

# Seni unsure if Chamlong involved in Oct 6 riots

FORMER prime minister M.R. Seni Pramoj said yesterday he did not know if Palang Dharma Party leader Chamlong Srimuang was involved in the October 6, 1976, killings of Thammasat students.

But he declined comment on the role of Prachakorn Thai leader Samak Sundaravej in the incident.

M.R. Seni, speaking to Chulalongkorn University students led by Anusorn Thamchai, said events at the time had been very confusing.

He admitted, however, that former Supreme Commander Sa-ngad Chaloryoo had warned him that a military faction planned to topple his government.

The only person he knew in the Housewives Group that had protested against his government in front of Government House was the well-known novelist, Tommayanti, and he did not know any members of the Young Turks, he said.

M.R. Seni said, however, that about 10 Young Turks had visited him at home, on one occasion to demand he name Gen Chalard Hiranyasiri as Army chief, but he refused.

Commenting on the October 6 killings, M.R. Seni said he did not witness any of the events that day: neither the student massacre at Thammasat nor the protest at Government House.

"I got conflicting reports from then-police chief Gen Srisook Mahinthorathep and his deputy Lt-Gen Chumphon Lohachala.

"Lt-Gen Chumphon told me there were many military weapons on Thammasat campus and many policemen had been killed.

"But the police chief told me this was not true and no policemen had been killed," he said.

He also remembered that Maj-Gen Charoenrit Chamrasromran, who

commanded the Border Patrol Police (BPP) at the time, had asked him to allow village scouts to clear Thammasat of students.

Meanwhile, former student leader Theerayuth Boonmi, of Chulalongkorn's Social Science Research Institute, said students were now interested in the debate on the 1976 riot because students of the time had been treated so violently.

Today's students are also concerned about allegations that the leader of one a popular party in Sunday's elections, Palang Dharma, was involved in the massacre.

He said: "The incident was inevitable in Thai society.

"It was part of (Thailand's) political development, when Right and Left dominated the political scene. But we have passed through that period."

## SPEECH

In a speech on business ethics, Theerayuth said the political spectrum had widened and now included a more diverse group of people, including businessmen, politicians and canvassers.

Also, political parties can now develop regional power bases, he said, allowing more accurate political choice.

Theerayuth said Ruam Thai Party, led by Narong Wongwan, has firm support in the North; Social Action Party, particularly Prachuab Chaiyasarn, leads in the Northeast; Chart Thai controls the Central provinces; Rassadorn and Prachachon parties have strongholds in the South; and Prachakorn Thai and Palang Dharma are strong in Bangkok.

He predicted Ruam Thai would be a big party, but the Progressives and Palang Dharma would not.

Despite the uproar over

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accusations surrounding Maj-Gen Chamlong's alleged involvement in the October 6 incidents, Mr Theerayuth said, Palang Dharma will still be popular and will win seats in Bangkok.

But the party is unprofessional and disorganised, he said, so it will only be a medium-sized party, he said.

The military will have a strong influence on the formation of the next government, he said, and this will lead to changes in the constitution.

He also predicted "the ethics of political parties" will decline.

"The opposition parties — Puang Chon Chao Thai, Palang Dharma, Prachakorn Thai and Progressive — will be strong in the House," he said.



# Chamlong should clarify his role in the Oct 6 incident

By Termsak C. Palanupap

**W**HAT we have heard from Palang Dharma Party leader Chamlong Srimuang so far were mostly evasive answers about his mysterious role in the tumultuous events in September and early October 1976, which culminated in the massacre of demonstrators at Thammasat University on the morning of October 6 and a coup against the elected civilian government of M.R. Seni Pramoj in the evening of the same day.

Chamlong laments about being victimized by mud-slingers from other political parties, implicitly including the Prachakorn Thai Party, which is afraid of being washed out of national politics by the flood of "good water" from his party in the upcoming general election.

He said he was surprised and distressed by the "foul play" of his opponents against a *kon dee* or virtuous person like him. He thought the October 6 incident, particularly his role in it, would be irrelevant to the current situation and thus a non-issue in the election campaign. But he was wrong.

Chamlong's mysterious role in the bloody incident became an issue when he tried to hide it and later gave the impression that he was a mere passive bystander who attended rallies of right-wingers out of his "concern for law and order" in the country.

Information from independent sources indicates, however, that Chamlong was anything but a passive bystander.

## Pi Bua and Chamlong

Chamlong was wrong when he complained that his political opponents dug up the October 6 incident to discredit him and destroy his party. In fact, the one who first mentioned it was Mrs Chongkol Srikanchana, a Palang Dharma candidate in Bangkok's Constituency 7 — an ardent admirer of Chamlong. This was what she recalled in an interview with the *Lak Thai* weekly magazine of June 30:

"...We [Chamlong and Mrs Chongkol] had a great deal of contact when we rose up to fight during 1973-76. At that time, there was a man wearing a hat and sunglasses, [I didn't know where he came from,] who handed me a microphone all the time. Later, I teased him why he had to wear such a hat which made him look like a beggar. Finally, during our attack on Government House, whenever I forgot something, he would remind me by saying *Pi Bua* [Sister Lotus] don't forget to mention this and

that words and handing me a microphone until the last second. It turned out that that man was none other than this Maj Gen Chamlong." [Pi Bua was Mrs Chongkol's pseudonym during her days as leader of a right-wing housewives group.]

She also said she couldn't stand seeing the country being brought under communist rule and that's why she and her right-wing colleagues had to stand up and fight. They went to Government House to demand action against the demonstrators at Thammasat, whom they accused of being communists and calling them "scums of the earth".

Mrs Chongkol repeated her account of Chamlong's role during a campaign rally at Lumpini Park on July 1. Chamlong was visibly upset and asked her afterwards to stop talking about this "irrelevant" issue. Subsequently the party threatened to bar her from all election campaigns unless she agreed to avoid this subject altogether. Mrs Chongkol was upset by the restriction and complained to reporters that she was unhappy she couldn't say what she wanted and that she disagreed with the party's campaign emphasis on extolling the moral values of the party and its leader.

The *Nation* mentioned Mrs Chongkol's interview with the weekly magazine in the Bangkokian column on June 30, writing under a headline "Chamlong's skeleton?" and played up the Lumpini Park incident as a front-page lead story on July 2. That was when Chamlong started to respond to reporters' questions.

Unfortunately, the more he explained, the less we know about his real role.

In a background briefing to reporters covering the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, he gave an account of being a sympathizer of the demonstrators of the October 14, 1973, which overthrew the dictatorship of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn. When students started protesting the return of Thanom in late September 1976, Chamlong said he followed the development with great concern for the deteriorating situation. He attended right-wing rallies out of his good intention to see the restoration of "law and order". By his own recollection, he was merely a passive bystander.

Chamlong gave the same account, almost word for word, in an interview with the mass-circulation *Thai Rath*, which published it as a front-page lead story on July 11.

Chamlong didn't touch on his association with Mrs Chongkol at all.

When pressed for his response to Mrs Chongkol's story, Chamlong said he merely attended rallies to listen to Mrs Chongkol, who is an elder sister of one of his classmates at the Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy. And he went in his civilian disguise so that he wouldn't be recognized because he was then an army major and it wouldn't be appropriate to

wear an army uniform to the rallies. He also claimed that his only active participation was in the march from the Royal Plaza to Government House on October 6.

Chamlong declined an invitation from Thammasat students to discuss the October 6 incident at the university last Saturday. He said he was scheduled to campaign for candidates of his party in the South.

## Intelligence gathering mission

Last Wednesday, Col Prachak Sawangchit, a former key Young Turk, disclosed that Chamlong attended right-wing rallies to gather intelligence for the Young Turk army faction.

Prachak's statement contradicted Chamlong's claim of being a passive bystander who seldom went near Thammasat during the eventful weeks preceding the October 6 incident.

In a book written by Dr Chai-anan Samudavanija about the Young Turks published in 1983, he had this to say about Chamlong:

"From July 1976 onward, Major Chamlong sought cooperation from other pressure groups to stem the rising 'Leftist current' and [he] had close ties with the housewives club [presumably the one led by Mrs Chongkol]. Before the October 6 incident, Major Chamlong was a member of the housewives club and took part in protesting against the government of M.R. Seni Pramoj to [force] the Seni government to resign."

Chai-anan, who reportedly interviewed Chamlong for material to write the book, also wrote that by Chamlong's own account of the coup, the deployment of troops under the command of the Young Turk officers in Bangkok, including those of then Major Prachak, who came down to Bangkok all the way from his outpost in Chiang Rai, made it possible for senior military leaders to seize power as the Seni government was groping for ways to handle the angry right-wing mobs after the massacre at Thammasat on the morning of October 6.

Interestingly, Chai-anan came out last Tuesday to defend Chamlong by asserting that Chamlong had "nothing" to do with either the massacre or the coup.

Chai-anan also claimed that Chamlong was one of the key men behind the amnesty law enacted by the Kriangsak government which enabled a large number of students who joined the outlawed Communist Party of Thailand after the October 6 incident to return to normal life.

Chai-anan evidently contradicted himself because his writing in the book clearly showed that Chamlong had at least "something" to do with the right-wing movement. His claim about Chamlong's playing an active role in pushing for the amnesty was disputed by human-rights lawyer Thongchai Thongpao during a panel discussion at Thammasat last Saturday.

## Chamlong's explanation

Last Friday, Chamlong said, "The incident happened 12 years ago. Sometimes we cannot remember every detail. ...What Colonel Prachak said was correct in some parts and incorrect in others, just like Khun Chongkol's account which was accurate in some parts and mixed up in others."

Chamlong said he will speak his mind in a final rally of his party at Sanam Luang this evening.

He also said he wouldn't lie because he is a devout Buddhist who "wouldn't even smash a mosquito or kill an ant."

Chamlong's popularity is based on public appreciation of his simplicity and honesty. Support for his party depends entirely on Chamlong's ability to mobilize public sympathy for his party and convince the voters to trust his party and its candidates.

Chamlong's party bills itself as a "new alternative" and "good water" to clean up national politics. Since it is making such a big claim, it should prepare to face any scrutiny. And since it is a new party with no record, the only place the voters can look for clues about the party's potential is Chamlong's past.

For Chamlong to cry foul in the current probe into his role in the October 6 incident is, therefore, unwise. And to invoke his asceticism and religiosity as proof of his trustworthiness is childish.

The interest of the press in Chamlong's role is not politically motivated either. The *Nation* just picked up from what Mrs Chongkol had said. *Siam Rath* followed suit and came up with more and more interesting revelations. Then Chamlong's apologists jumped in and tried to rescue their *kon dee*. "Let's forgive but not forget," one of them said.

Col Prachak and others then joined in with their contributions which shed some light on Chamlong's mysterious past. Kasem Sirisamphan, deputy leader of the Social Action Party, disclosed in the panel discussion at Thammasat that Chamlong was one of the active Young Turks who forced Gen Kriangsak Chomanan to step down in late February 1980 and installed Gen Prem Tinsulanonda as premier in early March 1980. Chamlong subsequently served as Prem's secretary-general before he quit in 1981.

What else has Chamlong done? Why is Chamlong trying to hide his past?

If we don't know, how can we tell or predict what he will do once he is in power?

Chamlong have his chance to tell all at Sanam Luang. Let's hope he would not simply go over the same old line about him being a mere passive bystander. Such a claim doesn't hold much substance and it will hurt his credibility and destroy his party.

# Samak, Chamlong claim innocence

**5 days to  
General  
Election**



The election is only five days away. Today, *The Nation* continues to bring you all aspects of the political activities leading to the nationwide ballot-casting on July 24.

*Nation* readers will get the most extensive and in-depth coverage of the election — in both the main morning paper and the AFTERNOON EXTRA which is delivered free to all *Nation* subscribers to offer breaking election reports in the last week of election campaigns and analyses of the political developments.

Our comprehensive coverage today is on Pages 1, 2, 3 and 8.

## ● In Oct 6 '76 massacre of students at Thammasat

**SAMAK Sundaravej said he was not a "murderer". And Chamlong Srimuang declared, "I didn't kill the students."**

The two politicians, whose parties are rivals in the July 24 election, hope that with those statements they can convince the public they had nothing to do with the massacre of students at Thammasat University on Oct 6, 1976.

Chamlong, the Bangkok governor, told a rally of 50,000 people at Sanam Luang that how he could disassociate himself from that tragic event was a matter of "life and death" for his Palang Dharma Party in the election.

● Chatichai wants Oct 6 incident forgotten; Sudsai to reveal truth 40 years after his death — P 3

But Samak apparently didn't care what it would do to his Prachakorn Thai Party.

"I never said or did anything against the students," said Samak at a panel discussion at Chulalongkorn University when asked whether he at any stage before the Oct 6 incident had incited right-wing mobs to rise up against the students who were protesting the return of former military strongman Thanom Kittikachorn.

Samak, who was made interior minister in the post-coup Thanin Government, also denied any association with the village scouts who played an instrumental role in crushing the student movement. He claimed that throughout Oct 6 he was with then deputy governor of Bangkok, Mongkol Simaroj, at the City Hall. "You can check with him," he said.

But Mongkol yesterday declined either to confirm or deny Samak's claim.

While refusing to comment on Samak's role at the time, Mongkol said, "Politicians who were involved (in the Oct 6 incident) should not be telling lies." But he did not elaborate.

Mongkol said he knew a lot of facts about what happened on that day but said he would talk about it after the election.

Samak, who was known for his close links with ultra-rightist groups during the country's most politically turbulent period, said he was told there were some communist infiltrators among the

students. Samak was one of the speakers invited by the Chulalongkorn student union to speak on the Oct 6 incident. Another of the speakers was Maj Gen Sudsai Hasdin, leader of the notorious Red Gaur right-wing movement.

Samak later repeated the denial of his role in the incident during a campaign rally at Chatuchak Park. During the course of the discussion, Samak claimed that he was instrumental in giving back licences to newspapers that were closed down after the Oct 6 coup because he was a member of the ad hoc newspaper licensing board. "I should have been credited for reopening all the newspapers," he said.

But when a participant noted that some progressive newspapers were never allowed to resume publication, Samak contradicted his earlier statement and claimed he did not have the full authority to have all newspapers reopened.

Samak complained that students of Thammasat University have unfairly portrayed him as a "murderer" responsible for the massacre. "I am no murderer," he declared.

And if Samak and Chamlong have anything in common these days, it is the fact that people suspect both of them of having a hand in the massacre of the students. And that Chamlong tried to defend himself as vehemently as Samak did against the charges yesterday.

"I didn't kill the students ... and had nothing to do with any movement that killed them," Chamlong told the cheering crowd at Sanam Luang.

Chamlong, who asked for one minute of silence to mourn the death of the students killed in the riot before he spoke, hoped to use the forum to clear himself once and for all of the allegation that he engineered some of the anti-student right-wing rallies.

Chamlong said that he has become a victim of "cruel" pre-election mudslinging and admitted that his ability to explain himself yesterday held the future of his party.

The rally began at 5 pm with Palang Dharma members taking turns attacking the Prachakorn



CHAMLONG: "I didn't kill the students."

NATIONPHOTO

## Govt steps up vigil on movements of Iranians

THE Immigration Division has intensified its supervision of Iranians arriving in Thailand to prevent possible terrorism, the division's chief said yesterday.

The division is concerned with potential terrorist acts and it has a list of international terrorists to which it refers constantly, said Pol Maj Gen Vanich Kulma, commander of the Immigration Division.

Terrorist groups sometimes employ unknown persons in their missions and notorious criminals may use false names when travelling, he said.

The division's increased concern is a consequence of the death of 290

passengers and crewmen in the downing of an Iranian Airbus by the USS Vincennes above the Persian Gulf on July 3.

Thai authorities earlier stepped up security for American aircraft leaving Bangkok to prevent possible sabotage in retaliation for the Iranian plane attack.

Vanich said there are 193 Iranians in Thailand presently and immigration officials are closely monitoring their movements.

In addition to Iranians, the division is keeping a close watch on Libyans and Syrians in Thailand, he said.

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## ▶▶▶ INNOCENCE

Thai Party, which they charged was behind many of the accusations raised against Chamlong.

Before Chamlong took the podium, a Palang Dharma member told the crowd, "The man who will appear before you right now is not a suspect, nor a murderer. He is here to tell the truth."

Chamlong said Chongkol Srikanchana, a Palang Dharma candidate, confused the public because of her "unclear" statement linking him with the right-wing movements in 1976.

Chongkol, running in Bangkok's Constituency 7, was absent from yesterday's rally, which was joined by most Palang Dharma candidates running in the city.

Palang Dharma sources said Chongkol, whose statements about her past relationship with Chamlong unintentionally reanimated the Oct 6 issue, was barred from the rally by senior party members, who feared she might create more trouble.

Chongkol's statements implied that she and Chamlong stage-managed right-wing rallies against the government and students before right-wing mobs stormed the Thammasat University.

Chamlong said he joined many rallies prior to Oct 6 "as a civilian concerned by chaos in the country."

"I went out alone ... to listen to others' opinions or sometimes to express my opinions. If I was to be blamed, I should be blamed for being nosy."

Chamlong, however, didn't say whether he guided Chongkol to speak at anti-student rallies as recounted by the woman in a recent interview with a weekly Thai magazine.

Chongkol told the magazine Chamlong, "who wore a cap and sunglasses", kept handing her microphones and telling her what to say during the 1976 rallies.

Chamlong said demonstrations in 1976 were very "emotional" and speakers must be able to talk non-stop. "Seeing the podium unoccupied, it's possible that I handed Chongkol a microphone and said 'sister, please speak,' " he said, but did not elaborate.

He also denied being an active "Young Turk" or an army "agent" during the 1986 tragedy.

"If I were responsible for the killing, how could I enter the university again? How could I forget the whole thing. It should have haunted me forever," he said.

The governor admitted the resurgent Oct 6 issue means a matter of "life or death" for his party.

"However, I will accept whatever the verdict from the people," he said.

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# Chamlong's explanation draws positive reaction

PALANG Dharma Party leader Maj-Gen Chamlong Srimuang's first public explanation of his role in the October 6 incident drew a wide range of reactions last night from people who had come to his rally from the provinces as well as from around Bangkok.

Several Palang Dharma supporters said they had been confused by press reports of the PDP leader's role in the incident and had planned not to vote for him.

In an interview with the *Bangkok Post*, they said they now believed the Bangkok governor had not been directly involved in the incident.

Some said, however, that Maj-Gen Chamlong's explanations were unclear and had left many questions unanswered, and others said they did not believe him.

**Thaweesak Vachiravit**, 59, of Samut Prakan said he would vote for the Social Action Party or for individual MPs on July 24.

At first he did not believe in the press reports and wanted to hear Chamlong's side of the story, he said. "Now it's clear that Chamlong could do no such thing.

"Rain or shine, on July 24 I will vote for all PDP candidates," he said.

**Miss Orn-aksorn sae Ung**, 35, said she had planned to vote for the PDP but wavered after the controversy began over the October 6 incident. "Now I am confident again because he has been able to clear himself," she said.

Although she may still have doubts, she said no one really knows who had been behind the incident, and "you have to be fair to him," she said.

**Sonchai Tippayarak**, 37, said that he had been planning not to vote for the PDP anyway, but had come to the rally because he was interested in the incident. He was satisfied with Maj-Gen Chamlong's explanation, he said, adding that the accusations had been aimed at discrediting the Bangkok Governor.

**Sanchai Plengsri**, 36, said he was satisfied with only part of Maj-Gen Chamlong's explanation, but the incident should have no influence on the outcome of Sunday's elections.

He had planned to vote for the Democrats in Huay Kwang, but now he would vote for one PDP candidate, he said.

**Tor Samaidarn**, 42, of Bang Khun Thien, said he is still unsure if Maj-Gen Chamlong was involved in October 6.

"There's a 50-50 chance," he said.

He said Chamlong's speech had been unclear and ambiguous, and he did not believe some of it. He did not elaborate.

**Somboon Wiwat**, 32, a labourer, said he didn't believe Chamlong had been involved, adding that while the governor had cleared up his personal role, he had left many points unanswered.

For example, Maj-Gen Chamlong's story differed from what Col Prachak Sawangchit had said, he said.

Mr Somboon said he firmly believed

that only Maj-Gen Utharn Sanitwong and Maj-Gen Sudsai Hasdin had been behind the student massacre.

A lawyer, **Suriyan Suphacheep**, 26, said the Chamlong's explanation was clear and believable.

Mr Suriyan said he knew it was the truth because he had read Dr Puey Ungpakorn's account of the incident.

"I believe Maj-Gen Chamlong is a good person and don't believe he did it," he said.

A trader, **Withawat Benchapong**, 36, said he did not believe the accusations made against Chamlong by Samak Sundaravej of Prachakorn Thai Party and Capt Chalerm Yoobamrung of Muan Chon. The governor's statement had been clear and credible.

A student, **Wit Matiyanan**, 26, said he didn't know if Maj-Gen Chamlong had been involved, but knew of a former minister and now party leader who had been.

"I don't believe Maj-Gen Chamlong

would kill students," he said, but added, "Chamlong is like any other politician who is used to answering questions evasively."

**Somchai Masdee**, 24, a Thammasat University student, said he did not believe either Chamlong or Samak after hearing their explanations.

He said they had evaded the important questions and caused more confusion with their answers.

**Preecha Phetpiphat**, 26, a state enterprise worker, said he believed Chamlong had not been directly involved.

"I want to know what happened at that time though, because I was still a little boy. I am disappointed that Maj-Gen Chamlong's explanation was not clear."

A 40-year-old businessman, **Man Pitayaphanpong**, 47, said he did not believe all of what Chamlong had said because he had offered no proof.

However, he admitted that he had changed his opinion of Chamlong and

now supported him, though not 100 per cent.

A 26-year-old government official, **Prasom Boonmee**, 26, who had hired a pick-up truck with his friends to bring them to the Bangkok rally from Nakhon Pathom said he believed Chamlong was not telling the truth.

**Chairat Sukranon**, 32, a mechanic, said he did not believe all of what Chamlong had to say, and he had more to do to prove his innocence.

He had not yet decided who he will vote for on July 24, he said.

**Phra Noppakhun Kathaseelo**, a 30-year-old monk at Wat Liab Rajabamrung, who came to the rally with monks from other temples, said he was particularly interested in Chamlong's links to Santi Asoke Religious Centre.

He said he doubted that Chamlong had been involved in the Oct 6 incident.

"Although I have no right to vote, I have a right to know what is going on in the country," said the monk.



Bangkok with the PDP and it was her unwitting statement implicating Maj-Gen Chamlong in the October 6 incidents that touched off the controversy.

Clarifying why he had dressed as a civilian to attend the rally at the Royal Plaza on October 6, the PDP leader said he was acting independently.

He said he wore civilian clothes because, at that time, he wasn't sure if wearing a military uniform would be safe.

Maj-Gen Chamlong said he did not gather information because he was not an intelligence officer.

The three Armed Forces branches had their own intelligence officers, he said.

He said he did not attend the rallies as an "agitator of military officers" to create a situa-

# Chamlong

tion that would set the stage for a coup to overthrow the Government.

"If I had been one of them, I should have been made a Cabinet minister or a member of the national assembly as a reward. But I was neither," Maj-Gen Chamlong said.

He also maintained he did not represent the so-called "Young Turk" Army officers because the group then was not strong, and only three of them were battle commanders.

The governor insisted he did not venture near Thammasat University before or after October 6.

He said he did not know of the storming of the university and the massacre at the time because he was then concerned only

with urging the Government to restore order.

The rallies at the Royal Plaza and Government House were not connected with the killings at Thammasat, he said, noting that shooting had already started at Thammasat before the rally took place at the Royal Plaza.

To clarify a statement by Mrs Chongkol that she received a microphone from Maj-Gen Chamlong at the Royal Plaza rally, he admitted having entrusted her with the microphone because he, like the others, was impatient and "wanted someone to address the crowd".

He said he did not recall what Mrs Chongkol said at the time.

"Our main concern was to urge the Government

to restore peace," he said.

He added that he was invited to attend the wedding of a former student leader, Sutham Sangprathum, and also to preside over the funeral of Mr Sutham's wife.

"If my hands were stained, would he (Mr Sutham) invite me to attend his beloved wife's funeral?" the PDP leader asked.

He said distortions concerning the October 6 incident had affected his party.

"But whether I survive or die politically depends on your judgement on July 24. Whatever the outcome, I will accept with grace.

"If the judgement is for me to stay on, then I will continue to serve. But if the judgement is that I should be dead, then I shall go back to where I come from — as an honest and ordinary Chamlong."

him the post of deputy industry minister in a reshuffled Cabinet.

He declined the offer because it was "tantamount to a relegation" and he quit the Democrat Party, he said.

Mr Samak claimed that when a NARC leader consulted him on closing all newspapers after the riots, he advised against it.

He also claimed he was the one who, later on, gave approval for reopening all publications.

A former newsman of *Prachachart* newspaper then asked Mr Samak if he was sure he approved the reopening of all closed papers, citing the case of *The Nation*, *Prachattipattai* and *Prachachart* which were not immediately allowed to resume publication.

The Prachakorn Thai leader said "he could not remember" and claimed the case of these publica-

# Samak

tions might not have reached him "because others were also empowered to deal with the press".

A student then quoted an article from the October 6, 1976, edition of *Thai Rath*, which reported that a radio announcer, Arkhom Makaranond, said Mr Samak would appear on TV Channel 7 despite a ban imposed by Prime Minis-

ter Seni.

"I don't recall whether I went on television or not. But it's not important," Mr Samak replied.

While saying he is against communism, the Prachakorn Thai leader insisted he had not instigated the mob that attacked student protesters during the incident.

Later yesterday, Mr Samak reiterated his claim that he was not involved in the Oct 6 bloodbath during a campaign rally at Chatuchak Park.

# a seeks end 6 debate

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where in Bangkok.

The veteran politician also told how he and a number of other Democrat Party members had been accused of being communists and had been called on to resign by a right-wing movement that later marched to Government House before the military takeover.

Mrs Pantipa said the riot at Thammasat had been well-planned to set the stage for the coup.

"The Armoured Radio was airing exciting messages around the clock inciting the mob to kill the students," she claimed.

"I have no personal conflict with Khun Samak, and cannot say if he was involved in the incident. But I was surprised when he was appointed interior minister (in the Tanin Kraivixien Government) when none of the Democrat Party members received such a reward after the period," she said.

Mrs Pantipa said she did know Maj-Gen Chamlong, but said he was not important enough at the time to order the storming of Thammasat University.

**PANTIPA...stop delving.**

vent it from being distorted and used for political purposes in the general election.

he handed out copies of a letter sent to Democrat Party members by his colleague Surin Pitsuwan.

Mr Surin, who was a Minister in the Seni Pramroj Government, offered details about the administration's plan to declare a nationwide state of emergency to end the rallies at Thammasat and else-



# Chamlong: 'Did I kill them with my eyes?' 20 JUL 87

By The Nation's Political Desk

**B**ANGKOK Governor Chamlong Srimuang has now given his fullest account so far of his role in the events of Oct 6, 1976. He clearly denies having had anything to do with the assault on students protesting in Thammasat University, either directly or indirectly.

Inevitably, a few questions remain. Is Chamlong being truthful by claiming that he was simply an enthusiastic supporter of the right-wing groups at the Royal Plaza on the morning of Oct 6? Was he really working in a personal capacity?

Was it possible for an army officer or anyone else at demonstrations at one end of Rajdamnoen Avenue to be unaware of what had been going on since dawn at the other end? Did no one really hear the shooting at Thammasat University?

But the biggest question is one of interpretation and judgement. And it is a question that a number of other political leaders — such as Samak Sundaravej and Chatichai Choonhavan — also have to answer.

The question is: Given the heated atmosphere of 1976 and the right-wing violence that erupted at previous protests, such as in August 1976, is it really plausible to argue that participants in the right-wing demonstrations and media hysteria were entirely separate from the violence at Thammasat?

## NO RESPONSIBILITY?

The concern shown by Chamlong, Samak and Chatichai to prove that they had "nothing to do with" the storming of Thammasat is an interesting reflection on how the incident is now viewed.

Chamlong denies having blood-stained hands. Samak's *Daily Mirror* newspaper carries front-page headlines referring to mass-murderers — an indication that Prachakorn Thai believes association with the incident is politically damaging and that it can use the issue to win votes at the expense of Chamlong. Chatichai also denies involvement.

By implication, there are (or were) "mass murderers" with "blood-stained hands" who ordered the Border Patrol Police to storm the university with such a powerful array of weaponry.

Chamlong defends his support of the rightist demonstrations by arguing that leftist demonstrations in that period were accompanied by unprecedented violence — hand grenades and bottle bombs were used. That is one of the arguments used by Samak and Chatichai at the time.

What the argument overlooks is that almost all of the violence came from rightist groups, many of them the very people who spoke at the rallies Chamlong attended and in the radio programmes that brought people like Chamlong out on the streets. Among the most strident speakers was Samak. Patrons of the right-wing groups included leaders of the Chat Thai Party, such as Chatichai.

Samak later became one of the most prominent defenders of the assault on Thammasat and has only this year changed his tune.

The question of responsibility is a complicated one that will continue to be debated. But many people living in Bangkok in the weeks and months up to Oct 6 could clearly see where it was all leading. With the benefit of hindsight, the links are almost indisputable.

Whatever the answer, Chamlong deserves to be listened to carefully.

## CHAMLONG'S ACCOUNT

At his Palang Dharma Party's rally at Sanam Luang on Monday, Chamlong said repeatedly and categorically: "I did not kill the students. I had no part in killing the students."

He denied that he was involved in any intelligence gathering. Prajark Sawangjit, who along with Chamlong was a founding-member of the Young Turks, said recently Chamlong was gathering intelligence for the Young Turks.

Chamlong also implicitly denied that he was orchestrating the demonstration at the Royal Plaza and the march to Government House. But he did not say so specifically, perhaps in order to avoid contradicting Chongkol Srikanchana, the Palang Dharma candidate for Constituency 7 in Bangkok who claimed recently he helped her direct the right-wing demonstration.

He said he went to the Royal Plaza in a personal capacity and did not wear uniform because he was not sure if it was "wrong" to be there. He admitted wearing a cap and dark glasses in order to remain incognito.

Chamlong said the rally at the Royal Plaza was chaotic and that some of the speakers were boring. Like other members of the audience, he said, he became impatient. So when there was a pause between speakers, he said, he handed Chongkol the microphone and urged her to speak. At that time she led a right-wing housewives' group.

That was the first time he met Chongkol, he said. Previously he had heard her speak on the radio and was impressed with her fearlessness. Subsequently he got to know her better because her brother had been his class-mate at pre-cadet school. (Chongkol's brother joined the police, Chamlong said.)

Chongkol claimed Chamlong had helped orchestrate the Oct 6 right-wing demonstration, first in a recent interview with *Lak Thai* magazine and then at a Palang Dharma rally at Lumpini Park on July 1.

On Monday, he said the party had subsequently considered what she had said and agreed that she "told the truth", but that the timing was bad because there was too little time

before the election to explain what she meant. (He also denied that the party had attempted to gag Chongkol, although he was not among the Bangkok candidates on the stage listening to his speech.)

In this respect Chamlong is guilty of a fudge — perhaps in an attempt to salvage party unity and credibility. Most would agree that Chamlong and Chongkol cannot both be telling the truth, even allowing for his argument that people's recollections of what happened 12 years ago are bound to contain inaccuracies.

At about 11 am on Oct 6, Chamlong said, he joined the rightists in their march to Government House. They were not seeking to overthrow the government, he said, but simply to urge the government to restore law and order.

## THE COUP

He said he returned home at about 4 pm and did not learn about the military coup that overthrew the elected coalition government of Democrat Seni Pramoj until it was announced on radio and television at 7 pm.

He denied that he or his Young Turk colleagues were involved in the coup — but in 1981 he reportedly told Dr Chai-Anan Samudavanija, a Chulalongkorn University political scientist now working at the Thailand Development Research Institute, that the mobilization of troops under the command of the other Young Turks made the coup possible even though they were not under orders from the officers who staged the coup. At that time Chamlong did not himself command any troops.

"If I had coordinated with the military I would probably have become something — become a minister," he argued, alluding to Samak (who became interior minister) and others. Staging coups is a risky business, he said, and participants would have been rewarded with some important post. (He hurriedly added that he was only joking because, along with other Palang Dharma members, he is not seeking any ministerial position.)

Nor would he need to run for election, he went on. Participants in the coup were appointed to the National Assembly. "Remember the National Reform Assembly?" he asked.

## THAMMASAT

Chamlong repeated his denial that he had been near Thammasat either on Oct 6 or in the weeks before or after. Nor, he said, did he coordinate with any police officer on Oct 6. He did not name anyone, but it was understood that he was referring to Salang Bunnag, then a police colonel, who has been accused of participating in the events at Thammasat.

If he did not go near Thammasat, Chamlong asked, how could he have killed students? "Did I kill them with my eyes?" Or with some psychic power? "Is that possible? But they (political

opponents) try and invent the possibility."

Chamlong repeatedly distinguished between the rally at the Royal Plaza and the assault at Thammasat. He read out excerpts from *Siam Jodmaay Het* (*Siam Chronicle*) which said the violence at Thammasat broke out between rightists outside and students inside just before 6 am with a first attempt by police to enter the university at 6.20 am — said to have failed because of firing from the students — and a final storming by Border Patrol Police at 8 am using M-79 grenade launchers, M-16 automatic rifles, HKs and carbines.

He also quoted passages describing how students trying to escape from the university were lynched by the mobs outside, some killed, others severely wounded.

At 11 am, when the demonstrators at the plaza marched to Government House, the police started arresting the students in Thammasat, Chamlong said. He repeated that he had no idea what was going on in the university.

The rightists at the Royal Plaza rallied because they were concerned about disorder and outraged by pictures published in newspapers the previous day showing a play performed at Thammasat in which one actor playing a victim of a hanging was, Chamlong said, made up to look like the Crown Prince. (Some activists had previously been found hanged in Nakhon Pathom.)

Chamlong said he had been given the photograph on Oct 5 along with newspapers that reproduced it. The photograph and concern for the "three institutions" — the Nation, Religion and Monarchy — spurred him to join the rally at the Royal Plaza, he said.

He argued that many of the demonstrators at the Royal Plaza had children or relatives demonstrating inside Thammasat and could not possibly have wanted the university to be stormed.

In further support of his argument that he had nothing to do with the bloodbath, Chamlong said student activists and Thammasat academics subsequently showed their trust in him by talking to him or inviting him to speak at the university.

For example, Wachiraporn Saengpathum, a former student who became a reporter with *Matichon* newspaper, regularly discussed politics with him.

"She can't have been such a stupid fool as to have continued to interview a murderer," Chamlong said. "Why did she do it? Because she knew I wasn't a murderer."

When she died in a car accident, he said, her husband, Sutham Saengpathum, leader of the National Student Centre of Thailand who was arrested on Oct 6, invited him to preside at the funeral.

"If my hands were stained with blood, would Khun Sutham have invited me to preside at the funeral of his wife?" Chamlong asked.

# Samak and Chamlong clash at rival rallies

PALANG Dharma Party leader Chamlong Srimuang and Prachakorn Thai Party leader Samak Sundaravej confronted one another last night when both parties staged campaign rallies only 100 metres apart at National Housing Authority flats in Din Daeng.

Both rallies drew crowds of about 1,000.

Mr Samak unleashed another attack on Maj-

Gen Chamlong.

He said the Bangkok governor "did not dare to speak the whole truth" concerning his involvement in the October 6, 1976 incident, and "did not dare to clear himself when invited to do so by students".

The Prachakorn Thai leader then attacked former Democrat Party member Pantipa Wat-

charobol for her remarks against him on the October 6 incident.

He said that Maj-Gen Chamlong, as a vegetarian, is not in a good position to know what people are suffering from.

Maj-Gen Chamlong, at his own rally, said he had become a target for accusations on a number of issues, including communism and the killing of students in the October 6

riot.

He described the accusations against him as "smear campaigns, lack of morality and competing with each other in doing bad things".

Both Mr Samak and Maj-Gen Chamlong spoke for about an hour.

Yesterday Mr Samak sent a letter to Maj-Gen Chamlong asking him to help prevent fraud in Sunday's election.

In his letter, Mr Samak said the current system is vulnerable to cheating.

Mr Samak suggested that blackboards on which results are noted down be marked with the number of the polling booth, district and constituency and that the results on every blackboard be photographed.

He said that since blackboard results do not usually match the official results sent to polling headquarters, he suspected that polling booth officials could change the results.

Also, ballot boxes arriving at the district office should be placed in a public area until official counting starts, he said.

Usually, ballot boxes are placed in a locked room, he said, where someone could open the boxes and put in additional or invalid votes.

His party would set up a tent for the ballot boxes in the district office compound "if the BMA refuses to do so", he said.