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Saigon Muzzle

As President Nixon seeks a pre-election finale to the Vietnam war, President Thieu continues to play havoc with political freedom in South Vietnam. After a campaign of mass arrests, in which thousands of Communist and non-Communist critics of the regime were herded to detention camps, Mr. Thieu has now moved to silence opposition from an already intimidated press.

For some time newspapers publishing articles unfavorable to the Saigon Government have been subject to stiff financial penalty under a repressive "national security" press code. This week's decree requires each paper to make a \$47,000 deposit on fines that may subsequently be levied and broadens the confiscatory power of the Interior Ministry. These new forms of intimidation are certain to shut down many of South Vietnam's 46 dailies and stifle freedom of expression for most of the rest.

Once again the brutish measures undertaken by President Thieu grotesquely mock America's stated purpose of preserving "self-determination for the South Vietnamese."