

4 LEAVE CABINET IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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Resignation of Close Aide of Thieu Seen as a Move to Soften Opposition

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Oct. 24—Information Minister, Hoang Duc Nha, a cousin of president Neu Yen Thieu and one of his closest advisers, resigned today along with three other Cabinet members.

Mr. Nha and another departing Minister, Nguyen Duc Cuong of Commerce and Industries, have been under persistent public criticism.

Mr. Thieu, who himself has been attacked by an increasingly vocal opposition coalition, approved the resignations and instructed Premier Tran Thien Khiem to realign the Government. The resignations were announced in an official communique today.

The resignation of the 32-year-old Mr. Nha had been expected. It was widely interpreted as an attempt by the President to cool the political temperature in Saigon, which has been buffeted by a wave of small but occasionally tempestuous demonstrations and protests.

His Dismissal Sought

Yesterday an alliance of newspaper publishers and press associations called upon the President to dismiss Mr. Nha, whose responsibilities included censoring newspapers and seizing those that he found objectionable.

Lately, the seizures increased along with the sharpening criticism of Mr. Thieu, his personal entourage and members of his administration.

Besides Mr. Nha and Mr. Cuong, those who resigned were Chau Kim Nhan, Minister of Finances, and Ton That Trinh, Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Cuong had recently been accused of corruption. The Government's usually dormant anti-corruption agency had sought his dismissal on the ground that he had mishandled a fertilizer scandal.

Mr. Nha, who was also in charge of the department dealing with Communist defectors, has been close to Mr. Thieu since 1968. He began as the President's press spokesman and personal secretary. Last year he was appointed to the Cabinet-level post of Commissioner General for Information. Last February, he was elevated to the cabinet as Information Minister.

Tall and boyish looking, he quickly aroused the enmity of many senior generals and politicians, who considered him something of an upstart.

Opposed Paris Concessions

But throughout, Mr. Nha appeared to retain the loyalty of the President. During the difficult negotiations in late 1972 that led to the Paris peace agreements, Mr. Nha led the attack against the concessions to the communists proposed by Secretary of State Kissinger.

Before yesterday's demand for the dismissal of Mr. Nha, the Rev. Tran Huu Thanh, a conservative Roman Catholic priest who is leading a campaign against official corruption, had repeatedly mentioned Mr. Nha as one man who would have to go.

"That young man is detested by everyone," Father Thanh said recently.

It was not clear today where the resignation might lead. Father Thanh and others have made little secret of their desire to see Mr. Thieu himself resign.

An informed Western diplomat commented late today that "the opposition is in high gear for the first time in many years and it will probably take more than these two resignations to stop its momentum."

Campaign to Continue

"We will continue to press on with our struggle for freedom of the press and publication," said Vo Long Trieu, publisher of the Dai Dan Toc, a prominent Opposition newspaper.

"Mr. Nha's resignation came a bit late, for he has done so much harm to the press," said Tran Van Tuyen, a lawyer and leading Opposition figure in the National Assembly. However, what we really need is a complete review of national policies, and as long as Mr. Thieu is still there, I think it is hardly possible."

Senator Vu Van Mau, leader of the Buddhist-supported National Reconciliation Force, said curtly: "We would not be disturbed in our struggle by the resignation of a youthful member of the Cabinet."

President Thieu began to loosen earlier this year with the dismissal of Nguyen Van Ngan, a once-powerful assistant to the President, and the dismemberment of the Government's democracy party. Mr. Ngan, who had been a rival of Mr. Nha, is now in Canada.

Chau Kim Nhan, who resigned as Finance Minister, has a long reputation for honesty. He is expected to be appointed to the realigned Cabinet.