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POLITICAL FOES BID THIEU STEP DOWN

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Officials of Parliament Join
With Religious in Attack
—Gen. Minh on Hand

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Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 10—On the eve of Tet, the Vietnamese lunar new year, opposition deputies and religious figures gathered on the steps of the National Assembly building tonight and burned photographs of President Nguyen Van Thieu.

The deputies stood under flickering torches and shouted, "Down with country-selling Thieu!" Tet shoppers and strollers passed by and a Government sound truck screeched popular music to drown out the demonstrators.

Duong Van Minh, the titular leader of much of the opposition, put in an extremely rare public appearance at the demonstration.

The protest was prompted by Mr. Thieu's crackdown on the press. The Government closed five opposition dailies and said it had arrested 18 journalists as "Communist infiltrators."

Taken as Intimidation

Half a dozen other journalists and writers have been arrested and many others have gone into hiding, according to Vietnamese informants. But a parliamentary Deputy, Ho Ngoc Nhuan, who keeps track of such arrests, said tonight that he knew of no new wave of detentions.

"I think it is just an attempt at intimidation," said Deputy Tran Van Tuyen, who was dressed in a purple traditional robe that he wears on important occasions.

Mr. Tuyen read aloud a long denunciation of Mr. Thieu that was signed by 27 Deputies and one Senator. The statement charged that the President had purposely allowed the province of Phuoc Long to fall to the North Vietnamese last month "to put pressure on the United States Government to give more military aid and to have an opportunity to oppress the opposition."

Mr. Tuyen called upon Mr. Thieu to step down during the lunar new year period, so that "the war shall be stopped, corruption shall be swept away and national reconciliation shall be a reality."

Fasting at Feast Time

The deputies declared that they would fast for a day as a protest against the Government. Tet is a time of feasting, but this one, because of the bad state of the economy, will be meager for many Vietnamese. The four-day holiday begins tomorrow.

This afternoon 12 Buddhist nuns from the Ngoc Phuong pagoda in Gia Dinh, on the outskirts of Saigon, began a demonstration in a park across from Mr. Thieu's palace. After a half an hour, they were taken away by the police and returned to their pagoda.

In a Tet message to the nation Mr. Thieu said the new Year of the Cat will bring "even greater difficulties" than those known in the outgoing year—the year of the Tiger.

"We are determined not to let South Vietnam fall into the hands of the Communists," he said. "The problem that is confronting us particularly in this new Year of the Cat is that we must defeat the Communist general offensive."

Mr. Thieu outlined three new goals for the new year: "Maximum support for the front line, maximum stabilization of the rear and increase of production."

"In the rear," the message said in part, "we cannot afford to let the Communist underground agents and lackeys of the international political mongers, camouflaged under various forms, infiltrate our nationalist ranks to intoxicate people and promote solutions of surrender to the Communists."

Most military analysts are not yet calling the stepped-up North Vietnamese and Vietcong attacks a "general offensive," as Mr. Thieu has on several occasions.