

# Infiltration of Saigon Regime by Communists Is

By **TERENCE SMITH**  
Special to The New York Times

**SAIGON, South Vietnam, Nov. 28**—An extensive Communist spy ring involving ranking members of the South Vietnamese Government was described in testimony today in the opening session of the biggest espionage trial in this country's history.

Forty-three persons, including a former special assistant to President Nguyen Van Thieu and several senior civil servants, are charged with crimes ranging from high treason to activities detrimental to the national security.

One of the principal defendants, Vu Ngov Nha, a man with influential political connections who, according to the testimony, frequently visited President Thieu in his office and advised him on political matters, admitted to the court that he had been supplying confidential information to the Vietcong for 15 years.

Mr. Nha told the court that he had been a member of the Communist party since 1949 and was ordered in 1955 to infiltrate South Vietnam to establish an intelligence network here.

He said his principal source of inside information during the last two years had been the principal defendant in the trial, Huynh Van Trong, who served until his arrest last July as President Thieu's special assistant for political affairs.

In that position, which carries the rank of Deputy Minister, Mr. Trong carried out a number of missions at President Thieu's request—including trips to Paris and Washington. He also was a member of the official 24-man party that accompanied President Thieu to Midway Island last June for his conference with President Nixon.

According to the indictment read by the prosecution today, Mr. Trong had frequent meetings with Mr. Nha in which he passed along "information classified as state secrets."

### Statement Is Read

The information allegedly concerned relations between the American and South Vietnamese Governments, some unspecified matters discussed at the Midway meeting, the Saigon Government's pacification plan for 1969 and negotiating strategy at the Paris peace talks.

In a statement obtained by the National Police and read into the record today, Mr. Nha acknowledged that he had received this and other information from Mr. Trong, as well as additional information from other sources, and passed it along to the Vietcong.

The other information allegedly included details of the Saigon Government's psychological warfare operations, allied military maps, copies of the Saigon Central Intelligence Organization monitors of Vietcong broadcasts and other materials. Mr. Nha was arrested at his home in Saigon July 16. Numerous documents, letters and rolls of microfilm were said to have been found in his home.

In a brief statement before the five-man military tribunal,

Mr. Trong denied that he was a Communist and that he had given assistance to the Communists.

### Knew of Activities

Under questioning by the prosecutor, he admitted, however, that he had known since last October, that Mr. Nha was a Communist spy but had not reported him to the Government.

Mr. Trong said he was told of Mr. Nha's Vietcong affiliation by Le Huu Thuy, another of the accused, last October. Despite this, Mr. Trong admitted that he continued to discuss various matters of state with Mr. Nha.

Asked why he had failed to report him, Mr. Trong first said he was waiting to gather additional evidence. Later he said he had held back because of what he described as the "close,



Associated Press

**Huynh Van Trong, former aide to President Thieu for political affairs, being taken into court in Saigon yesterday.**

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1969

## Described as Spy Trial Opens

good and personal relationship" between Mr. Nha and President Thieu. "They appeared to be on such familiar terms," he said, "that I felt I did not have the right to interfere in the relationship."

Mr. Trong testified that on repeated occasions he had seen Mr. Nha in President Thieu's office, talking and sometimes sharing a meal with him.

"The relationship was really close," Mr. Trong said. "I would say that of every 10 times I came to see the President, Nha would be there six times."

No comment was available tonight from Mr. Thieu or his spokesmen. But South Vietnamese sources familiar with the President's staff were skeptical about Mr. Nha's role as described by Mr. Trong.

They reported that Mr. Nha had merely served as a contact

between the President and certain politically active Catholic groups, and that it was inaccurate to describe him as an "adviser" to Mr. Thieu.

Of the 43 defendants, 12, including Mr. Trong and Mr. Nha, are charged with high treason, which carries the death penalty. Eight others are accused of being "accomplices" to high treason, five are charged with maintaining "liaison with the enemy," and the remaining 18 face the lesser charge of "activities detrimental to national security."

The defendants include three former officials of the Information and "Open Arms" Ministry, which administers a program to receive Vietcong defectors. Civil servants, two newsmen and several teachers and businessmen are also on trial. Thirteen of the accused are women.