

new University

VOL. 2/NO. 38/THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 1970

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college press service

WASHINGTON (CPS) - Numerous American Universities are involved in Counterinsurgency research in Thailand, currently being conducted for the United States government.

The main organization involved is the Academic Advisory Council for Thailand (AACT), a group composed of ten professors from eight American Universities.

AACT is established under a contract between the United States Agency for International Development (AID) and the University of California.

That contract, according to a copy provided by AID, commits the University to "identify research that is being, has been, or will be conducted in Universities, foundations and other institutions that may be related to developmental and counterinsurgency activities in Thailand; evaluate, index, and make such research available to AID; suggest and solicit research proposals relevant to AID/W (Washington) and USOM (United States Operating Mission/Thailand)." The contract states that AID has established AACT "to provide coordination between the academic community of Thai scholars and AID."

The contract is with the University of California because David Wilson, a UCLA professor, is Executive Secretary of AACT, a job which commits him to work half-time for the organization.

Other members of AACT are University of Michigan Professor of Geography, Peter Goaling, University of Washington Professor of Anthropology Charles Keyes, Stanford Professor of Education Frank Moore, Cornell Professor of Anthropology Lauriston Sharp, Indiana University Professor of Government William Siffin, Miami (of Ohio) University Professor Paul Trescott, Rice University Professor of Political Science Fred von der Mehden, UCLA Professor of Anthropology Michael Moerman, and Cornell Professor of History David Wyatt.

Questioned by CPS about the propriety of a presumably impartial academic aiding the U.S. government's mission in Thailand, Wilson stated the "Academics are not impartial and without commitment. It is the University's duty to entertain the possibility of entering into contracts with all legal and legitimate enterprises. Propriety in this case is defined by law. The regents rely upon the academic judgment of professional people. Absolutely, without a doubt, academics should be involved with the government."

Louis Stamberg, who works on the Thailand desk of AID, explained to CPS that the programs in question were primarily developmental, such as education, road building, and agriculture. "In justifying our program to Congress, we say 'counterinsurgency.' In terms of the scope of AACT, it doesn't have to be in there."

Vincent Wilber an information officer for AID, told CPS that "It's not cloak-and-dagger sneaky stuff at all. If you want to build the story up, you can say it's bad, but it doesn't have that connotation for us."

Documents concerning AACT and other organizations involved in Thailand research were released by the

Student Mobilization Committee (SMC), which said it would conduct a nation-wide campaign against such projects.

Another organization condemned by the SMC was the "American Institute for Research" (AIR) which is currently doing research for the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the Department of Defense.

In their proposal, which was accepted and funded by ARPA, the AIR states, "The struggle between an established government and subversive or insurgent forces involves three different types of operations. The first is to make inputs into the social system that will gain the active support of an ever-increasing proportion of the local population. Threats, promises, ideological appeals, and tangible benefits are the kinds of inputs that are most frequently used."

"The second is to reduce or interdict the flow of competing inputs being made by the other side by installing antiinfiltration devices, cutting communication lines, assassinating key spokesmen strengthening retaliatory mechanisms, and similar preventive measures.

"The third is to counteract or neutralize the political successes already achieved by groups committed to the 'wrong' side. This typically involves direct military confrontation.

"The social scientist can make significant contributions to the design of all three types of operations. But it is the first area - that of designing programs to win or strengthen public support - that he is expected to take the lead; and it is with this area that we are chiefly concerned."

Reins Wallace, the President of AIR, a Pittsburg research organization that does \$8 million in annual work, 70% of it for the government, said his project was being carried out in Thailand by full time employees of AIR. He said most of the employees were academics with Ph.D.'s. He referred more specific questions about the project to ARPA.

Wallace said the project was assisted by an advisory board, whose "expertise is very valuable to us." The board "tells us what we're doing right and what we're not."

The government's quest for research in S.E. Asia has resulted in the formation of yet another group of American scholars with Asian expertise. The South East Asia Development Assistance Group, funded entirely by AID, has been formed to provide research and advice on every phase of life in S.E. Asia.

Usually in the form of paper or seminar discussions, the topics and committees range from developmental administration of human resources, education, and rural political development to a category called rural safety, designed to strengthen the rural police forces.

UCLA professor Michael Moerman, associated in the past with both AACT and SEADAG, recently dropped out of both programs. Labelling SEADAG "a front for the U.S. government," he charged that the AID program was merely hoping to gain respectability for the government mission in South East Asia from Academic types. "The government ultimately makes policy decisions - academics are dragged along - and the whole affair takes on a whitewash."

Similarly, he dropped out of AACT because "the government was doing things that I didn't know about or would not want to be done." He felt that he was "giving expertise in a blank check form."

SEADAG is funded by AID through the ASIA Society in New York. Lionel Landry, the society's executive director explained that the ASIA Society, a non-political Asia-education group, is funded entirely by

membership donation, which include those of John D. Rockefeller, 3rd.

However, it seems that last year the ASIA Society received \$700,000 from AID to fund SEADAG research. Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand were prime research targets, and programs touched on almost every phase of rural Asian life.

Conjunctive research with Asian scholars in SEADAG is limited. Mr. Landry brushed over the fact that there has been very little Asian cooperation in SEADAG program planning, and thus, in implementation by the U.S. mission in the field. While copies of all research have supposedly been sent back to the originating country, there has been almost no feedback.

Joe Fischer of the UC Berkeley Center for Southeast Asian Studies, and one who is unhappy with SEADAG work explained that while their discussion seminars were informative and basically academic, feedback from the mission in S.E. Asia was "either accidental or coincidental." He explained that AID, in screening SEADAG program grants, failed to use academic criteria. Final governmental decision was

counterinsurgency research: a report

based upon functional relevance to policy and political sensitivity.

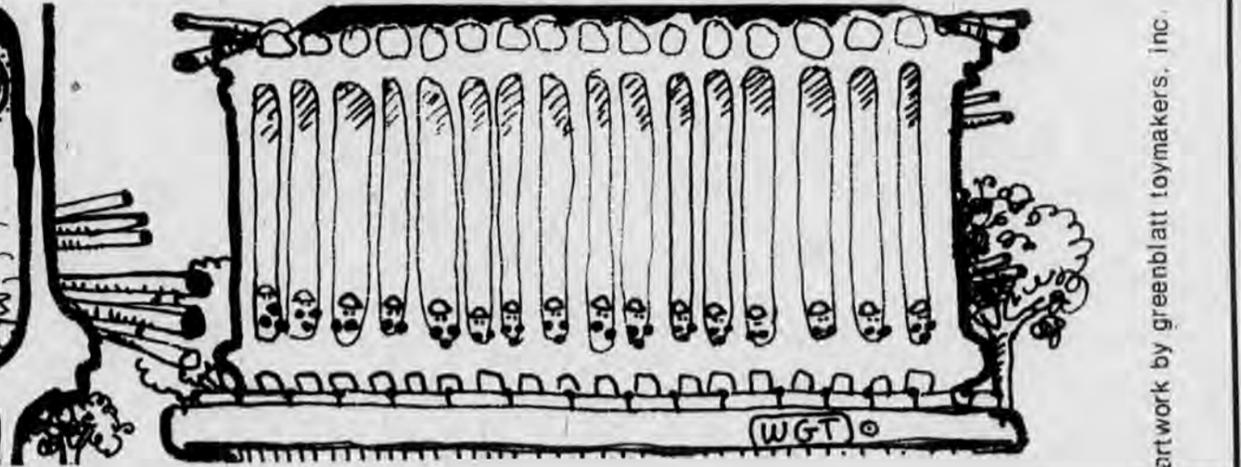
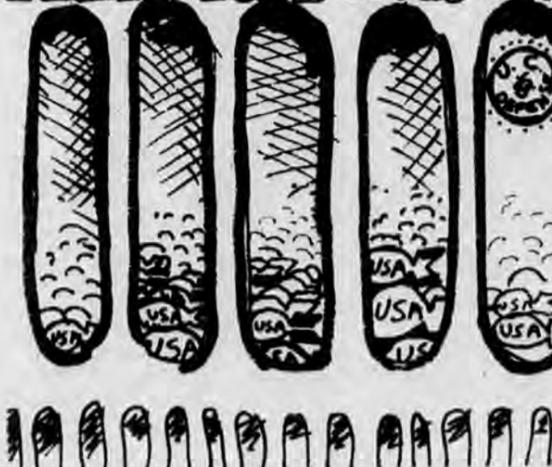
Fischer also questioned the ASIA Society's involvement as the administrator of government funds to SEADAG. He explained that the research of SEADAG was essentially not concerned with the cultural aspects of Asian life as were previous ASIA programs. As a case in point, he cited the introduction of a paper at a seminar on Vietnamese studies in Boston last year which, in effect, was the direct application of American power and interest to South Vietnam - essentially what he termed "a war games paper." In an eight page paper to other academicians involved in similar research programs for the government, he outlines the reasons for his recently leaving the SEADAG project. In summary he stated, "One might conclude that governmental co-optation is the term which best characterizes the effect and use of academicians in SEADAG."

The counterinsurgency research was also blasted by Marshall Sahlins and Eric Wolf, Professors of Anthropology at the University of Michigan. Wolf is chairman of the Ethics Committee of the American Anthropological Association.

"The participation of American scholars," they said, "is a perversion of their science, as the participation of the University is a corruption of its purpose. Over the long run, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists who lend themselves to the counterinsurgency projects of the Department of Defense render their fields physically impossible as well as intellectually meaningless. The dangers over the long run are to the existence of this country, and not only from foreign defeat, but from the application to the United States of the methods of totalitarian manipulation now being perfected by our scientists abroad - a prospect that one of the Thailand research proposals finds 'exciting.'"

Although very little has been printed about it in this country, there are guerillas operating in both the Northern and Northeast sections of Thailand. The U.S. government estimates there are no more than 1500 insurgents, however, and says the problem is not serious at this time.

It is to keep the problem from becoming serious that the US AID mission is attempting to spur "development," which it thinks will improve the lot of the people and thereby make revolution less likely.



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