

New Leader in Thailand

Sa-ngad Chaloryu

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BANGKOK, Thailand, Oct. 7—Several months ago, a crew from Bangkok's Metropolitan Electricity Authority found it would have to turn off the voltage in a group of select houses along a small lane on the outskirts of the city. They approached

Man
in the
News

one of the houses with trepidation. It was occupied by a senior Thai military official and such officials are not used to being told

that they will have to do without something, particularly by a governmental organization. But when the problem was explained, the official, a chunky man with close-cropped hair and a broad face, smiled, observed that it was all for the public good, the electricity went off and the work was quickly completed.

Yesterday, the leadership of Thailand was suddenly and, many of his friends believe, somewhat reluctantly thrust into the hands of the military official, Adm. Sa-ngad Chaloryu. He and more than a dozen fellow officers formed the Administrative Reform Council, seized power and Admiral Sa-ngad, as the council chairman, became Thailand's new government chief.

The post could not have gone to a more unlikely prospect, many believe. And it is largely for this reason that these people say that the admiral does not hold the real power. They say that it lies with other, stronger officers, particularly leaders of the army, which has traditionally dominated the military hierarchy, leaving the tiny, weak navy far behind in power, prestige and perquisites.

Personality and Reputation

Then why was Admiral Sa-ngad chosen as the junta's public face? The reasons most widely mentioned are his character, his personality and his unscarred reputation. He has the kind of image that the junta is trying to project to the Thai people in an effort to heal the scars of weeks and months of turmoil and one day — yesterday — of bloody conflict.

Sa-ngad Chaloryu was born March 3, 1915, in Suphanburi Province north of Bangkok. Little is known of his life until he was graduated from the Royal Naval Academy in 1939 and began his rise through the ranks of the military.

The service he chose has always been the least significant in the Thai military — with fewer than 24,000 officers and men — largely because most of Thailand's wars have been with landlocked neighbors to the north.

During World War II, he served on torpedo boats, the backbone of the Thai navy. His first wife was killed during that war, reportedly as the result of an allied bombing raid. His second wife, Sukon, is a fourth-generation Christian and one of the leading Protestant leaders in Southeast Asia. He has



Associated Press

Enjoys an unscarred reputation

two children—a son studying architecture in the United States and a daughter studying medicine in Germany.

In November of 1951, Sa-ngad Chaloryu was imprisoned briefly because of a peripheral involvement in an abortive attempt to overthrow Field Marshal Pibul Songkram. He bounced back quickly. During the 1960's he held a succession of executive positions with the fleet, including deputy commander in chief and chief of staff. In November 1973, he was named naval commander in chief and two years later supreme commander of the armed forces.

He was apparently aligned with no outside political forces—his only political posts having been a two-year appointment by the King to a seat in the largely ceremonial Senate and a two-year appointment to the National Legislative Assembly, a huge body that drafted the constitution. Ironically, it was this Constitution that the admiral abolished last night.

Appointment by Pramoj

It was his apparent nonalignment with any major political party that resulted in his appointment three days ago to the post of defense minister when Prime Minister Seni Pramoj was unable to settle on any of the claimants to the post among members of his fragmenting coalition.

Later, attempts were made to install him in a party. According to senior Democratic Party politicians he had agreed to join their party when the entire exercise was rendered moot by the coup, in which all political parties were dissolved.

His political philosophy is not clear, though he is presumed to be a moderate, leaning to the right. Western diplomats consider him pro-American.

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