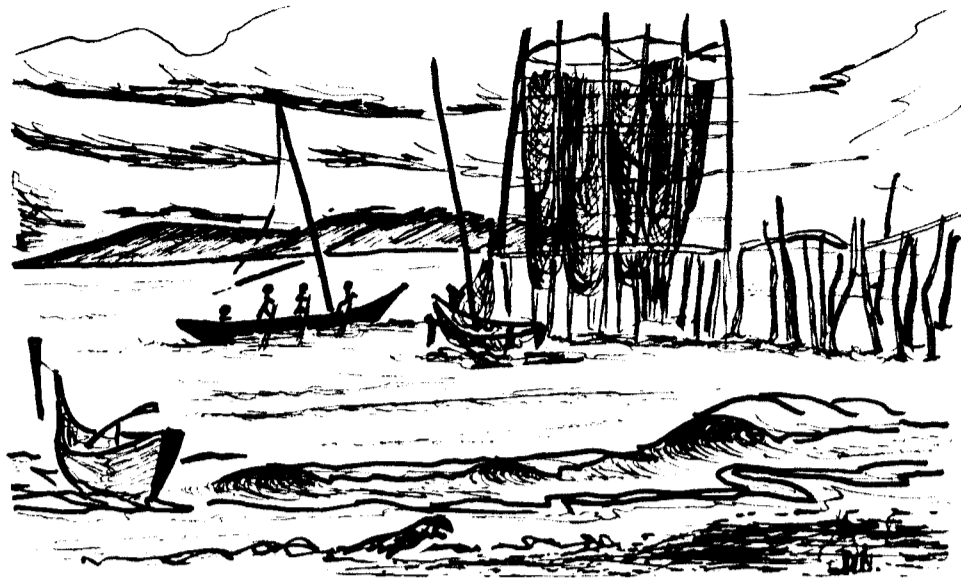


FARMERS, WATER BUFFALO, RICE PADDY AND MUD



BOATS, FISHERMEN, AND NETS HUNG TO DRY

gateway features—A REPORT ON THAILAND

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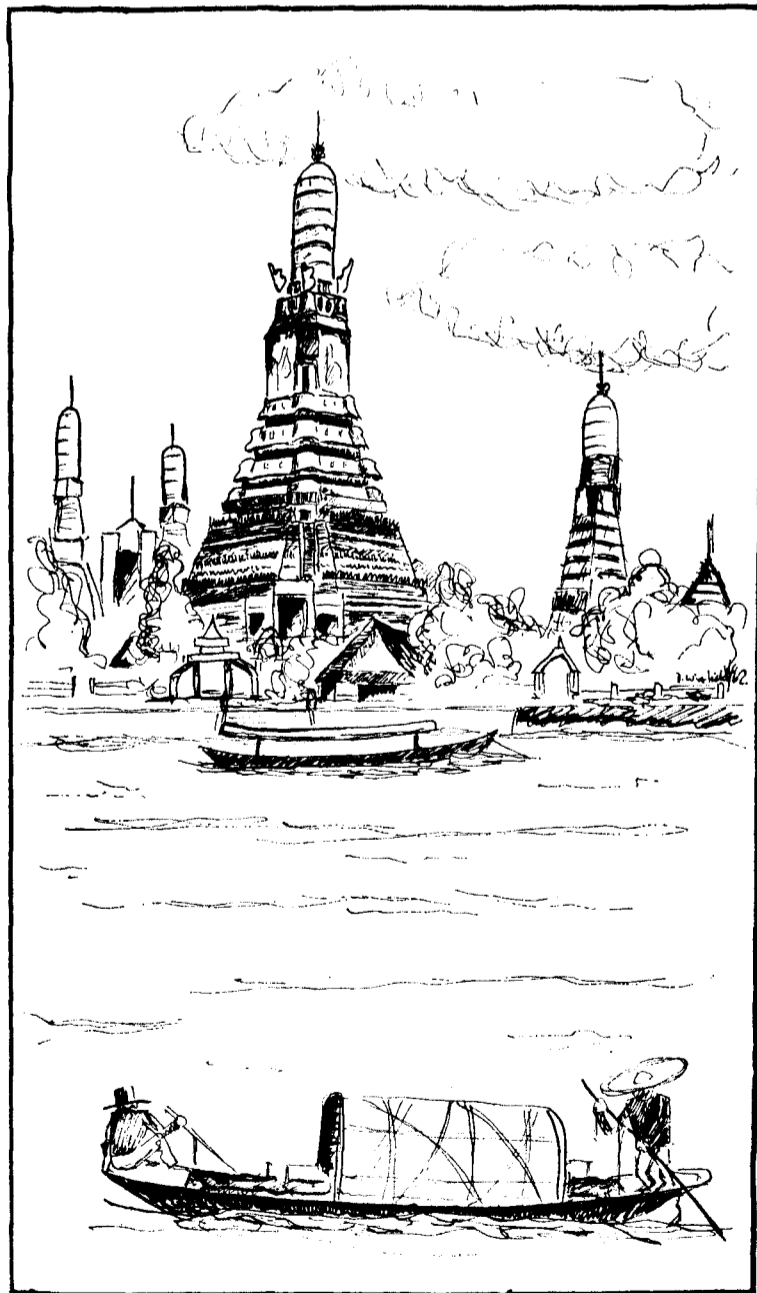
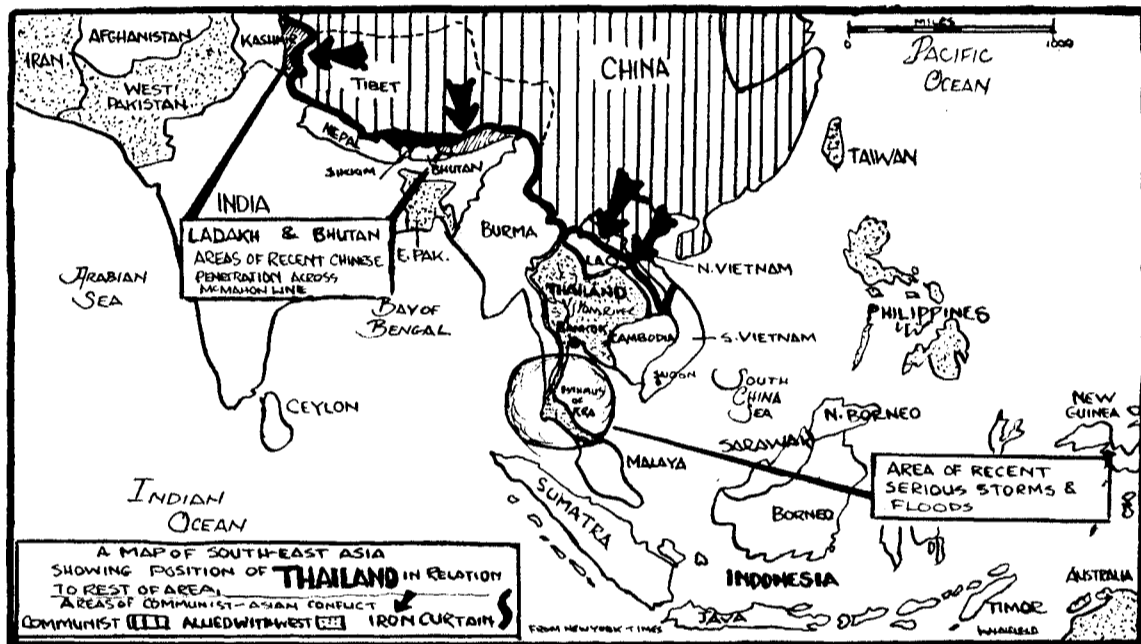
Thailand is situated on the southeast corner of Asia, between Burma on the west and Laos and Cambodia on the east, Malaya to the south, Burma and Laos to the north. There is a land area of 198,247 square miles, and a population estimated at 23, 220, made up of 90 percent Thai; 3.4 percent Chinese; Indian and Malayan, 3.4 percent; and others, 3.2 percent.

Thailand is a land of contrasts. It has a climate which burns its soil part of the year and then floods it as if in repentance. Thailand is

three-seasonal: hot, hotter, and still hotter.

It is a country of jungles, mountainous forests, rich alluvial plains—and a westernized capital in Bangkok. There are temples . . . palaces . . . and homes that float on logs . . . relics of absolute monarchy amidst a young and spirited democracy.

Until 1932 Thailand was ruled as an absolute monarchy. In June of that year a group of army officers staged a coup d'état and were granted a constitution by the King,



WAT ARUN . . . TEMPLE OF THE DAWN, BANGKOK

providing for a parliament with one-half of its members to be elected and one-half appointed. Today, the present government comprises 28 cabinet ministers and is headed by the President of the Council of Ministers.

Thai means free. The primary goal of Thai foreign policy has been of political independence; except for a few brief periods in its history Thailand has enjoyed full sovereignty.

Bangkok serves as headquarters for SEATO which the country joined in 1950, and at present Thailand is one of the most articulate and consistent opponents of Communism in Asia.

Among the people of Thailand are a great number of impoverished peasants who live surrounded by rich mineral and agricultural resources. As implied, the economy is underdeveloped and underdiversified.

Some 85 to 90 percent of the population are occupied with agriculture which provides a substantial portion of the national income and government revenues. Rice holds a dominant position. Fishing, forestry (teak in particular), rubber, and tin are mainstays of the economy.

There are signs of progress in industrial modernization and diversification, but at present development is hampered by deficiencies in power, transportation and communications, scarcity of capital and shortage of technical and managerial skills.

Like deficiencies are problems yet to be overcome in the maintenance of public health and the attempt to stamp out debilitating and

fatal diseases. In short, modern medical services are lacking.

In the fight against tuberculosis, the incidence of which is extremely high among university students, the Thai Department of Health, in cooperation with UNICEF, operates a lung clinic and a tuberculin hospital. But because of insufficient beds only active cases are admitted to the hospital. As soon as possible patients are discharged and given ambulatory treatment at the clinic. Continuing problems for the program are the difficulty of reaching remote areas and the weakness of local health units as cooperating partners

Higher education in Siam evolved from professional schools established at the turn of the century to train government officials. Chulalongkorn University was founded in 1917, then embracing the faculties of arts and science, engineering and medicine. Many other disciplines have since been added. In 1942 medical science faculties were partly separated to form the College of Medical Science. At about 3,500 students, Chulalongkorn is Thailand's principal university. Its course of studies is now a very broad one, its faculty largely Thais, many of who were educated in Britain. English is used extensively, particularly in more technical fields where a literature in Thai has not yet been developed.

in the project.

The most important feature of any country is its people. And Thailand is primarily a country of friendly people. The Thai is known for his spontaneous hospitality—the "always smiling" Thai.

He will probably converse in one of the principle languages: Thai and Lao. (English is the only European language widely known; almost all high school graduates have had at least six years of English training.)

The Thai is proud of his culture, heritage and religion. He is especially proud of the country's two most famous benevolent monarchs: King Mongkut (of "King and I" fame) who was the first ruler to "westernize" his country and his son King Chulalongkorn, the most beloved of all Thai monarchs, (after whom the University is named). As a result numerous ceremonies are enacted throughout the year commemorating their famous deeds. As well, many beautiful rituals are celebrated in the practicing of Buddhism.

Theravada (or "Doctrine of the Elders") Buddhism is traditionally the Thai religion. A number of other religions exist to a minor extent—tribal religions, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, and Christianity. While none of the less popular religions seem to be expanding, there is nothing in the tenets of Buddhism which could lead to a censorious attitude towards other faiths.

A people of ceremony . . . a friendly people, the Thai are self-consciously proud of their own culture but they bear no feelings of racial superiority; race does not enter into their thinking as a possible determinant of behavior.