

# THAI PURGE RESULTS IN CLIMATE OF FEAR

## With More Than 5,000 Arrested by the Military Junta, Roundups and Searches Continue Daily

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BANGKOK, Thailand, Oct. 30—The Thai military junta has embarked on a wide-ranging purge of people who have or are suspected of having Communist affiliations, and it has created a climate of fear—fear of arrest and imprisonment, or of losing jobs.

Police figures not yet made public show that in the first two weeks after the military takeover Oct. 6 there were almost 5,000 arrests. In only 58 cases were the police said to have documentary evidence of Communist affiliation. According to preliminary police estimates, at least 500 more arrests were made in the next few days in Bangkok alone.

Those arrested without documentary evidence are listed as suspects. In most cases, it is reported, they have been rounded up as a result of cursory searches of homes and offices or on the basis of hearsay evidence from neighbors or acquaintances that they have reputations for what is described as subversive thinking. Roundups and searches are continuing daily.

On Oct. 22 the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Anand Panyarachun, was removed from office and the civil service, reportedly because of his stands during discussions on the United States presence in Thailand and relations with Communist governments in Indochina. Similarly, the two senior officials of the Budget Bureau were removed, it is said because of their close association with Air Siam, the charter line, some members of the new junta are connected with the other flag carrier, Thai International.

### Ex-Premier Is Interrogated

Last Thursday a panel of police generals interrogated former Prime Minister Seni Pramoj concerning his ties with student groups involved in violent clashes with the police at Thammasat University that preceded his ouster.

As the powerful military establishment, restrained during three years of democratic rule that ended Oct. 6, moved against a broad spectrum of opposition groups and individuals, a European ambassador with extensive experience in Southeast Asia commented:

"Much will depend on the next few months—the first few months of the new Government. But the record so far is frightening, and what is most frightening is their lack of discrimination. They paint everything from left-wing Maoist to New Force with the same red brush." The New Force Party is widely viewed as a moderate reformist organization.

The left and the opposition which in Thailand are not necessarily synonymous, have been among the most diverse, outspoken and thoughtful in Southeast Asia since they emerged three years ago after a coalition of student groups almost singlehandedly overthrew the previous military dictator, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn and, with the support of King Phumiphol Aduldet, forced the establishment of a civilian government.

In the first months of that government, late in 1973, a broad spectrum of political parties blossomed, ranging from the United Socialist Front and the Socialist Party of Thailand on the far left to the military-backed Social Justice and Chart Thai Parties on the far right. Only the underground Communist Party, consisting of a small group of fringe labor officials and of insurgents in the jungles, was officially prohibited.

### New Publications Suppressed

In and around these groups there grew up a series of publications—daily, weekly, monthly—espousing outspoken viewpoints all across the political spectrum. All have been suppressed and in some cases their editors have been imprisoned or are in hiding.

Several days after the Oct. 6 coup the home of a Thai employee of a Western volunteer agency who had been working upcountry for several months was searched by policemen. They found nothing, but they returned later and discovered "subversive literature." He had not been home in the interim.

When special-branch policemen phoned his employer about him, the atmosphere in the office turned ugly. "He was one of the most popular people here," said a Westerner who worked with him, "but now none of our Thais even wanted to mention his name. I've never seen them this scared."

### Neighbors Were Suspicious

When the American sought to determine why the employee was suspect, he was told: "He was married several months ago and neighbors thought it was suspicious he had not returned home since then."

There is a hard core of pro-Communist insurgency in some areas of the country, but Western counterinsurgency experts who have watched it for years have seen little substantive change.

"You just do not have a Vietnam type of situation here," one of the Western experts explained. "You have no broad base of dissatisfaction or dissent in the villages where the insurgency can grow. You have a strong central Government and, above all, a King who is committedly anti-Communist and whom the people revere."

As for the students—more than 3,000 of them were arrested the day of the coup and immediately thereafter and more than 400 are reported to be in jail still—their community has changed considerably since October 1973 when the previous military government was ousted. Now, like most of the political and intellectual groups, they are badly fragmented.

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