

Tri Quang is clearly testing the prevailing political winds to see if a successful antigovernment campaign can be developed by reviving anti-Catholic sentiments. The militants' peace cam-

paign has failed to gain much momentum, and Tri Quang may have decided that the theme of religious persecution may be more successful.
(~~SECRET~~)

NEW THAI GOVERNMENT IS FORMED

There were no major changes in the new 28-man cabinet proclaimed by the King on 11 March, the final step in forming the government specified by the new constitution.

There were some shifts among the leadership but the key posts remained unchanged: Thanom retained the Ministry of Defense, Praphat continued as deputy prime minister and minister of the interior, and Thanat remained minister of foreign affairs.

Pote Sarasin, the regime's top civilian, was also named a deputy prime minister, presumably to help offset the government's military cast. The army's role in the cabinet was, nevertheless, substantially increased by the inclusion of three additional generals.

In addition to providing political continuity, the new cabinet may provide somewhat better government; several aging members of the old cabinet were replaced with younger, professional administrators. The leadership, however, refrained from restructuring the often overlapping ministerial functions that have plagued so many domestic programs in the past. It also missed an opportunity to broaden its political base by failing to include opposition elements in the cabinet.

Earlier this month the government cleared its only potential obstacle in succeeding itself when its candidate was elected speaker of the popularly elected lower house. With the support of independent members, whose candidate the government in turn helped elect as deputy speaker, the regime demonstrated that even with its mere plurality, it could muster a working majority. Although the outcome was never in serious doubt, the election indicated that the independents, some of whom had been sounding out the possibility of working with the opposition Democrats, would side with the government on important issues. At the same time, however, several independents have made it increasingly clear that they intend to exploit their pivotal position between the government and the Democrats.

The strength of the opposition and the tactics it will pursue may become clearer when the government presents its major policy positions to the legislature next week. The government is not expected to make any substantial shifts in these policies, although such issues as relations with the US and the government's stand on corruption may spark some lively discussion both in the legislature and the press. (~~CONFIDENTIAL~~)