

New Thai Junta Solidifies Rule; Curfew Lifted

Curbs Are Continuing on Most Civil Rights

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BANGKOK, Thailand, Oct. 7—Thailand's new military rulers today began the complex task of consolidating the power they seized yesterday.

The midnight-to-5 A.M. curfew that they imposed was lifted, and it was announced that some newspapers would probably be allowed to resume publishing in three days. But other civil liberties, Parliament and the Constitution remained suspended.

A ban on the assembly of more than five people continued, and policemen manned roadblocks on major downtown streets, stopping cars to search at random for contraband arms.

The universities, including Thammasat University, where violent clashes between students and policemen yesterday morning left at least 30 dead and hundreds injured, remained shut. Armed policemen patrolled the campus while hundreds of people watched from across the street, gaping at the bullet holes in the walls, the shattered windows and the blood-spattered pavements.

On foreign policy, the new administration said only that it would continue to "respect all treaty commitments of the Royal Thai Government." However, some foreign diplomats said it appeared likely that the new leaders would lean far more

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Thai Military Consolidating Rule; Curfew Ends but Most Curbs Stay

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closely to the West and particularly the United States than the ousted Government of Prime Minister Seni Pramroj, who reportedly remained in what was described as protective custody.

Members of the Administrative Reform Council, the Junta headed by Adm. Sangad Chaloryu that seized power at 6 P.M. yesterday, met today with the under secretaries or senior civil servants in each of the principal ministries and charged them with continuing government operations.

All other ministers and deputy ministers who served in the Seni government cleaned out their offices as the military rulers began establishing military-backed commissions to supervise some aspects of government.

Publishers and editors of principal newspapers and owners of the radio and television stations were summoned to command headquarters to be told the terms under which they might resume operations and to meet the censorship committees.

Communist Role Charged

Lieut. Gen. Tuantong Suwanatat, not a member of the junta but apparently its chief spokesman, told the publishers that Communists had been "considerably involved" in the disorders of the last few days and that the incidents had "direct repercussions on national security and stability." The general said that newspapers could apply to the junta for permission to reopen and that "the committee will consider applications for each newspaper separately."

"I feel confident that newspapers which adhere to the ideals and principles of democratic government with the King as chief of state will not suffer any repercussions whatsoever," he added.

Few Thais appeared to know precisely who was running the country beyond the chairman of the Administrative Reform Council, the retired supreme commander and defense minister, Admiral Sa-ngad. But in a series of interviews with senior military officials who are not members of the ruling junta and with others close to the military establishment, a profile of the new administrative council began to emerge.

It is said to consist of 18 four-star generals, or their equivalents in the navy and air force, and seems to be dominated by several army men—particularly the deputy supreme commander, Gen. Kriangsak Chamanand.

Areas of Control Set Up

The junta has organized itself into such broad areas as internal affairs, external affairs and maintenance of order. Radio announcements, which continue to be the only official source of news, indicated that Gen. Serm na Nakhorn, the army commander in chief, has been placed in charge of security and operations of the Bangkok metropolitan area.

Air Chief Marshal Kamol Dechatungka, who replaced Admiral Sa-ngad as supreme commander last week, was placed in charge of overall national security and Adm. Amorn Sirikaya, the new navy commander, is reported in charge of other internal affairs.

The coup was at least the 12th forcible change of government since the military ended the power of the absolute monarchy in 1932 with a bloodless coup.

Ironically, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, who was toppled as Thailand's military dictator three years ago, provided at least an indirect cause of yesterday's seizure of power by the military, from the

civilian government of Prime Minister Seni.

Exiled to Singapore in October 1973 after a bloody series of battles between students and the military, Marshal Thanom returned to Thailand as a Buddhist monk three weeks ago and students took to the streets to protest. The protests ended yesterday morning when the police stormed into Thammasat University. Hours later, the military announced it had seized power.

Causes of the Coup

The real causes of the coup seemed today to go far deeper. The military has long been a major power in Thai politics and society. But student power is a comparatively recent phenomenon that reached its zenith in the anti-Thanom action of three years ago. It was undertaken by a broad coalition of tightly organized student groups. Some of that organization persisted, but the students quickly fragmented, largely along class lines.

The elitist students from the liberal-arts universities, mostly from the wealthier, better educated and more socially elevated families, drifted to the left. The vocational university students drifted toward the right wing and the military.

Politicians have been quick to take advantage of this split, particularly in view of the shortage of other comparably organized groups in Thai society. Labor unions are weak or nonexistent, political parties fragmented with little large following. The students apparently remain the only group capable of generating a demonstration or poster campaign on a moment's notice.

Military Felt It Had Support

Many politicians agreed today that because of the fragmentation of political parties and the growing conflict among the students, the military had concluded that it was time to intervene and that it had won broad enough popular support for such a takeover to hold.

Plans for the coup had apparently been formulated in January when the military applied substantial pressure on the then Prime Minister, Kukrit Pramroj, Mr. Seni's predecessor, either to dissolve Parliament and call new elections that could strengthen the hand of the right wing or to face the likelihood of a coup.

Sources close to the junta said tonight that the first nine major directives the body issued had been drafted in January. The speed of yesterday's takeover, agreed upon in a matter of hours, took many, even within the military hierarchy, by surprise.

What the Administrative Reform Council hopes, according to some officials close to its operation is that its work can be completed within three months and the government turned back to civilian rule, probably with a right-wing politician at its head.

The jockeying has apparently already begun for this post led by such right-wing military politicians as Gen. Pramarn Adireksarn, the Minister of Agriculture and former defense minister, and Gen. Chatichai Choonhaven, the Minister of Industry and former foreign minister.