

Thai Junta's Campaign to Blame

By George McArthur
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The new military regime of Thailand is engaged in an almost frantic effort to fix the blame on Communists for the brutal scenes at Thammasat University that accompanied its coup last Wednesday.

Under Thailand's new strongman, Admiral Sangad Chaloryu, the police are also seizing and suppressing photos of the violent military attack on the downtown campus.

The government has admitted that 41 people died in the fighting—two policemen and 39 students, although other estimates are higher. About 15 bodies remain in morgues, unidentified and unclaimed.

Western newsmen who witnessed the attack by police and border patrol units declared that it was an example of overkill. The troops raked the buildings with automatic weapons fire and used high explosive shells from recoilless cannon. In addition, the throng of right-wing students and "Village Scouts" converging on the campus engaged in unrestrained savagery—assertedly lynching four Thammasat students and, in several witnessed incidents, mutilating corpses.

Photos of these incidents have been published worldwide but few have been seen within Thailand.

Local newsmen have told Western reporters that the police have

now seized all the negatives and prints found in newspaper and television offices. The dozen newspapers permitted to resume publication Saturday were forbidden to print photos of the clash.

In addition, inspired accounts appeared in the now controlled press. One account of the lynchings said "four fleeing protesters were fatally lynched despite efforts of the police to save them," but witnesses on the scene said the police made no such efforts.

Yesterday, the Village Scouts, a right-wing nationalist movement, was exempted from a decree banning gatherings of more than five people.

The authorities also declared the Communist Vietnamese agents were on the campus. The police reported a medallion, said to be found on one of the dead, was

inscribed in words believed to be Vietnamese but otherwise unspecified. Police Lieutenant General Chumpollohachala said such medallions were used by "Communist elements" as identification.

The newspapers also claimed the armed forces had reports that "Vietnamese terrorists" had smuggled highly destructive weapons on the Thammasat campus.

But on a television broadcast last night, the police search commander displayed only two AK-47 rifles — one Soviet-made and the other Chinese-made — plus some grenades and pistols. The haul also included a flag from Communist-ruled Cambodia, Chinese contraceptive pills and dehydrated food.

One example of the anti-Communist efforts was a raid on the downtown hotel room of former

Reds

London Times correspondent Bruce Palling, now in Rhodesia. The government radio announced that they had found "Communist documents" there.

Meanwhile, the police were systematically confiscating suspected Communist books and literature from bookshops, street stalls and university libraries. One published account said that more than one million books had been seized. They were being burned in the special branch police headquarters in Bangkok, and similar sweeps were taking place in the countryside.