

Enemy Is Said to Execute Hundreds in South Vietnam

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Allied Officials Describe Slayings of Government Aides in Binh Dinh — Thousands Reported Imprisoned

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Aug. 3 — Allied intelligence officials say that Communist political officers have publicly executed hundreds of Saigon Government officials and imprisoned thousands during their occupation of Binh Dinh Province, on the central coast of South Vietnam.

The allied officials say that they have confirmed the deaths of about 250 persons through eyewitness reports and have additional information that

leads them strongly to believe that the total number of dead is about 500.

People who have escaped have pinpointed three large prison camps in the rugged Anlao valley of central South Vietnam, which are said to hold about 6,000 persons, the officials say.

The main victims of the enemy were said to be hamlet and village chiefs and their deputies, pacification workers, policemen and militiamen. But teachers, doctors, nurses and minor administrative staff workers, as well as some soldiers, were among those reported imprisoned.

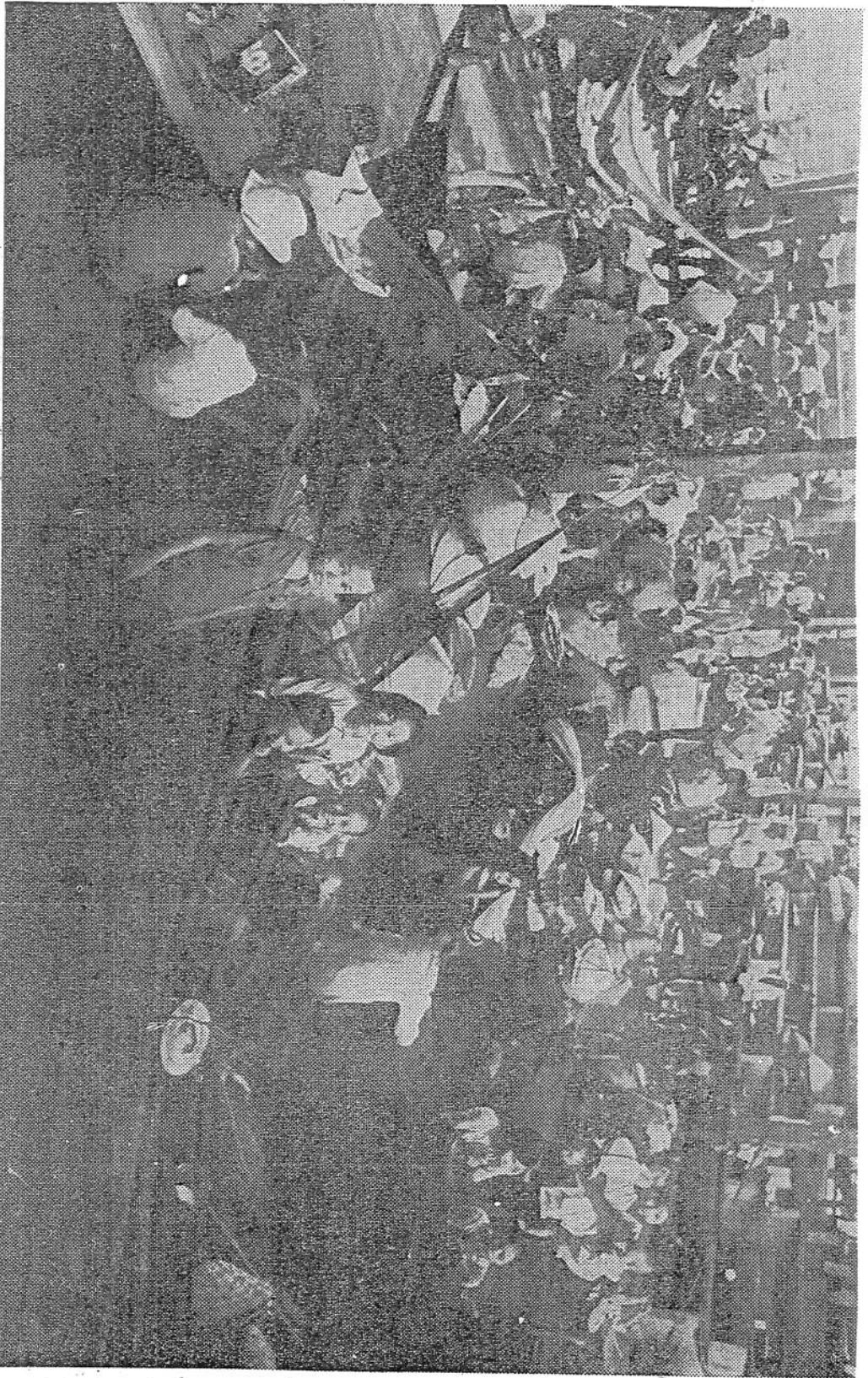
Lengthy interviews with people who lived in northern Binh Dinh during the nearly three months of unchallenged Communist occupation generally corroborated the findings of the intelligence officials.

The reported executions in Binh Dinh appear to be the most sizable deliberate assault on individuals connected with the Saigon Government since the massacres in Hue during the 1968 Lunar New Year offensive when, according to allied officials and independent jour-



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Refugees from Binh Dinh Province, where hundreds of Saigon Government officials were reported to have been executed, in a refugee camp in Phnumy.

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nalists, more than 2,600 people were killed.

Some American officials see the reported executions in Binh Dinh as a sample of the kind of "bloodbath" that President Nixon has predicted if the Communists succeeded in taking over South Vietnam by force.

Such violence, these officials say, especially would be expected if a Communist victory were "sudden and decisive."

Other American officials, however, say that history would suggest that a sudden and decisive victory "just isn't in the cards for either side."

These officials feel that if the North Vietnamese Communists were eventually to gain control of South Vietnam through a gradual political settlement, they might well adopt a conciliatory attitude toward their former opponents in hopes of uniting the country.

But those who most firmly subscribe to the "bloodbath theory" are convinced that any kind of enemy take-over would result in the execution of many officials in the Government in Saigon.

Some Americans with considerable experience in studying North Vietnamese and Vietcong affairs say that they have been surprised by the particularly harsh tactics of the Communists in Binh Dinh province which has a long history of party activity.

Revenge Suggested

They suggest that some of the reported killings may have been inspired by a sense of revenge toward former party members who, for one reason or another, have worked with the Saigon Government in recent years. Another possibility, they say, is that the reported killings represent some sort of interparty conflict, perhaps between northern and southern factions.

While a few executions have been reported in the other areas captured by the North

Vietnamese in their current offensive, there has been nothing of the magnitude of the events reported in Binh Dinh.

This is so, authoritative officials say, because the districts in Binh Dinh fell rather suddenly — in a few days as compared with a few weeks in Quang Tri — and many Saigon Government officials were "caught in place."

After the fall of northern Binh Dinh Province in April, nearly three months passed before Government troops tried to retake the territory. Thus, left alone, the Communists were able to carry out their programs in some detail among the more than 200,000 people of the region.

In most of the other captured areas, the fighting never fully subsided. It was fairly quiet, however, in Loc Ninh district, north of Anloc, and that is where some of the other executions were reported.

Hundreds Shot to Death

The enemy gunned down several hundred South Vietnamese civilians who tried to flee from their control in Quang Tri Province, the northern most province in South Vietnam, and they used the same tactic at Anloc, but apparently killed fewer civilians there.

American intelligence officials believe that these slayings were more likely to have been the outcome of local battlefield decisions than the results of high-level policy, as the reported executions apparently were.

Government troops began to disrupt Communist programs in northern Binh Dinh with a counteroffensive late in July. Within two weeks, Saigon's troops had re-entered the principal town in each of the three northern districts — Hoainhon, Tamquan and Hoalan—and had encountered little resistance. In the last several days, though, the enemy has been striking back, and large sections of the area remain contested.

The territory in northern Binh Dinh was captured by

North Vietnamese regulars. But after they had secured the area they withdrew and left administration of the "liberated" communities to local Communists, some of whom had been living in the mountains for years.

Installation of Officials

The Communists are believed to have installed chiefs and administrative staffs in each of the villages and 138 hamlets in the three districts.

According to allied intelligence officials and residents of northern Binh Dinh province, this is how the Communists proceeded:

Communist security officers had compiled dossiers on everyone in the region. They quickly classified the population into several categories according to physical capabilities, financial position, occupation, age and relationships to the Communists and the Government in Saigon.

Those who had worked directly for the Saigon Government were brought before "peoples' courts," denounced as "tyrants," and condemned to death or sentenced to prison.

Relatives of the Communists were often offered jobs in the administration of the hamlet, while relatives of Government employes were watched closely, restricted in movement and forced to attend special indoctrination classes.

In organizing the "people's courts," the Communists would assemble 30 to 40 persons to the entire hamlet of several hundred. The courts were held during the day and the night, usually outside administrative offices or schools but sometimes on a road or in a rice field.

'Frozen With Fear'

Sometimes the residents were urged to join in hurling charges against the accused. But in other cases a death sentence was read while the people stood—in the words of a farmer—"frozen with fear."

In many cases, there were fewer than half a dozen vic-

tims in the reported executions in Binhdin. This is in contrast to the killings in Hue during Tet, when scores of people were herded together and shot as the Communists apparently tried to eliminate the entire community of Saigon Government workers and anti-Communist leaders.

American intelligence officials say that the Communists appear to have been generally more "selective" in their killings in Binhdin than in Hue in 1968, intending them as "object lessons" to discourage future cooperation with Saigon and to reinforce loyalty to the Communist side.

For this reason, the intelligence officials say, only the worst "tyrants" were killed. Others were given stiff prison terms ranging up to 30 years, and still others were required only to attend intense political-indoctrination courses for a month, or so, where they were expected to learn that the salvation of the Vietnamese lay in Communism.

Despite the general pattern of small-scale executions reported, the intelligence officials said that they had sketchy details on a few mass killings. For example, they say, on May 18 in the evening, 100 Government officials were reported to have been killed and buried in Andong hamlet.

In another instance, 42 policemen and Government workers, including an officer, Tran Van Luc of Dinhbin, were said to have been shot to death on the outskirts of Vinhphung hamlet at about 9 P.M. May 27. They were reported buried in a sandbar nearby.

Rifle fire was the most common method of killing, but intelligence officials say that a hamlet chief and 46 other village and hamlet officials and soldiers were buried alive south of Tanthanh hamlet sometime in May.

They also said that a policeman, a pacification worker and an assistant village chief had been stabbed "many times" with a bayonet affixed to a

rifle after they had been shot before 1,000 people at the Anphong village sports stadium May 29.

On May 21, the intelligence officials say, an unidentified South Vietnamese military policeman was beheaded in Bongson and his body was hanged in front of the military-police station there.

According to allied intelligence officials and northern Binhdin residents, the charges that brought the death penalty were usually vague but reflected the Communists' puritanical nature and their intolerance for "crime" against their own people.

Those who died were reportedly accused of taking bribes, violating unmarried women, making love to wives of "revolutionary cadre," capturing and killing "legal agents of the revolution," and providing information to the "enemy." Some were reported also cited as simply "corrupt" and "domineering" over the people.