

Premier Seizes Power in Thailand

Associated Press

Bangkok

Thailand's brief experiment with limited democracy ended yesterday. Premier Thanom Kittikachorn dissolved parliament, suspended the constitution and assumed absolute power.

Paratroopers moved into Bangkok to reinforce regular police patrols, and tanks encircled the parliament building. But despite imposition of martial law and police checkpoints in the streets, the capital appeared calm.

Regular announcements on Radio Thailand, interspersed with patriotic songs, said Thanom will head a Revolutionary Council with power to decide all civil and military matters. The cabinet was disbanded.

KING

Thanom pledged loyalty to King Bhumibol Adalyadej, who remains as a symbol in

this monarchy but keeps his hands off politics.

The Revolutionary Council pledged to continue Thailand's foreign policy, which has been strongly anti-Communist and pro-American during the Indo-China War. There was no indication Thanom's assumption of absolute power would endanger the status of United States air bases in Thailand.

In Washington the State Department declined to comment on the upheaval.

A department spokesman said about 32,000 U.S. troops now are in Thailand, which is scheduled to receive \$60 million in military aid and \$40 million in economic assistance, from the U.S. this fiscal year.

AMERICANS

In addition to the troops, mainly airmen, there are 11,000 other Americans living in Thailand, most of them dependents of servicemen.

An announcement from Revolutionary Council headquarters said internal domestic strife and a threatening international situation had made the takeover necessary.

The announcement, broadcast over the national radio, said the internal troubles included obstruction by parliament, insurrection in the north, student unrest, strikes and terrorism.

"All this presents a threat to the security of the government and the throne," the council said.

Constitutional procedures, it added, would have been too late.

Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, who lost his job,

See Back Page

The Premier Takes Over In Thailand

From Page 1

blamed Thanom's decision on "excessive behavior" of members of parliament.

SATISFACTION

"I take satisfaction in the development. The only regret I have is that it could not have taken a more evolutionary form," he said.

"Somehow or another we have not mastered the political forms of Europe and America."

Thanom's power move ended the two-year life of parliament and the three-year life of Thailand's constitution. Both were experimental ways of government in Thailand, which was the absolute monarchy of Siam until 1932.

Thanom, a 60-year-old field marshal, had ruled the country by decree from 1963 until the elections were held in 1969.

COUP

His predecessor and patron, Sarit Thanarat, also was a field marshal. Sarit seized power in a 1957 military coup and turned over the premiership to Thanom, but within a year abandoned the attempt at parliamentary rule and resumed command until his death in 1963.

Thanom's decision to follow in Sarit's footsteps appeared to reflect a judgment that constitutional rule with an elected parliament was not working.

In theory, a requirement for two-thirds majority in parliament meant the government could never lose a vote. But the government, composed mainly of soldiers like Thanom, was unable to keep its own party in line. Legislators delayed last year's budget until the government prodded them with an army alert.

DELEGATION

A delegation from the Revolutionary Council visited King Bhumibol to explain the new situation to him. It in-



AP Wirephoto

PREMIER THANOM
The absolute ruler

cluded Thanom; General Praphas Charusatthien, the army commander in chief and interior minister in the former government; Pote Sarasin, deputy premier and national development minister; General Prasert Ruchirawongse and Air Chief Marshal Dawee Chullasapya.

They conferred with the king for 20 minutes, the national radio reported.

Thanom often has said he wanted to resign. Soft-spoken and popular with most Thais, he has a reputation as a diplomatic healer able to smooth over differences.

SURPRISE

Because of his avuncular ways, Thanom's swift assumption of power came as a surprise to many Thai politicians who did not consider him ruthless enough.

Despite Thailand's strong backing of U.S. policy in Indochina, the government has moved recently to reappraise its policy toward China.

"We are not the enemy of the people in China but we are against those who export Communist doctrine to our kingdom," Thanom once said.

Thailand has accused the Chinese of backing rebels in the northeast attempting to break away from Bangkok's rule. It has permitted U.S. planes to use bases in Thailand for bombing raids in Vietnam and sent a contingent of Thai soldiers to help Saigon.