

THE FIRST AMERICAN ADVISERS IN THAI HISTORY

by

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I

The eventful forty-two year reign of King Chulalongkorn of Thailand (1868-1910) was a landmark in Thai history. It was the period that Thailand began to develop herself into a modern state, with the abolition of extraterritoriality (extraterritoriality), the negotiations of treaties, the reform of law and judicial administration, and the reorganization of governmental agencies. The achievement of these aims was, in fact, partly due to the work of the "foreign advisers" who shared roles in the affairs of this small Asian country.

In 1868, when King Chulalongkorn came to the throne, he was only fifteen years old. The King was under the "supervision" of the Regent who was the head of the most influential noble or ministerial family in the early Bangkok period. Being a nominal authority himself, the King was furthermore confronted with some other problems, for example, the loose structure of administration and the fact that Thailand's independence was being threatened by the two strong colonising Powers, England and France.

King Chulalongkorn believed that the maintenance of internal stability was essential in the face of threat. He also believed that the monarchy was of prime importance for the progressive development of the country. Therefore, the King's first effort was to strengthen the power and position of the monarchy. Once that institution was secure, the King took further steps to lead the country towards modernization. The best he could do was to groom new men who had both initiative and a strong sense of responsibility. But the major obstacle to modernization in Chulalongkorn's time was the lack of able and responsible men capable of taking on constructive jobs. True, there were some capable men like Prince Dewawongse and Prince Damrong, his brothers, and

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some of his cousins, but they were far too few. Explaining the situation, the King concluded :

“ Our country lacks nothing more than human resources . . . ”¹

“ Our men are really useless, they are useless not because they run out of energy or are incapable but because their knowledge is totally non-existent . . . ”²

Time did not allow the King to wait to develop human resources. Thailand urgently needed internal reforms to maintain her strength and security. The threat against her independence was imminent. She was having serious difficulties with France which was then settling firmly in Indo-China. The French ambition was to secure complete control of the great river Mekong which, for part of its course, formed the boundary between French and Thai territory. The result was constant friction between Thailand and France, in which jealousy between Great Britain and France also played a part. British activities in the Shan states to the north of Thailand had aroused the suspicions of the French who concluded that the British were contemplating a movement from the Shan states eastward across the upper reaches of the Mekong into Laos. In the midst of these troubles, the Thai Government had to find a solution which was to be friendly with the colonial neighbours and to draw advantage from the rivalry existing between them and from the country's geographic position in order to reach more favorable negotiated settlements. The best means to avoid a crisis was to look for foreign advisers whom Thailand could rely upon and whose advice the country badly needed. King Chulalongkorn gave as his reasons that :

“ . . . to employ foreigners is like having ready-made textbooks. It means that we have in hand men whose qualifications have already been proven and guaranteed. ”³

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- 1) King Rama V to Phya Visutsuriyasak, Jan. 21, 1899. *Phraratchahathlekha lae nangu krap banghom tun khong chao phraya phrasadet surenharathibodi r.s. 113-118* (Correspondence between King Rama V and Chao Phraya Phrasadet Surenharathibodi 1894-1899) (Bangkok, 1961), p. 294.
 - 2) King Rama V to Phya Visutsuriyasak, Feb. 3, 1899, *Ibid.*, p. 306.
 - 3) *Ibid.*

The tradition of foreign advisers and officials was an old one in Thailand. As early as the sixteenth century Indian legal experts were called in to revise ancient Thai laws, and in the seventeenth century a Greek and a Japanese were employed as chief ministers of King Narai and King Songtham of Ayudhya, while many Englishmen have been in governmental service. However, it was during the reign of King Chulalongkorn that the important Departments became full of foreign advisers and experts. Among these advisers, the British formed a majority as a tradition. They penetrated all the branches of the civil service, being appointed to the Ministries of Finance and Commerce, including the Mint, Internal Revenue, and Customs and Excise Departments, the Ministries of the Interior and of Lands and Agriculture, comprising the Land Registry, Survey and Irrigation Departments, and, in addition, the more important posts in the Ministries of Education and of Local Government, and the Department of State Railways.

Other nationalities were Danish, Italian, French, American, Portuguese, Dutch, Russian, Belgian, Norwegian and Spanish. But they, of course, formed a minority. The Danish served mostly in the marine and police departments. There were Danes in the navy from the time of the eminent Admiral Richelieu, the Danish adventurer, who came to Thailand during the reign of King Chulalongkorn and made a brilliant career while amassing enormous wealth in Thailand. The Italians were chiefly architects and engineers. They were given posts in the Palace Works Department of the Ministry of the Royal Household. The French shared work with the British in the Ministry of Justice, while there was a written agreement that the city engineer in Bangkok would always be of French nationality. Apart from that, other nationalities seemed to find themselves in the Thai Government service by accident. For example, in 1918, there were two Russians. One was a school-mistress and the other a railway employee.⁴

4) In 1907, the total number of foreigners employed in the Thai service was as follows :

British	126	Danish	} 39
French	5	Swedes	
American	4	Norwegians	
German	36	Japanese	9
Italian	12	Dutch	11
Belgian	5		

From British Foreign Office Papers 371/333 No. 9761 (Hereafter cited as F.O. 371/333)

Among these positions, there was one post which was regarded as above and beyond the influence of any office. That was the post of General-Adviser whose functions embraced foreign policy, home legislation, finance, and the general order of the country.

The office of General-Adviser was created in 1892 with the appointment of a distinguished Belgian jurist and statesman, M. Rolin-Jacquemyns. Formerly, there were individuals acting as consultants and formulators of some policies. For example, Henry Alabaster, a British Consul during the reign of King Mongkut (1851-1868), was called back from England in the first few years of King Chulalongkorn's reign to become the King's personal secretary. His work dealt directly with correspondence and there is evidence that he had some part in the restructuring of governmental organization and in the formulation of policies. Upon the death of Alabaster in 1884, the Thai Government had to find a replacement. At first Mr. Mitchel Innes, an English barrister, was hired but he was too aggressive and unpopular with the Thai.⁵ It was also during this period that the difficulties between France and Thailand were approaching a rupture of relations. The Thais had to seek help from outside, and the natural consequence was that they tended to rely upon an unbiased nation. King Chulalongkorn remarked that :

“... our friendliness towards both France and England can cause us concern when coming to the question of appointing our advisers. If we appoint a British as an adviser, the French will be very concerned about this, or if we appoint a French to such a post, this will also cause concern among the British. Therefore if we choose to appoint some national of a neutral country... things will be easier.”⁶

As a result a Belgian was called in. Rolin-Jacquemyns remained in his post for nearly ten years. He resigned in 1901 because of poor health.

After a Belgian, an American came to take his place and there followed an unbroken succession of Americans as General-Advisers to the Thai Government until 1916 when the title was reduced to that of the Adviser in Foreign affairs.

5) *Sarn Somdet*, (Correspondence between Prince Naris and Prince Damrong) (Bangkok, 1958), Part 44, p. 41.

6) National Archives, Fine Arts Department, Bangkok, 5th Reign, File T. (ต. ศัง ประเทศ), Vol 2/1, Prince Damrong-Prince Dewawongse, January 30, 1891. (Hereafter cited as NA. R5)

II

The three American General-Advisers, sometimes referred to by foreigners as the "original modernizers" of Thailand and, at times, as "American Kings of Siam," were Edward H. Strobel, Jens I. Westengard and Wolcott H. Pitkin. Strobel was appointed in 1903 and on his death in 1908, was succeeded by Westengard who served until 1915. Pitkin followed Westengard, first as Acting General-Adviser and, after 1916, as Adviser in Foreign Affairs.*

The choice of Americans as chief advisers came for several reasons. In the first place, Thai officials felt certain that there was no political motivation behind the Americans' efforts. Prince Devawongse, the Thai Foreign Minister for 38 years, confided that Thailand turned to America because "there is no danger from America of annexation".⁷ The Thais thought that it would be wise to employ Americans, whom they always regarded as "the nationality of future" and "the disinterested friends" in the work of developing the country. They realized that they had to call in the new world to hold the balance between two parts of the old.⁸ King Chulalongkorn said :

"When *Chao Phya Apai Racha* (Rolin Jacquemyns) was still in office he could see all injustices Siam had to bear and could not ask help from any country. A country like Belgium could not help us because she always has to depend on England and France while our suffering means nothing to her. I believe that had *Chao Phya Apai Racha* been American, the American government and all the Americans would have been quite concerned with his ordeal."⁹

* The exact dates are : Edward Henry Strobel, General Adviser to His Majesty's Government and Minister Plenipotentiary, Dec. 8, 1903–Jan. 15, 1908, died in office; Jens Iversen Westengard, Assistant Secretary at the Foreign Office, then Acting and later General Adviser to His Majesty's Government, Aug. 1, 1903–Aug. 14, 1915; Wolcott Homer Pitkin, Acting General Adviser, and later Adviser in Foreign Affairs, March 10, 1915–October 26, 1917.

7) *Reports of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Siam 1910-1929*. Microfilm No. 729, Roll 6, United States Archives, (Hereafter cited as US Archives 729/6) No. 892. OIA/33, Ingersoll-Secretary of State, January 2, 1918.

8) *The Spectator*, (London), July 20, 1903. Editor's reply to correspondence from "K."

9) NA. R5, File T. 2/1, Phya Suriya-Phya Akaraj, June 10, 1902.

In the second place, the attitude of the Americans toward the Thais was usually a less condescending one than that of some Europeans, particularly the British who had an attitude of superiority toward Asians whom, no matter what their social, educational or other qualifications, they refused to regard as social equals. In the third place, there was deep gratitude on the part of the Thais for the important educational and medical work which the American Presbyterian missionaries had done in Thailand. In the beginning of the 20th century the number of Americans in Thailand was 125, of whom 113 were engaged in missionary work. It should also be remembered that when the mission was established in Thailand in 1840 there was practically no education or medical treatment available along western lines.¹⁰

The policy of employing expert American Advisers was entirely the voluntary decision of the Thai Government, and the selection was made solely on merit. There was no pressure of any kind exerted by the State Department in Washington or by the American Legation in Bangkok.¹¹

The choice of Strobel was made through the recommendations of Phya Akaraj Varathon, the Thai Minister in Washington, and the American Secretary of State, John Hay.¹² Strobel was recommended because of his excellent academic record and his wide experience. He was Professor of International Law at Harvard, on the faculty of the law school for eight years and had been in the diplomatic service. An American newspaper said of Professor Strobel :

“He is a recognised authority on international questions and his mastery of the subject while in the service of the country at various Embassies led to his selection for the professorship at Harvard.”¹³

Strobel had travelled extensively in Europe and South America and spoke five languages. The Secretary of State, the Thai Minister in Paris and the Thai Crown Prince, who was studying in London, were asked to

10) *Records of the Department of State relating to the Political Relation between Siam and the United States 1910-1929*, Microfilm No. 731, United States Archives, (Hereafter cited as US Archives 731), Charles H. Albrecht—Department of State, February 21, 1925.

11) US Archives 729/6 N. 892, OIA/19, Hornibrook—Secretary of State, December 14, (1915).

12) NA. R5, File T. 2/2, Phya Akaraj—Phya Suriya, September 30, 1902.

13) Cited in *Singapore Free Press*, February 31, 1907.

investigate Strobel's personal manners. Strobel came to Paris for an interview in 1902. Soon after, a contract was signed in Paris between Strobel and the Thai Government. The salary was 3,000 pounds a year, in addition to which a residence was provided and travel expenses to and from Thailand were paid. The contract at first was for two years only, at the end of which time, if both parties were agreeable, the contract could be renewed.¹⁴ Strobel continued in the post upon the expiration of the first period and served the Thai Government until his death in early 1908.

Westengard became the General-Adviser through promotion. He had been for some years a teacher in the Harvard Law School and was always regarded as an exceedingly able man. Westengard was a friend of Strobel. He came to Thailand in 1903 as Strobel's assistant and acted as Strobel's substitute during the latter's leave of absence. It was by virtue of this experience that he became the General-Adviser.

While Westengard was on leave of absence in the States in 1909, he received instructions from the Thai Government to bring back one or two Americans to be his much-needed assistants but he failed to do so.¹⁵ It was only upon his return from leave in 1914 that Westengard made two or three unsuccessful attempts to secure the services of a suitable person to follow him. He finally selected an American lawyer, Wolcott H. Pitkin Jr. Pitkin was a former Attorney-General in Puerto Rico. He came to Thailand in early 1915 as Assistant General-Adviser and became the Acting General-Adviser a few months later when Westengard resigned from the service to take up the Chair of International Law at Harvard University.¹⁶

Pitkin signed a one-year contract with the Thai Government. Upon its completion a new contract was signed for a second year's service in 1916 but the title of the Office of General Adviser to the Thai Government was altered to that of the Adviser in Foreign Affairs, though practically this Office continued as before with all the related responsibilities, duties and powers.¹⁷

14) NA. R5, File T. 2/2 Part 1, "Papers concerning the employment of Mr. Strobel", October 21, 1903.

15) US Archives, File 12293/1, Mr. King-Secretary of Strobel, March 3, 1908.

16) F.O. 317/2464, Crosby-Grey, No. 53, April 26, 1915.

17) US Archives 729/6, No. 892, OIA/24, Hornibrook-Secretary of State, April 3, 1916.

The responsibilities of the General Adviser were wide. Rolin-Jacquemyns explained his role as follows:—

“... his (General-Advisers) functions do not by themselves involve any particle of executive power. And it is better that it be so; because the General Adviser has to consider himself as a disinterested friend, who had to look everywhere, to the utmost of his ability, for what may promote justice and public works, without any pretension to public power for himself personally. His functions are thus merely consultative, but they are so in the broadest sense of the word, because they may give his advice about suppression of abuses or introduction of desirable reforms, without waiting to be consulted either by His Majesty or by his Ministers . . .”¹⁸

In 1903, with the arrival of the two Americans, Strobel and Westengard, the role of General-Adviser became increasingly important. As the British Consul in Bangkok at that time reported to Sir Edward Grey, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary:—

“With the introduction of M. Rolin Jacquemyns as the first General-Adviser . . . the management of foreign affairs passed to a certain extent into the Advisers hands. But the Belgian had neither the breadth of view nor the tact to gain entire confidence . . . since the arrival of the American Advisers the relations of the foreign Representatives with the Siamese Government have undergone a complete change . . . the whole conduct of foreign affairs has now passed into the hands of Strobel.”¹⁹

In a letter to President Eliot of Harvard University Strobel gave “as complete an account as possible” of his work in Thailand. Excerpts from his long letter reveal his role and his style:—

“The post is one of great importance. The King, as soon as I arrived, appointed me General Adviser, which gives me supervision not only over foreign relations but over all the departments of government. The work may, therefore, be divided into three heads:

18) NA. R5 File T. 2/3, Rolin-Jacquemyns-Numa Droz, June 10, 1899.

19) F.O. 371/333, General Report in Siam for the year 1906, Paget-Grey, May 27, 1907.

(1) Foreign Relations; (2) Legislation and Internal Reforms; (3) Opinions

(1). Foreign Relations—Under this head the relations with France stand first in importance I took charge of the negotiations, and after more than three months of very difficult work I succeeded in having the treaty signed My plan has been to be personally on as friendly relations as possible with the foreign representatives here, and to settle all questions (wherever it is possible) unofficially. I also go to the Foreign Office every afternoon and see that correspondence is promptly attended to. The result has been that all questions which were pending on my arrival have now been disposed of and the complaints of the foreign representatives largely resulting from delay and neglect of business, have entirely ceased

(2). Legislation and Internal Reforms.—There is here a great field for good work, not only in an improvement in the Siamese general law but also in securing the enactment of special legislation The system that I have introduced is quite different. I now consult the foreign representatives beforehand and take up the provisions of the Act that I wish passed, with them unofficially. The result is that I think I shall shortly be able to have passed a Companies Act, Harbor Regulations Act, Hackney Carriages Act, and a Secret Societies Act. I hope to get these through before the end of the year, and this is only the beginning The principal reforms which I would like to accomplish would be to reduce the gambling

(3). Opinions.—Questions are daily sent to me for opinion, some referred to me by the King himself on general policy, as, for example, the advisability of making a foreign loan, upon which I have just had to make a long report. Cases also come from the different Ministers upon questions arising in their departments and upon claims against their departments. A number of these cases had accumulated before my arrival. These I have disposed of, but the regular work under this head requires considerable time and labor. . . .²⁰

20) Quoted in Kenneth T. Young, "The Special Role of American Advisers in Thailand 1902-1949", *Asia* (New York, No. 14, Spring 1969,), pp. 12-13,

III

It is impossible to understand and to appraise the work of the General-Adviser without some account of the foreign relations of Thailand which resulted in the British Treaty of 1855 and the treaties which were modeled upon it in succession to 1870, for it was to the modification of these that a very large part of the efforts of the General-Advisers were directed.

By the treaty of 1855, called the "Bowring Treaty," Thailand agreed that all British subjects in Thailand should be exempt from the jurisdiction of Thai courts and that Thailand would never raise its import tariff on British goods beyond three per cent. Neither of these provisions was felt to be burdensome at the time. Consular jurisdiction seemed a measure wisely framed to meet the exigencies of a day when Thai courts knew nothing of western justice or western ways, and a three per cent import tariff was then amply sufficient to provide for the simple needs of the undeveloped state. But, with the expansion of western power into the countries neighbouring Thailand, the whole situation changed. Asians claiming foreign protection became the *protégés* of the treaty nations and thus were invested with all the privileges of the Europeans. They were subject to their own consuls and not to Thai law. This system of extraterritoriality (extraterritoriality) thus constituted a real grievance in Thailand for in no other country where foreigners were by treaty excluded from the jurisdiction of the local courts did Asian *protégés* of treaty nations receive such exemptions. Also the commercial restrictions, such as the three per cent tariff limitation became intolerable. As progress cost money, internal reforms of Thailand were slowed down by the inability of the country to finance improvements as a result of the fiscal restrictions of the early treaties. Practically speaking, with the attainment of modern methods of Government, Thailand became imbued with the thought of abolishing all unequal treaties.

With the era of American Advisership, the future of Thailand became more hopeful. Handicapped by none of the questions, territorial or political, that affected the European advisers, the American Advisers were in a position to estimate accurately the true political interests of

Thailand. They knew the Thai position was dependent on the goodwill of Britain and France; they also knew that Thai policy had to be subservient to British and French interests.²¹ Therefore, their role was mainly that of impartial mediators between those countries and Thailand. From 1903 to 1915, while Strobel and Westengard "ruled over the destinies of Siam"²², treaty after treaty was signed with the two foremost Powers, bringing solutions to the frontier questions and a partial abolition of extraterritorial jurisdiction over French and British nationals.

Strobel's crowning achievement was in foreign policy. Three years after his arrival in Thailand, Ralph Paget, the British Consul in Bangkok, gave the following report to Sir Edward Grey in London :—

"It is difficult adequately to describe the contrast in the methods of the Thai Government before and subsequent to Strobel's arrival. I have mentioned that supineness, prevarication and tortuous dealings often led to misunderstanding and consequent friction. These methods have now been succeeded by promptitude, straight forwardness, and rational discussion of any difficulty that may arise . . ."²³

Hamilton King, the American Minister in Bangkok, also spoke very highly of Strobel's work :—

"A very large amount of work with the foreign representatives, work that had been accumulating for years, have been cleared up, and promptness and dispatch in this department with an evident endeavor for even-handed-justice, have resulted in an improved feeling all along the line of Siam's Foreign Relations."²⁴

Strobel's first work was the completion of the Franco-Thai Treaty of 1904 which brought about a better understanding in the relations between France and Thailand.

21) F.O. 371/333, General Report on Siam, 1906.

22) US Archives 4150/1, King-Root January 26, 1907.

23) F.O. 371/333, Paget-Grey, May 27, 1907.

24) US Archives T. 172 Roll 9, No. 255, Hamilton King-Elihu Root, January 8, 1906.

It should be noted that during the second half of the nineteenth century Thai relations with the French were in a constant state of discord, and periodically the situation became tense. After the crisis of 1893, when the French carried out a blockade of the Menam River, relations between the two countries went steadily from bad to worse. Thailand suffered a serious blow from the stipulations of the 1893 Treaty. Since 1900, Chantaboon, a Thai province on the eastern coast, had been occupied by French troops who gave no signs of evacuating. The 25 kilometer neutral zone which had been established along the Mekong had become a place of lawlessness and disorder. Questions of jurisdiction and the registration of French subjects in Thailand became more serious.

In early 1900 France and Thailand opened negotiations in Bangkok. The issues were two : the re-organization of the registration scheme and the evacuation of French troops from Chantaboon. A year passed and nothing could be agreed upon. At the end of 1901, discussions were transferred to Paris. After six months of discussions, a convention by which, among other stipulations, Thailand agreed to cede a considerable portion of territory to France in return for the evacuation of Chantaboon was signed. For some reason, however, the Convention failed to secure ratification in the French National Assembly.²⁵

Negotiations once again were resumed in Paris in May 1903 in order to render the 1902 Convention acceptable. At this stage France demanded the complete abolition of Thai suzerainty on the right bank of the Mekong, the establishment of French Consular Agents with full power of jurisdiction at Siemreap and Sisophon and over the Cambodians residing in Thailand. In reply, *Phya* Suriya, Thai Minister in Paris, refused practically every French demand. French authorities therefore threatened to break off negotiations unless Thailand took a more reasonable attitude.²⁶

25) F.O. 69/247, Classified. Documents Diplomatiques. Affaires de Siam 1893-1902, Delcasse's letter circulated to Foreign Consuls, October 7, 1902.

F.O. 422/57, Paget-Lansdowne, May 1, 1902.

F.O. 69/245, Paget-Lansdowne, May 1, 1903.

26) F.O. 422/57, Monson-Lansdowne, September 14, 1903.

At the height of the crisis, Strobel reached Paris on his way to Bangkok to replace Rolin-Jacquemyns as General-Adviser to the Thai Government. With his assistance, the tone of the negotiations was softened. Strobel knew full well the necessity of finding a solution to the ever-growing pressure on the eastern frontier, and thought that Thailand had to be prepared to make a few concessions. So, upon his arrival in Bangkok, Strobel put all his efforts into convincing the King and his ministers that a refusal to co-operate with the French at this time would only result in demands of greater severity in the years to come.

Strobel succeeded. A month later the Franco-Thai Treaty of 1904 was signed. The Thais looked upon this treaty as a major accomplishment since it provided for a new delineation of the entire frontier between Thai and French territories. In the eyes of the Thais, the unwarranted occupation of Chantaboon by the French, situated as it was in the heart of Thai territory, was a constant irritation to the Thai national spirit; and they had come to believe that there was no possible way to remove this menace.²⁷

The next move of Strobel was to break the judicial ties Thailand had with France. During Strobel's trip through Paris on his return to Bangkok from leave of absence in early 1907, some hints were thrown to him by the authorities at the Quai d'Orsay that France would be glad to have a rearrangement of the boundaries on the Cambodian frontier.²⁸ On his arrival in Bangkok Strobel was met with a French demand for Battambang, Siem Reap and Sisophon in exchange for Krat which France got in 1904, and the islands of Donsai, a wedge of land cutting into Thailand on the north-east frontier. As the proposed exchange appeared very much in favour of France, Strobel suggested the extension of negotiations to include the abandonment of French jurisdiction over French Asian subjects in Thailand. It was Strobel's view that Thailand would not suffer from a loss of these Cambodian provinces so long as her pride was satisfied by obtaining jurisdiction over the subjects of a foreign

27) US Archives T. 172, Roll 9, No. 225, King-Hay, March 30, 1905.

28) F.O. 422/61, Paget-Grey, March 27, 1907.

power. Battambang, Siem Reap and Sisophon were according to the American Minister, Hamilton King, "French" in sentiment, language, location and many other ways, and they had proved to be a constant source of difficulties. On the other hand, again according to Minister King, Krat and the islands of Donsai were as definitely Thai as the other places were "French".²⁹

Strobel's proposal met with a favourable reception by the French authorities. The negotiations then proceeded with unexpected rapidity, reaching a conclusion on March 23, 1907.

The French treaty of 1907 constituted a very considerable advance in the political status of Thailand. It was a landmark in Thailand's struggle for freedom from extraterritorial jurisdiction, inasmuch as it saw the submission of French Asian subjects in Thailand to the jurisdiction of Thai tribunals.

Judging from the haste with which the Treaty of 1907 was concluded—the actual negotiations covered a period of barely one month—and in view of the fact that since the latter half of the nineteenth century, French policy towards Thailand had consistently been based on the principle of a strict and jealous assertion of extraterritorial rights, the explanation for this sudden abdication of these rights, as far as her Asian *protégés* were concerned, without any precautionary guarantees, rested on Strobel's capable handling of the situation. It was, indeed, a master stroke on the part of the General-Adviser for Thailand.

Strobel's other great work was the Anglo-Thai Treaty of 1909 which brought an end to misunderstandings and disagreements between the two countries. By this treaty, England relinquished her extraterritorial rights over her subjects, European and Asian alike, in Thailand. In return Thailand transferred all her rights and suzerainty over the four northern Malay states, namely Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah and Perlis to England. The Anglo-Thai Secret Convention of 1897, which required Thailand to obtain sanction before granting prospecting licences over land in the Malay Peninsula, was abrogated. Also Britain gave

29) US Archives 5359/1-4, No. 312, King-Root, March 28, 1907.

Thailand a loan of £4 million at four percent interest, for the construction of the Malay Peninsula Railway up till its completion.³⁰

True, Strobel died before he could see the fruits of his negotiations. But it should be remembered that he masterminded the whole process. He also kept detailed knowledge of the negotiations almost entirely in the hands of the King and himself, and would no doubt have kept them going to their successful conclusion had he lived, in spite of opposition in some high circles of government. In the course of the negotiations Strobel did not hesitate to bring his influence to bear on a policy which he considered to be to the advantage of Thailand. Of the provinces that Thailand had to give England Strobel said:—

“I look upon them very much as I did upon the territory we ceded to the French. They are territories over which, on account of language, religion, prejudices and location we have but limited control, are constantly the cause of irritations and difficulties, and were it not for appearances, personally, I would rather give them away for nothing rather than be compelled to hold them with the difficulties they entail . . .³¹

In fact, apart from the loss of face, the Thais hardly regretted letting these states go. The words of King Chulalongkorn on his visit to these states in 1891 should be recalled :

“... we have no particular interest in the states. . . . If we lose them to England we would miss only the “Bunga Mas”. Apart from this there would not be any material loss.³²

With regard to the Anglo-Thai Secret Convention of 1897 Strobel thought that its abolition would achieve for Thailand the consolidation of her dominions in the Malay Peninsula and their protection against future danger. In his opinion the 1897 Convention was the most “deplor-

30) See Thamsook Numnonda, “The Anglo-Siamese Negotiations 1900-1909”, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of London, 1966.

31) US Archives 10883/4-9, King-Root, March 4, 1908.

32) King Chulalongkorn, *Rayathang sadet phraratchadamnern praphat thang bog thang ruca rob laem malayu, r.s. 109* (Royal Tour of the Peninsula in 1891) (Bangkok, 1932), p. 323.

able document" Thailand had ever signed. Thus Strobel was extremely anxious to see it go, root and branch.

On the judicial side, the Treaty of 1909 raised Thailand to a higher position among Asian powers. At least the Thais were proud to say that their country had attained her ambition to become, in legal matters, on a par with Japan and European countries. She could also congratulate herself that she had brought to a conclusion, within less than a decade, a revision of her treaty system with England which Japan had accomplished only after laborious negotiations extending over twenty years. Most important, this partial freedom of jurisdiction fostered among the Thais, at least those in the official classes, a national consciousness that they had lacked before.

In domestic affairs, Strobel accomplished many reforms. He was elected a member of the Commission for revising the Penal Code of the country. At the same time many new laws were enacted, for example, a law providing for abolishing gambling throughout Thailand while the land tax laws were revised to meet the resultant loss of revenue. The new Harbours Regulations came into use from which foreign shipping and home revenue benefited. Provisions were made for abolishing the remnants of debt slavery in the country. The Post and Telegraph Department was reorganized on a business basis. The state railways were extended. These improvements gave confidence and a feeling of security to all private interests. The Thai Tramway Company Limited opened a new line; and lumber mills increased in number. To sum up, as Strobel's work had to do with all departments, the general result was the development of a unity of purpose and a harmony of action throughout the Government never before known.

Minister King made the following report to the Secretary of State in Washington in 1905 :—

"The position of Siam today is more hopeful than at any time during the last eight years. Her internal improvements are going forward at a healthy pace, money is plentiful at home . . . while the able handling of the political interests by her General Adviser is creating increased confidence in the future . . . 33

33) US Archives T. 172, Roll 9, No. 248, King-Elihu Root, November 28, 1905,

IV

Westengard proceeded along the same lines as Strobel : foreign relations, legislation, internal reforms and advisory opinions. However, the work which gained him much confidence among the Thai officials was the Anglo-Thai Treaty of 1909. At the time of Strobel's death in 1908, these negotiations had started only a month earlier. The treaty was very unpopular among Thai Court officials who hated the idea of giving away territory as proposed by the treaty. Those officials also felt humiliated at not being kept informed or consulted. Moreover, the projected negotiations were felt to be too broad to stand any chance of success. A year after Strobel's death, discussions between the two contending parties still dragged on without any sign of compromise. Westengard, however, saved the situation. Through his close association with Strobel he was well acquainted with the latter's views on the various pending questions and he had, to a large extent, absorbed Strobel's methods.

Ralph Paget, the British negotiator, grasped the situation. He demanded that if the Thai Government did not negotiate through Westengard he would abandon the negotiations and return home immediately since he had no other business in Thailand.³⁴

With this lever in his hands, Westengard's influence carried weight. After much strenuous effort, with infinite patience and with the use of his extraordinary powers of persuasion, he finally obtained the King's approval. On March 10, 1909, the Treaty, which was characterized by Mr. King as an "epochal step for Siam", was signed. Mr. King said about the episode after the signature of the treaty that :

"In reply to a brief note of congratulations, which I sent to Paget as soon as I learned that the treaty had been signed, occurred these words:— And permit me to congratulate you on having such a fellow citizen as Jens I. Westengard . . ."³⁵

Four years later, as a result of Westengard's negotiations, a similar treaty was concluded with Denmark which, although it had few nationals in Thailand, had a very strong position in Thai trade.

34) US Archives, 12293, King-Root, January 29, 1908.

35) US Archives, 10883/26-28, No. 470, King-Robert Bacon, April 3, 1909.

Once Westengard had proved to the satisfaction of France and England that Thailand was fit to exercise jurisdiction over subjects of those countries, he saw it as a blow to himself and to American prestige in Thailand that he, as an American citizen, was unable to persuade his own Government to grant what nations possessing greater material interests in Thailand had already yielded. Therefore, throughout his tenure of office, Westengard put all his efforts into opening the question with the American Government.

In fact, it was Strobel who manifested the desire that the United States should be the second Power, next to England, to take up the question of a treaty. The subject was first unofficially raised by the Thai Government through Mr. King, the American Minister, in 1907, asking for the surrender of American consular jurisdiction. But the issue took a more serious turn after Strobel's death. In 1909 and 1910 Westengard went to Washington to urge the matter upon the attention of the State Department. The question centered around the surrender of consular jurisdiction in return for which Americans in Thailand would be given a recognized right of freedom of travel and ownership of land beyond the limits prescribed in the existing treaty.

It should be borne in mind that American interest in Thailand was chiefly of a missionary character, and the majority of these missionaries were willing to pass under Thai jurisdiction. The Presbyterian Board in New York also expressed its willingness to have American consular jurisdiction withdrawn. In their opinion, they would gain considerable advantage by so doing since, under the new treaty, missionaries would have the right to travel freely in all parts of the country and to own real property. Under the existing treaty they were restricted to residence in the vicinity of Bangkok and were allowed to own or lease property only within a distance from Bangkok of twenty-four hour's journey by native boat. It was true that missions were established elsewhere than within the limits assigned by treaty, but it was by courtesy of the Thai Government and not by right.³⁶

36) US Archives M, 730, 711.922/37, Comment by Williams, February 9, 1916.

The State Department, however, felt that it was still premature to renounce consular jurisdiction before the Thai Codes were completed and before some time had elapsed in which to test the working of the courts under the new arrangement. As a result, an informal proposal was made to Westengard that the question of a new treaty could be taken up on the understanding that a protocol be attached reserving the surrender of jurisdiction until the Codes were completed and in satisfactory operation.

The proposal was not satisfactory to Prince Devawongse. His reason was that Thailand could not afford to enter into any treaty which retained jurisdiction since the surrender had already been made by England and in part by France.³⁷ While the matter was pending, Mr. King died.

In 1913 the original proposal of the Thai Government regarding a revised treaty to include "an arrangement for the present surrender of consular jurisdiction instead of postponing that event until the completion of the Thai Codes" was revived.³⁸ The support for the issue was based upon the conclusion of the Treaty with Denmark of 1913 and upon the fact that the arrangement with England of 1909 had worked out satisfactorily.

Mr. Hornibrook, the new American Minister in Bangkok, was asked to sound out the attitudes of the American residents in Thailand. In reply he reported :

"Both the missionary and business interests now appear to be in accord upon the proposal and it is also significant that for the first time since the proposal was made several years ago by Siam, officials of both Legation and Consulate General are united in making the recommendation. Sentiment in regard to the entire matter has undergone a most decided change during the past year and it is my firm opinion that the Department will have the approval of almost the entire American colony in Siam in the event that treaty negotiations are carried through to a successful conclusion."³⁹

37) US Archives M 730, Westengard-R.S. Miller, January 24, 1910.

38) US Archives M 730, 711.923/99, Department of Far Eastern Affairs, (April 30, 1913), Drafted on April 24, 1913 by Prince Traidos Prabandh.

39) US Archives M 730, No. 25, 711.923/111, Hornibrook-Secretary of State, November 22, 1915.

Westengard once again acted as negotiator on behalf of the Thai Government. He went to Washington in 1913, 1914 and 1915 to conduct the negotiations. After many meetings with the officials at the State Department, the draft of the proposed treaty was issued. One of the provisions was that International Courts or American-Thai Courts would be set up. Any case in those courts not covered by a code already promulgated might be opposed by the American Consul, if an American citizen was the accused or defendant in the case, and thereafter the Consul alone would be competent to try such case. Thailand also agreed to appoint an American Adviser to the International Courts.⁴⁰

The whole atmosphere of the negotiations was harmonious and friendly. Part of a personal letter which Ransford S. Miller, the Head of the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, wrote to Westengard, reads:—

“... so far as I am able to judge, this Government is disposed to do all that it consistently can to help the modern progress of Siam, and that desire is all the stronger because of the fact that a representative American like yourself holds such an important advisory position in the Siamese Government . . .”⁴¹

In 1917 success seemed close at hand. Sadly enough, however, the European War suddenly brought an end to the negotiations. A year later Westengard died in his hometown in America. Had he lived two years longer he would have witnessed the Thai-American treaty which was then concluded by Dr. Eldon James, his successor.

Westengard also took a keen interest in Thailand's internal development. His “pet scheme”, as the American Minister called it, was the financing and construction of railways south to Singapore. He was selected a member of the Royal Commission whose function was to increase revenues and control expenditures, which helped the modernization of Thailand's fiscal operations. Westengard also held two other

40) US Archives M 730, No. 25, 711.923/111, Hornibrook-Secretary of State, November 22, 1915.

41) US Archives M 730, Personal, Miller-Westengard, June 10, 1913.

important positions. He was appointed judge of the Supreme or Dika Court in 1911. The same year he was appointed Thailand's Member to the Hague Permanent Court of Arbitration.

Wolcott Pitkin replaced Westengard in 1915. But in estimating his work one finds it was regrettably the least successful. Pitkin served the Thai Government during the reign of King Vajiravudh, a British-educated monarch. It was a time when a somewhat aggressive spirit of nationalism flourished among the Thais. The Thai Government seemed to be determined to dispense with foreign advisers except where they were absolutely necessary. Moreover, Pitkin lacked the genial personality of his predecessors. He suffered from the Thai climate, was irritable, very deaf, and possibly for that reason, a trifle slow of apprehension.⁴² The Thai officials accused him of being devoid of tact. They also criticized his appointment on the grounds of his youth as he was only thirty-five years old. At the same time, Thai officials hardly understood Pitkin's pronounced New England accent.⁴³ The King was not favourably impressed with his manners either. All these circumstances hampered Pitkin's work to a considerable extent.

In 1917, the second year of Pitkin's service, Thailand decided to enter the war on the side of the Allies. Pitkin was entrusted with the work which would pave the way for the success of the Treaty negotiations then in abeyance. This resulted in a book entitled *Siam's Case for Revision of Obsolete Treaty Obligations*, which appealed to the conscience of the treaty nations. It was printed immediately after the war and was presented by the Thai delegation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

Upon studying the role of these American General-Advisers one would not hesitate to say that Strobel was the most successful function-

42) F.O. 371/3364, Derring-Balfour, March 4, 1918.

43) F.O. 371/2464, No. 88, Derring-Grey, July 19, 1915.

F.O. 371/3864, Derring-F.O., May 9, 1918.

ary. He was selected for both his ability and his integrity and hence enjoyed a close understanding with the King. Strobel was given the right of direct approach to the King without the intermediary of a Thai minister.⁴⁴ And in his capacity of confidential adviser he had a say in all matters.⁴⁵

Apart from this paramount influence, Strobel's personal character and his judicious conduct of affairs were the main elements of his fame. It was Strobel's desire to adopt an attitude of complete independence towards the Thai Government. For example, in the case of the Franco-Thai Treaty of 1904, Strobel was well aware that his advice would be distasteful to his employers, but he stated his views with absolute fearlessness assuming complete responsibility for the consequences of his policy. He said that should the Thai Government not follow his advice, or should he prove to be mistaken, he feared he could no longer consider himself competent to advise the Thai Government and would resign his post. Naturally, when subsequent events proved him correct he came to earn the unlimited confidence of the King and, with His Majesty's authority and support, all opposition on the part of other Ministers and officials gradually collapsed.⁴⁶

Apart from that, Strobel's own sound common sense, frankness and sincerity were so evident that he inspired a feeling of confidence in all who came into contact with him. Up to his death, Strobel was hard at work, throwing himself with tremendous energy into everything. Thus he was cognizant of and his influence made itself felt in every aspect of the administration. Prince Devawongse said of Strobel that :

"His Majesty can only entertain a feeling of gratitude to the American nation which has given so honourable and faithful a servant to Siam."⁴⁷

44) US Archives 892, OIA/50, No. 178, Curtis Williams-Secretary of State, November 16, 1921.

45) US Archives M 730, J.C. White-Secretary of State, April 17, 1919. *Singapore Free Press*, Thursday 11, 1907.

46) F.O. 371/522, Paget-Grey, January 18, 1908.

47) US Archives, No number, Devawongse-King, January 20, 1908.

King Chulalongkorn himself remarked :

" Mr. Strobel has served Siam so well that he seems indispensable to us and to our administrative machinery to function smoothly. I have not seen any European or American who is so thoughtful and so firm in character as Mr. Strobel. Furthermore, he is loved by all, including me."⁴⁸

When Strobel died in 1908 in Bangkok his death was not only a loss to Thailand but it was felt as a personal grief by the King and by everyone who had come into contact with him. The King sent a letter of condolence to Mrs. Caroline Strobel, his mother, in America, saying that :

"It is needless for me to say how much I deplore the loss of so excellent and so accomplished a man, . . . he had been a devoted servant and true friend of my government, I rather doubt being able to find another man equal to him in every respect to fill his place. There is for us only one consolation, that is, that the memory of his and of the good he had done for my country will ever remain in the history and in the minds of the people of Siam."⁴⁹

The Siam Observer of January 16, 1908 reported the popular sentiment towards his death as follows :

"In Mr. Strobel Siam has lost one who was not only faithful official but an earnest friend, and we in Bangkok mourn his death with a sense both of public and of personal loss. He was in manner the most unassuming of men, in character the most lofty, and the words which come irresistibly to mind are the stately words of Holy Writ—that "a prince and a great man hath fallen amongst us."⁵⁰

48) NA, R5, File T. 2/6, Draft of a letter to Prince Devawongse, September 24, 1905.

49) NA, R5, File T. 2/8, His Majesty the King-Mrs. Strobel, September 6, 1908.

50) *The Siam Observer*, January 16, 1908.

The American Minister, Mr. King, wrote :—

“Truly the King loved this man, Siam has paid him high tribute, and through him we feel that our country has been honored.”⁵¹

For being a trusted adviser, King Chulalongkorn conferred decorations and signal marks of his confidence and favour upon Strobel. There were also many touching episodes that showed the sincere and close relationship between King Chulalongkorn and Strobel. For example, on one occasion, soon after he had returned from Europe in 1908, the King wanted to see Strobel right away. But, knowing that Strobel was ill, the King refused to listen to Strobel's request for an audience in the Palace, and insisted on going to see him at his private residence. His Majesty stayed for nearly two hours. He presented Strobel with a watch made from a gold 100 franc piece, bearing on the reverse the King's monogram and an inscription, and which the King said was the thinnest watch in the world.⁵²

The most moving event was perhaps the official funeral which was given Strobel. The King attended the ceremony in person. It was the first time His Majesty had attended the funeral of any foreigner in Thailand and his presence was therefore a very special mark of esteem and affection. The words of Minister King who was present at the ceremony should be recalled :—

“The representatives who were appointed to arrange the details of the ceremony were considering the question of the character of the religious services to be observed, when His Majesty entered. As soon as he learned the nature of the question under consideration he remarked : “Gentlemen, there will be Christian

51) US Archives, 5402/55-56, King-Root, February 9, 1909.

52) F.O. 371/737, Beckett-Landley, Memorandum of Conversation between the King of Siam and Strobel on November 23 as described in a letter to Beckett on November 26, 1907.

services at the cremation of Mr. Strobel. Siam is tolerant, and whatever faith a man who serves this Government may hold, whether he be a Mohammedan, a Buddhist or a Christian, when we come to express our appreciation of his services in the last sad rites shown him, his faith should be respected. Mr. Strobel's great company of friends throughout the world are Christians and it will be to them a pleasure to learn that at the last sad honours paid to him by our Government his faith was respected.

With high appreciation of this courtesy, service brief, simple and appropriate were prepared for the occasion, and later we were informed that it was the wish of the Government that the American Minister should conduct the services.

Up to the hour of the ceremony it was not known whether His Majesty would be present at the reading; as the appointed hour approached the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said to me: "His Majesty will be present at the service to-day. I have just received a message from the palace in which His Majesty says "Tell Mr. King I may be a little late but I would have him wait for me for I wish to be present when the services are read."

His Majesty came into the pavilion at the base of the pyre, and bared head stood next the reader, surrounded by the representative prince of the realm.

Another mark of respect, that has never before been paid to any but the nearest and dearest of the King's own family, is worthy of mention—From one who stood beside him I have these words:— "As His Majesty ascended the large Royal pavilion he stood a moment in silence, looking at the silver fuse that connected this pavilion with the pyre and the long wand with which it is the custom for the King to apply the electric spark, then with evident emotion he waved his hand

and said—"No I loved this friend, take these away."⁵³ They were removed, and His Majesty accompanied by the Princes took his position in the small pavilion at the pyre, listened to the reading of the Christian services and then, alone, ascended the steps of the pyre, lighted the fire with his own hand passed out. This is the highest honour that can be shown by the King at such a time.⁵³

Almost equal in prestige with Strobel was Westengard. His long residence and intimate knowledge of the Thai character and Thai institutions enabled him to render valuable services to the Government which had full confidence in him and clearly relied on his judgment. In fact, when Westengard was first left as Acting General Adviser in 1907 much anxiety was felt on account of the remarkable success of Strobel with whom he was compared. But from the first the Government gave him its full confidence and he responded in a masterly manner.⁵⁴ Evidence of the Thai Government's trust in Westengard was clearly shown on the occasion of a personal visit that King Chulalongkorn paid to Westengard. The King took Westengard in his automobile to the Royal Gardens on a private outing with the children of the Palace. His Majesty told the Adviser of the anxiety felt by the Government at the time of Strobel's death and assured him that the anxiety had been entirely dissipated and that His Majesty had only words of approval to express.⁵⁵

Upon the strength of his qualifications, honours were conferred upon Westengard time and again by the Thai Government. In 1908 on the occasion of the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of His reign, King Chulalongkorn conferred upon him the Second Class of the Ratanaphorn Medal. This order was given only in recognition of personal services to the King and held by very few foreigners indeed. The auto-

53) US Archives 5402/55-56, King-Root, February 9, 1909.

54) US Archives 4150/1, King-Root, January 26, 1907.

55) US Archives 4150/4, King-Root, March 28, 1908.

graphed letters in recognition of his services spoke in the highest terms of Westengard.⁵⁶ Throughout the waves of "Siamization" during the reign of King Vajiravudh, Westengard continued to hold the confidence alike of the King and the Thai Government. In 1911 Westengard was granted the title, *Phya Kalyan Maitri*, the second highest title of nobility which could be bestowed upon any individual in Thailand not a member of the Royal family.⁵⁷ Prior to his departure in 1915, Westengard received the insignia of a specially high class of the Order of the White Elephant, which was rarely conferred on Europeans, as a mark of Royal favour.⁵⁸

The King expressed great regret at Westengard's departure in 1915. Upon learning of the death of Westengard in America three years later, Prince Mahidol, who was then studying at Harvard University, was asked to represent the King at the Thai-style funeral being held for Westengard in accordance with the wish of the deceased.⁵⁹

However, in spite of all the achievements of Strobel and Westengard, there was still a drawback that very often deterred them from complete devotion to their work. Strobel was not at all adjusted to the Thai climate. During his four-year term he had to take home-leave twice; each lasted almost twelve months. These absence from a high office like his were, of course, noticeable, as it was the practice of the Thai Foreign Office and other offices to defer, whenever possible, all important questions which arose while he was away until his return.⁶⁰ Strobel was also often an ill man. During one of his trips home in 1906

56) US Archives 8291/31, King-Root, November 18, 1908.

57) US Archives T. 729, Roll 6, 892. OIA/10, King-Secretary of State, July 18, 1911.

58) F.O. 371/2464, No. 88, Derring-Grey, July 19, 1915.

59) Foreign Ministry Archives, Bangkok, File No. 7 part 5, Phya Prapakarawongse-Prince Devawongse, October 5, 1918.

60) US Archives 729/6, No. 130, 892. OIA/27, Frank D. Arnold-Secretary of State, February 5, 1917.

he apparently contracted a severe form of blood-poisoning, from which he never entirely recovered. On his return to Thailand a year later, Strobel was virtually a doomed man.⁶¹

Westengard's case was equally serious. He left his family in America and hence had to make several trips home. Moreover, after a few years in Thailand his health gradually broke down under the long strain imposed upon him. But this handicap was probably not significant in view of his remarkable successes.

American officials as well as American citizens, who witnessed the highlights of the "good old days" for Americans in Thailand, later often mentioned that they were far from the powerful positions which were held in the time of Strobel and Westengard.⁶²

61) *Singapore Free Press*, January 16, 1908.

62) US Archives M 730, No. 16, 711.922/33, Curtis Williams-MacMurray, August 1, 1921.