



Americans arriving at Don Muang airport from Rangoon yesterday.

BP 880910

## Evacuees tell of chaos as Ne Win regime loses grip

MORE than 200 Rangoon-based diplomats, foreign mission members and their dependents arrived in Bangkok aboard a Thai Airways International flight last night.

The 237 evacuees from Burma included 29 Thais, 40 Americans, 10 Australians, 28 South Koreans, 30 Malaysians, 30 Indonesians, 13 Britons, 12 Filipinos, five Japanese, four West Germans, two Russians and unknown numbers of Canadians, Danes and Swedes.

The evacuees, many of whom asked that their names and nationalities be withheld, said the country they had left was virtually out of control and that the Burmese authorities who arranged their departure told them they would be refused re-entry if they talked about the situation in Burma.

Some said they saw 30-40 decapitated men every day for several weeks on the streets of Rangoon. Some of the dead were understood to have put poison in drinking water jars

in the hope of sabotaging the uprising.

Every day, thousands of people took to the streets to protest against the 26-year rule of military strongman Ne Win's Burma Socialist Programme Party.

Protests extended as far as the airport, about 25 km from the city centre, they said.

"It's really very difficult because of the demonstrations and the looting," said US Embassy commercial attache Shir- lie Pinkham, who was among 46 Americans evacuated.

Pinkham said another 35 to 40 American dependents would be evacuated over the weekend but that the embassy was remaining fully operational.

A number of evacuees said there was an increasingly serious food shortage and that gasoline was tightly rationed.

"It's frightening," said a Philippine Embassy official who asked that she be identified only as Su-

sie. "Many people have been beheaded but there has been no threat against foreigners."

The severe shortages of food and basic supplies, including petrol, were aggravating what the evacuees said was the worst public disorder and political turmoil ever in Burma.

Warehouses throughout the capital had been looted for clothes, canned food and fuel, which wound up on sale at the "Maung Maung Market" dedicated to the president who replaced Sen Lwin, who in turn, stood in for Ne Win.

The evacuees were doubtful the Ne Win regime could put down the disquiet or retain any hope of bringing about control.

Despite the chaos, most of the women said the situation in Rangoon had not been dangerous for them and that they hoped to rejoin their husbands soon.

"We are all housed in secure compounds with

watchmen and none of this agitation has any connection with foreigners," said Jennifer Moreland, wife of the British Ambassador. Martin Moreland.

"There was no threat to foreigners whatsoever," said Marzeena Lutton, wife of an Australian diplomat. "We've left for a very short time, one week at the most."

Some said they had been able to buy food from outside their residences in the Burmese capital.

According to a Thai official, 19 Thais remain in the Rangoon embassy.

He said contact has been resumed between Bangkok and Rangoon air traffic control units, but that planes arriving in Burma cannot take on food there.

Burmese air traffic control staff are stretched and special arrangements had to be made to accommodate the Airbus which took the foreign group out yesterday.

OH 1388/9A/0007