relations turned around military and security considerations, with the U.S. giving them top priority, while the Thai preferred projects which developed their economic/social potential.

Q: What was our attitude that you were getting out of Washington towards ASEAN? Were we looking at this as being really important or just a passing whim?

DEAN: Most American policies are based on good intentions and trying to promote the welfare of both the U.S. and the other country or region. After the post World War Two period, until quite recently, the United States was genuinely interested in promoting the development of friendly countries to which we were accredited, rather than exclusively American national interests. I call this period the golden age of American diplomacy. As for ASEAN, we gave a lot of scholarships for students from Asean countries. We were very active in the annual ministerial meetings. We recognized the strategic importance of the area, which coincided with the geopolitical importance our military attached to it. Thai ports received about 40 U.S. naval ship visits per year. Our armed forces trained their Thai counterparts in the latest technology. We worked with ASEAN in reducing growing, refining, and exporting of drugs. We found that the King's projects in that field were similar and supportive of our approach.

Q: Was there a concern in some of the upper reaches of the Thai Government, even among the members of the Royal Family, about the corrosive and destructive power of the drug culture? We have seen Colombia dissolve. We have enough problems with it in our own country, and certainly in Mexico. How did we see the corruption factor within Thai society?

DEAN: There always were people in every country that were corrupt and used this source of easy money as a way of acquiring great wealth, and with It, influence. I don't think this was a significant factor in Thailand in 1981-85 when I was there. A great effort was already afoot by the Thai themselves to replace poppy growing with other agricultural crops, to interdict smuggling, and to cooperate with the international and other organizations to bring this problem under control. There were undoubtedly some people involved in drug smuggling, but you will find

such undesirable elements in all countries, including our own. But the Thai Government, and the King and his family, were 100 % behind the effort to fight the drug culture in all its dimensions.

When you are involved in foreign affairs as I was for so many years, you also work with people whose job it is to find the flaw in a human being in order to exploit this flaw in your national interest. This shortcoming could be women, money, influence, whatever. What is this man's or woman's price and how can we use it to advance our overall national interest? As Ambassador, I knew those who pursued this line. Furthermore, when there is a producer of drugs, there is also a buyer and a seller. U.S. policy was one of trying to cut off the supply of drugs. I hope that the United States is equally zealous in prosecuting people in our own country who are involved in the clandestine importing, financing, and marketing of drugs. This is the complaint you hear when you listen to the producer of drugs: Why isn't the United States equally zealous about prosecuting and going after the buyers and traders in drugs in your own country. What about those who finance the purchase of large quantities of drugs in the United States? My reply was citing the great effort made by the U.S. authorities in all domains of the drug trade, but it usually did not satisfy those who wanted to be critical of the United States. Some of my Thai contacts might say: "Yes, we are trying our best, but we still have people in our own country who see drugs as an easy way of making money. ' By the way, the United States may have been involved in corrupting these very same people." Five or six years ago. two ministers in the Government of Thailand were told by the State Department that visas would be denied to them to visit the United States. The reason given was that they

had been involved in drug trading. To my great surprise, one of my colleagues from one of the many Intelligence agencies at my post, came to testify on their behalf against the accusations made by the Department of State. The Prime Minister of Thailand, knowing that he had a hot potato on his hands, did what most officials would do under these circumstances; he established a Commission to investigate the problem. The differences between two U.S. authorities played out in a foreign country caused a major domestic political problem for the Thai. After all, two Thai ministers had been denied access to the United States, one of the great allies of Thailand. A former American Intelligence operator had come from the United States to testify on behalf of the Thai ministers, but it did not change the position of the State Department. Dr. Thanat Khoman, former Deputy Prime Minister, long-time Foreign Minister of Thailand and considered the father of ASEAN was asked to be in charge of the Commission of Inquiry. In the course of the investigation, Dr. Thanat Khoman visited the U.S. Embassy, in Bangkok. Coming out of the American Embassy where he had long discussions with the Chargé d'Affaires, he was besieged by T.V. commentators and journalists who asked him what had transpired. Dr. Thanat Khoman explained that he was in charge of the Thai Commission of Inquiry to look into the allegations and would report back to the Prime Minister, and to His Majesty the King. After Dr. Thanat had left the Embassy grounds in his car, and as the television people were just packing up their gear, a young officer came out from the Embassy and said: "I just want to make a statement that the position taken by Dr. Thanat Khoman was not at all what was discussed at this meeting here at the Embassy." What a tremendous loss of face for Dr. Thanat Khoman who became even more anti-American than ever before. Yes. By

the 1990s, there were people in Thailand who blamed the United States for being partially responsible for the economic melt-down in 1997, which brought the Thai local currency of 26 baht to one U.S. dollar to 52 baht. (It has settled down now to somewhere around 40 baht to the dollar.) In any case, it was a devaluation of the Thai currency and it caused major problems for the Thai Government and the people. I am talking about these developments which occurred many years after my tenure in Bangkok because such accusations or talk about the United States would have been unheard of during my days. The change in attitude toward the United States came with time and perhaps was the result of a less constructive and generous policy by the United States toward Southeast Asia.

By the end of the 1980s Thailand had developed into one of the Little Tigers. The annual growth rate had been well over 5% and Thailand had made significant economic, social, and political progress. The United States had played a positive role in many areas over the years; in the fields of health, education, road construction, agriculture, commerce, finance, administration, and internal and external security. We had helped the country to move toward democracy, toward greater participation of the Thai people in controlling the future of their country. Thailand, a country of 60 million people is a success story in Southeast Asia. It has today a number of highly skilled people in the fields of medicine, technology, computing, finance, agriculture... you name it. Is corruption a factor? I think different civilizations have different ways of looking at this problem. What one culture may consider corruption, another may consider a gesture of hospitality. I do know that the Thai governments and their rulers are fighting the

kind of corruption that we, in the west, associate with that word. I regret, however, that the friendly, mutually beneficial relationship which did exist for more than 40 years in U.S.-Thai links appears to have given way to a less benign look at each other, and perhaps more of an approach "what's in it for me, and what's in it for you".

Q: You mentioned the development of Thailand. I Interviewed somebody who was saying that up until close to the period we are talking bout, close to the 1980s, you had two strains in the Thai economy or the Thai culture. The pure Thai, the upper-class, their kids took law degrees or other degrees, but not technical degrees. The Chinese tended to stick to business. They had not been pushing the technical side. It sounds like we gave great emphasis like this AIT and other things to move the Thai to the place where Asia was showing such great strength In the technical field.

DEAN: I think we helped not only in the technical field, but basically in every field. As for the question of the difference between the Thai and the Chinese Thai, I think most differences between the two groups have been reduced a great deal over the last thirty years. Except in the social context, they are now all Thais. Time has helped to integrate the Chinese immigrants into the Thai national community. The younger generation has no memories of mainland China. They grew up in a Thai culture, but maintain some aspects of Chinese culture, as all Chinese, regardless of where they live.

But I would like to mention one important factor which is probably more visible in Thailand than in other countries. The Thai upper-class, civilian or military, used to be trained In England until the 1960s. Many had attended Oxford, Cambridge, or Sandhurst. They were very proud of their links with the British academic establishment. The girls quite often went to France to study the arts, fashion, dance, painting or sculpture, in short, how to be an accomplished young lady.

For example, the sister of the King, Princess Galiani, upon her return to Bangkok, became professor of French literature. With the emergence of the United States as the preeminent power in the West, and with our increasingly important role in Thailand, we also influenced the destination of Thais wishing to study outside their country. The Fullbright Program and the many scholarships available in the United States made the redirection of the destination of Thais studying in the United States rather than in Europe feasible. Upon their return from the United States, civilian and military students alike, created in Thailand an organization which is still today America's best ambassador to Thailand: The American University Alumni Association. The building is located in Bangkok not far from the American Embassy. Thousands of Thais attended college or university in the United States since the 1960s. Most of them returned to Thailand at the end of their studies abroad and contributed to raising the level of excellence in all fields of endeavor. Today, the American-educated Thais constitute a major element in the friendship between the United States and Thailand. Many eminent Thais, over the last three decades, were educated in the United States, in engineering, medicine, public administration, science, technology, etc... Officers in the Thai Armed Forces often attended specialized training courses in the United States, including at the army, navy, and air force academies. It is this educational experience which may be one of the most durable linkages between our two countries.

Q: What about India? India, at this time, was beginning to strengthen its military power and develop a fleet in the Indian Ocean. Were the Thai at all concerned about India becoming a regional power?

DEAN: All relationships change with time. In 1981-1985, India was the President of the Non-Aligned Movement. Thailand was aligned with the

United States. Hence, India and Thailand pursued different foreign policies. They saw their national interests differently. Thailand today is less aligned with the United States than it was in my time. One must also remember that India was the great cultural and religious influence on Southeast Asia. It is there that Chinese culture from the north and Indian culture from the west met. That is why the region is known as the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, of which Thailand is a part.

Q: We are talking of 1981 - 1985.

DEAN: Yes. The cultural and spiritual linkage should not be completely neglected. Buddhism came to Thailand from India and Sri-Lanka and is still today a factor in Thai-Indian relations. Politically, the emergence of India in the 1950s as a great regional power created some problems for Thailand, especially in the Andaman Islands. In these islands, Thailand and India had conflicting interests regarding fishing rights, use of strategic sites coveted by the armed forces of both countries, etc... In modern times, the Indians had come to Thailand as traders. During my tenure, the Indians had a near monopoly on the textile trade. (The Indians held a similar position in Vietnam in the colonial days.) But the Indians in Thailand did not really intermarry with the Thai, as the Chinese did when they came to Thailand. Also, the two groups are physically quite different: the Thai people are not hairy, neither on the body nor on the face. Indians, and especially Sikhs, are very hirsute. The Sikhs have long beards, and tie their hair in a knot on top of their head. The chest of men are hairy. I don't think that these different characteristics helped to bring these two groups - Indians and Thais - closer together. Both Thais and Indians I talked with in Thailand are quite conscious of these physical

differences and make no bones about it. Furthermore, the Thai are considerably less numerous than the Indians and Chinese and this factor also affects Thai attitude towards Indians. In 1981-85, the Thai were about 48 million people. At that time, India had 750 million people and China about one billion people.

Thai attitude toward India varied. Some of the more educated Thai saw India as the champion of non-alignment, not taking sides between the United States and the Soviet Union. If one thinks of it, until the Second World War, Thailand had pursued a foreign policy which amounted to non-alignment between the English and French colonial ambitions in Southeast Asia. But after the Second World War, for reasons I have explained earlier, Thailand found herself on the American side and remained so until the end of the 20th century. The non-aligned movement lost its raison d'être with the collapse of the Soviet Union, but India remained aloof from the United States in the field of arms and weapons purchases where India continued to work with the Russians. (I will elaborate on this issue when we discuss my tenure in India.)

Q: In many ways, India talked about being non-aligned, but the Non-Aligned Movement was really aligned to some extent. When you look at it, in terms of the East-West confrontation, they were much more on the eastern side.

DEAN: That is your view. It may not be mine. I think we should add that subject to our discussion of India, my next posting. But permit me to say now that, for example, Nehru was culturally and sentimentally linked to the West. India, with Sanskrit, has always been the craddle of all western languages. Still today, in India, the English language, English law, English accounting practices, prevail despite the departure of the British from the Indian sub-continent, since 1948.

No, I honestly believe India was and remains truly non-aligned and uses this policy to advance its own national interests. Non-alignment does not mean that you have to be always with the United States 100%. When we refused to sell India spare parts for weapons we had sold to them, or ammunition for American weapons while they were fighting Pakistan for the "liberation" of Bangladesh, they felt that it was not the role of a seller to decide on a political basis when or whether the United States should honor the request for spare parts or ammunition for weapons the Indians had purchased. Dissatisfied with U.S. efforts to intervene in Indian foreign policy, the Indians replaced American combat aircraft with French aircraft. Non-alignment meant that countries could follow policies in their own national interests even if they differed from the policies of the two super powers. The Indians have always looked after their long-term national interests. It was a U.S. decision not to send spare parts and ammunition to India when they fought Pakistan over Bangladesh. Perhaps the United States decision was ill-advised. Certainly the sending of an American aircraft carrier facing Calcutta as a signal of American discontent did not enhance India's willingness to buy American military equipment for the next few decades. The result was India eventually turning to the Soviet Union to build in India a modern weapons manufacturing industry where India remained its own master. If a foreign country decides whether or not to ship spare parts or ammunition, the country that needs these items forfeits part of its independence. It is no longer a buyer/ seller relationship but the seller can impose his political will on the buyer.

Q: The real test of the Non-Alignment Movement came after the 1958 conference when the Soviets exploded a major atomic device. The Non-

Alignment Movement had been opposed to nuclear testing. From the way I gather, it came out saying "Well, the Soviet blast is not really bad, but an American test is bad."

DEAN: It's not my job to defend the Indians. I am just trying to explain a concept. Non-alignment does not mean being anti-American or pro-Soviet. After both the United States and the Soviet Union became nuclear powers, the Indians — a people of 750 million, with distinguished, internationally renowned scientists, and an industrial capacity, with their own raw materials — decided to make nuclear devices which permitted them to become masters of their destiny and pursue a foreign policy in the interest of their own people. That is not being anti-American; it is looking after Indian national interests. I would like to add that while India had conducted its own nuclear testing, India was also able to simulate on sophisticated computers nuclear explosions, something which was highly advanced for the time. As far as cooperation with the United States is concerned, during my tenure 1981-85, India had made available to the United States facilities which permitted the U.S. to monitor nuclear explosions and developments outside India. The American scientific establishment appreciated Indian cooperation in the nuclear and scientific field in general. I don't think that India's development of its nuclear potential was directed against one country in particular. It was a way to affirm its policy of development and a clear signal that India was determined to remain in charge of its own future and its own foreign policy. Why can Israel, in U.S. eyes, have a nuclear arsenal, and India not? To the Indians, non-alignment meant not taking sides in super-power confrontations but willingness to judge each issue on its merits. Furthermore, the merits of specific issues may change as time goes on. Non-alignment permits a country to re-appraise events and policy as time goes on, somewhat like the Supreme Court in the United States did on many issues. On certain issues,

the Supreme Court made decisions 100 years ago which were reversed as the world changed. Doing nuclear research and developing a deterrent for security reasons is basically an option for any country that has the means to do so. India today is certainly in a position to do so. Other countries will join the club. It is not by the U.S. saying "country A may have a nuclear deterrent, but country B may not, "that the issue is resolved. The situation may change in both countries so that they adopt opposite policies. This issue has been faced by all major countries since 1945, and can probably only be handled fairly by an international body, as for example the International Atomic Energy Agency or the United Nations. I doubt that a U.S. "diktat" is the correct way to approach this problem.

Q: Going back to the period of 1981-85, were you getting any feelings from your Thai contacts of disquiet about China and India in the area?

DEAN: Thailand is part of the Indochinese Peninsula. Thailand is caught between two giants in nearly all fields; culture, religion, economics, strategy, security... Both India and China are not adverse to expanding their zone of Influence. That obviously perturbed the Thai. In an earlier interview with you, I said that the Thai called for the Europeans to become more active in Southeast Asia in the 1990s in order to offset the growing Chinese Influence.

Q: Did developments in the Philippines have any impact on our role in the Philippines?

DEAN: Marcos was generally known as a strong-man regime, and not for its democratic tendencies or its incorruptibility. The United States usually sees the Philippines as a country where we have played a

constructive role for 100 years. We are proud of having given to the Philippines independence shortly after the end of World War Two. Most Philipinos had espoused our position during that conflict and fought with us during the trying days of the stand at Corregidor, until victory in 1945. The Philippines have always been perceived by other countries as being close to the United States in nearly every domain. Both sides were relatively comfortable in that position. The Philippines also had the legacy of Spain which made the Philippines, to a large extent, a Catholic country. In certain parts of the south, Muslims are in the majority. All this was known at the time of my tenure in Thailand. The efforts of some Philippine nationalists to close the large American base in the Philippines was also known. As far as I could see in the mid-eighties, the Philippine upper class who could make money under President Marcos did not have much of a problem with the Marcos regime. Some intellectuals and less privileged classes wanted the spreading of the wealth. Many groups in the United States - both civilian and military - never had any problem working with Marcos, until corruption got so bad that something had to be done to help the Philippines rid themselves of the bad image the country had acquired. There were elements in the United States who saw, In the economic sphere, that the "trickling down" policy under the Marcos regime moved too slowly, and the Pilipino masses became restless. This dissatisfaction in the economic and social areas among the Philipinos spread also to the religious realm where some Protestant sects competed with the Catholic Church for the loyalty of the rural people.

Turning to Thailand, the country was known for its tolerance, especially on matters of religion. One day, I had the visit in Bangkok of the

former Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, Mr. Kennedy. He was a Mormon. He came to Thailand in his capacity of an elder of the Mormon Church. He said: "John, I wish to explain to you a problem we have in Thailand. Many young American Mormons do their one-year missionary service in Thailand, explaining our faith and hoping that we can find people interested in our message. The Thai have suddenly decided to ask our missionaries to leave the country. Can you help?" Having heard his side of the story, I went to see the Secretary-General for Religions in the Thai Government, but finally ended up seeing the Prime Minister on this subject. He explained that in Thailand every religious denomination has to fall into a category. As examples of religious categories, he cited the Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Zen, etc... If you are Episcopalian, you belong to the Protestant group; a Baptist, to the Protestant group. If you are Presbyterian, you belong to the Protestant group. If you were Mormon, the Thai asked you to be part of the Protestant group. There was no special category for Mormons in Thailand. The Mormons claimed that they belonged to a separate group Mormons. The Thai replied!: "we have nothing against Mormons. But since visas for the Mormon missionary group had expired and they had refused to be part of the Protestant grouping, we asked them to leave Thailand." Mormons were not refused entry into Thailand, but like the others, they had to be part of a larger religious category set up in Thailand. The Prime Minister explained that American Evangelists had accepted to be listed under the Protestant category. The Shia, the Sunni, the Ishmaelites, had all agreed to be part of the Muslim category.

I went back to Mr. Kennedy and explained to him the category system for those Mormons waiting to exercise their religious duties in Thailand.

As far as I could see, there was complete tolerance once religious practitioners had accepted being placed into one of the religious categories outlined by the Thai authorities. Since the Mormon Church was holding out for a separate Mormon category and this was not available, the Thai suggested that first all Mormon missionaries whose visas had expired leave Thailand and go to a neighboring country. Once outside Thailand, the Mormon missionaries could apply for a tourist visa to enter Thailand. The Thai authorities indicated to me that if the tourists would also engage in the pursuit of their religious responsibilities, they would look the other way, until the category problem was resolved. And this is how it happened. There was no doubt that the Embassy had been helpful to the Mormons and the Thai to diffuse a problem acceptable to both parties.

Q: I talked to one of the elders of the Mormon Church in Greece. I explained to him that Article One of the Greek Constitution is "Thou shalt not proselytize". They just would not accept this.

DEAN: Thailand is tolerant. Most Thais are Buddhists. But if you walk around Bangkok, you will see Hindu temples, Catholic churches, Protestant chapels, Muslim mosques, and Jewish synagogues. The current Catholic Cardinal Archbishop of Bangkok is a highly respected Thai personality, particularly close to the Thai people. The Foreign Minister of Thailand during the late 1990s was a Moslem who studied in the United States. The southern part of Thailand is largely Moslem. Yes, I admire Thailand's tolerance in the religious field.

Q: During this 1981-1985 period, how did you find the Thai media, their influence, how they came out, and our dealing with them.

DEAN: In Thailand, one has to know who founded the newspapers, who owns

them, and who is behind the publication. The "Bangkok Post" was started by Americans and Thais who were involved with the OSS. That publication was friendly to the United States. It has a good group of foreign correspondents and good management. The people who founded the "Bangkok Post" are dead. Nonetheless, that newspaper remained a moderate, internationally oriented publication, which has influence even outside of Thailand.

There was, and still is, an English language competitor, "The Nation" which is perhaps more nationalistic in its orientation. Some people say that "The Nation" looks at any problem from the Thai point of view and is less globally oriented. It is a high-class newspaper and does not shy away from taking a stand on sensitive issues.

Then you have "Thairat", and many Thai language newspapers which are basically similar to the news media in England and in the States. They are more focused on strictly local, often quite parochial, news as for example who won a boxing bout, a soccer match, or who won the Miss Thailand Beauty Contest. These publications invariably defend the Thai position, whether good, bad, or indifferent, and enjoy a wide readership in Bangkok and up country. Foreign affairs is not of great interest to the readership.

Television is different again. Stations or chains are often owned by very wealthy businessmen who then side with political parties in Thailand. They have their choice among the Democratic Party, the National Republicans, the Nationalist Party, the left, the right, the pro-Royalists, etc... Some of the TV stations are owned by wealthy Thais of Chinese origin. These stations often line up with the

government, whoever it is. They are always in favor of the current King.

Most stations will run American soap operas, dubbed in Thai, but lately, Thais have produced their own TV serials. American productions from the 60s and 70s are cheap and the Thai audience loves them. These American TV films are perceived by the Thai masses as a reflection of life in the United States, a country of opportunity. In the 1980s, the average Thai looked at the American people with sympathy. Sometimes, when the United States tries to sell rice from Louisiana to Thailand, or competes with cheaper Thai rice exports in a third market, the TV commentators may get upset with the United States. The highly educated Thais who have a certain sense of responsibility are often more critical when they think Thai long-term interests are not sufficiently taken into account by the United States or by any other country treading on their toes. This viewpoint is also reflected by the more serious commentators on Thai TV.

Q: How did you find through your USIA representative that you dealt with Thai-American problems?

DEAN: You must remember that the relationship between Thailand and the United States was a very old one. Our relations with most of Thailand's neighbors in Southeast Asia were more recent because they had been under colonial rule until after World War Two, like Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, etc. For example, USIS in my days gave publicity to the wonderful 19th century letter from the King of Siam offering to President Lincoln elephants to be used by the Union forces in our Civil War. He thought that the elephants could be used to what some years later was the role of tanks in World War One.

While in Thailand, I asked USIS, with the help of Thai scholars, to publish a book: "The Eagle and the Elephant". It was sent to every university in the United States. The book relates U.S. - Thai relations from the 18th century to the present (1985). It was a wonderful hymn to friendship and cooperation between our two countries. It had many photographs and the book is still much appreciated today. In "The Eagle and the Elephant" the United States is the eagle and Thailand the elephant. A very deft, sensitive group of Thais and Americans working at USIA put this book together and I am grateful for their contribution to long-run U.S. - Thai relations,

Q: Did you find that you were having trouble (this was early on in the Reagan administration - they came with their point of view, which is considerably to the right on the political spectrum) that particularly early on you were getting rather heavy-handed instructions: "Tell the Thai Government this - Tell the Thai Government that - Make them do this and that"? Did you have a problem with that?

DEAN: I never did have any problems with Washington. Sometimes I would suggest policies or actions to Washington, as for example the desirability of having Prime Minister Prem's tour of duty extended. Some Thai politicians criticized Prime Minister Prem for having been in office too long (since 1981). and some military were getting restless, saying: "Let's change the Prime Minister". But I admired the Prime Minister who was an honest man, pursued a moderate policy both on internal and external affairs, and enjoyed the full confidence of His Majesty the King.

Q: He was cutting out the sources of gravy.

DEAN; He was an honest, moderate man who also knew how to bring the Thai civilian sector to work with the Thai military. He was staunchly

pro-West. So, when there were some ramblings by some opposition elements to topple Prem, I asked Washington for instructions: "How do you feel about a change in the Thai Government?" The answer from Washington repeated the standard line: "We support the territorial integrity and the constitutionality of Thailand." I used that all-embracing phrase to make a speech in Chiang Mai in which I did not refer to any instructions but just stressed how well the American Government had been working with Prime Minister Prem, how Prem had emphasized in his dealings with the U.S. the importance of the economic, social, and military development of Thailand, and what a respected representative Prime Minister Prem had been for Thailand in his dealings with the international community. Prem remained Prime Minister until well after I left Thailand in the summer of 1985, After 8 years in office as Prime Minister, the King made Prem the President of the King's Council, an important and potentially powerful position.

Before I close this chapter on Thailand, let me say again how much I owed to others for the success of my tenure. I was fortunate in taking over the Embassy in 1981 from Ambassador Mort Abramowitz who had initiated many good projects and had pursued policies which I found easy to continue and endorse. I also had a good successor. Ambassador Bill Brown, who continued most of my ideas in Thailand. As for style, every ambassador has his own. In every post I ever served, I used sugar rather than vinegar. My deputies in Thailand, Stapleton Roy and Chas Freeman, were among the ablest Foreign Service officers in our country, and the outstanding careers they had after Thailand reflected the high esteem in which they were justly held. I cannot mention all the fine officers who served with me in Thailand, but I had a truly great team. My secretary who had followed me from Lebanon to Thailand

and later to India was responsible for much of the praise the U.S. Government and others heaped on me. Leona Nieman, from Michigan, was for more than 14 years my "guardian angel". For our children, she was known as "Aunt Leona", a member of our family.

How do I see the role of the American Ambassador? Primarily as a person committed to making friends and trying to bring foreign policies of the host country parallel to those of the United States. To the extent they are radically different, sparks can only lead to conflict and open up the possibility for others exploiting the situation to their own interest. I also see the Ambassador's role as a "doer" in the country to which he is accredited, not merely as a reporter writing messages to the home office. Within the Embassy Itself, I see the Ambassador as the coordinator of the various agencies and departments represented at the post. This was in Thailand a particularly difficult job. Some of the worst battles I ever had to fight were playing Solomon in turf battles within the Embassy among American agencies and departments. This could involve shipment of grain, investments, differences among Intelligence agencies, drug interdiction, and the role of different agencies in this effort. These differences could erupt over the analysis of the geopolitical goals of potential adversaries. Representatives of our own Armed Services could differ among themselves on who should do what with their Thai opposite members. Should the FBI operate overseas, or was that role the prerogative of the CIA? On all these kinds of problems, the Ambassador must take a position. The representatives of other agencies or departments within the Embassy often cabled back to their own backstoppers in Washington so that they could have support for their position. It is not always

easy to obtain a clear-cut decision from the National Security Advisor in Washington on all issues dividing different agencies and departments in the field. During my period in Thailand (1981-1985), I took many decisions in Bangkok, and if the top authorities in Washington disagreed, they would let me know. Judging from the letters I received from our leaders in Washington, and that I was selected for an even more difficult onward assignment, I can only assume that the Administration in Washington was not too unhappy with Embassy Bangkok under my leadership. I don't think it made any difference whether a Republican or a Democrat was in the Oval Office in Washington. Every nation has a national agenda and the ambassador has to try to advance these goals. If the ambassador is lucky, the President of the United States has long-term interests at heart and short-term domestic political interests are not carried over into foreign affairs.

Q: One last question before we finish this session and this time in Thailand. I hate to keep using the word, but I come back to the sex problem. This is not a minor thing when you are the Ambassador dealing with the American community. This was probably even worse with the German and Japanese Ambassadors. You have these people coming to Bangkok and Thailand for sex. This was a pretty well developed market for this during this 1981-1985 period. Did you have any particular problems?

DEAN: Let me put it this way: Sex is a universal factor and all people of the world are involved in it. But in addition to sex, there is also a cultural approach to the same subject. Some societies had polygamy. Thailand was a country which, I believe, until 1932 allowed polygamy. Thereafter, some men who could afford it, kept a 'mia noi', a minor wife -- we would say, in western terms, a mistress. A man could have the wife to whom he was married, and in addition, have a 'mia noi', a mistress. The minor wife had no legal standing, but the children born from that relationship had certain legal rights;

specifically children born from the official wife and the mia noi (there could be several mia nois) - all children - had the same right of inheritance. They were on an equal footing. I don't think that this concept is the same automatically in Western jurisprudence. The minor wife was usually not mentioned in the Last Will but would be compensated during her lifetime.

The approach to sex in Thailand was perhaps different from the Western attitude. Also, remember that even in the West, prostitution existed in most countries. Officially, prostitution existed in France until 1947. It was carried out in legalized houses. Bordellos following the French Armed Forces around the world existed until World War Two. The United States had perhaps a different approach to this issue harking back to our puritan days, although perhaps in Las Vegas that approach was looked at differently from the way it was looked at in Boston, in the 17th century.

What is one Important reason for prostitution? Go to Germany in the year 2002 and see who is engaged in prostitution. Mostly poor women from Eastern Europe and Russia, lining the roads hoping for a car to stop and pick them up, so that they can make some money in order to survive. Prostitution is as old as mankind. We still have legalized prostitution in Western Europe in our lifetime - for example Holland. What I objected to, as U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, was the involvement of minors -- i.e., children of American employees -- in sexual activities which, in addition to everything else, might be prejudicial to the image of the Americans at the Embassy. Let me explain.

As President of the American High School of Bangkok, I was faced one

day with the following problem: a 14-year-old girl attending the American High School, good-looking and rather precocious for her age, had been "discovered" by a gentleman aged 60 who had taken a fancy for this young lady. The father of the young girl was an American employee of USAID, part of the U.S, Embassy in Bangkok. Every afternoon, after school was out, a large black limousine was waiting for her and she was driven to the house where the gentleman in question covered her with jewelry and gold for having the favors of this 14-years-old girl. The Rector of the American School came to see me and told me that the class mates of the girl had become aware of this daily routine and that her comportment had created a problem In the school under his direction. What could I do about It? I said that this kind of question was usually handled by my Deputy, the DCM. I would talk to him and he would let you know. My Deputy at the time was Stapelton Roy, one of America's great FSOs, the son of an American educational missionary in China. I was confident that such a discussion would lead to a good solution. I suggested to Stape Roy that since the father of the 14-year-old girl worked for the American Economic Development Agency (AID), we could have him transferred, and his family would have to leave with him. While it was not my job to intervene in the sex life of dependents of employees of the Embassy, it was my job, as Honorary President of the American High School, to see that this kind of problem did not adversely affect the reputation of the school, or other students. When we explained the situation by phone to the appropriate officials in Washington, the father of the girl was transferred to another post. The entire family left within a month.

To the extent you are in charge of 680 Americans on your staff and

some are single, I found that the best thing I could do was to set a good example. My wife and I did just that and hoped that it would be followed. But I could not call in an employee, a bachelor, just because he had a Thai girlfriend. My attitude on sex has always been that, as representative of America abroad, I must set a good example. I think this was also the case in Thailand.

Q: Let me stop at this point. We will pick this up in 1985 when you are off to India. We will talk about how the appointment came out and your experience there.
