

Thieu Foes Shrug at Aide's Resignation

By JAMES M. MARKHAM
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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Oct. 25—The resignation yesterday of one of President Nguyen Van Thieu's closest confidants appears to be a tactical victory for Premier Tran Thien Khiem, who suggested the move three weeks ago, well-placed sources said.

But as an effort to defuse the mounting Opposition movement against Mr. Thieu, the resignation of Information Minister Hoang Duc Nha appeared to have fallen well short of the mark. Opposition politicians and newspapers insisted that the departure of Mr. Nha, a cousin of the President's, would not subdue them.

The resignation of Mr. Nha and three Cabinet ministers was followed today by a Defense Ministry announcement that 377 field-grade officers had been dismissed from the army on charges of corruption. There were 20 colonels among the dismissed officers, but no generals. The majority were majors.

'Piecemeal Changes' Hit

In commenting on the resignation of Mr. Nha, Ly Qui Chung, an Opposition deputy, said: "If this had happened two or three years ago, it might have made a difference. But now the problem for Mr. Thieu is this—can he rally the majority of the non-Communists to have a fruitful dialogue with the other side?"

Mr. Chung tended to a negative answer to his own question, as did other Opposition voices.

An editorial in the leftist Opposition daily Dien Tin, called "The Struggle Continues," stated: "The people want none of these piecemeal changes of

Tactical Victory Is Seen for Premier but Move Is Called 'Piecemeal'

personnel. The people aspire to live in a wholly new atmosphere of peace and national reconciliation."

Dong Phuong, a sensationalist daily, said in an editorial: "In reality, those who are at the top of the leadership, those who have been long building up a political dictatorship, those who have a monopoly in the political and economic fields, those who protect the big hoarders and big, corrupt officials—they are the real target of the people's struggle."

In the short run, however, Mr. Nha's resignation appeared to enhance the position of Premier Khiem, a former general of considerable stature who has his own differences with Mr. Thieu. Many Vietnamese believe he sees himself as the President's natural political successor.

Mr. Khiem, who enjoys an important following in the military, had little fondness for Mr. Nha. Three weeks ago, as the Opposition campaign became more vociferous, Mr. Khiem suggested that the President remove his cousin from the Cabinet.

In addition to Mr. Nha, three other ministers—one of whom had been accused of corruption—submitted their resignations yesterday. The event inspired a cartoonist to picture a Khiem-like figure ordering four men out of his boat to save it from sinking; after the four dive into the water, the loaded boat itself sinks.

Well-placed Vietnamese poli-

ticians noted that the problem now confronting Mr. Thieu—and, to a point, Mr. Khiem as well, is the formation of a new Cabinet that will be sufficiently fresh-looking to satisfy at least a portion of the Opposition.

It was said that some of Mr. Thieu's associates had already made soundings for the formation of a broad-based government pledged to eradicate corruption and carry out the Paris peace agreements, but that the reactions from those approached were not encouraging.

Some Opposition figures are convinced that Mr. Thieu is finished politically, and so are reluctant to consider joining any government, however radical its mandate, for fear of compromising their own positions.

Having given in on Mr. Nha, an energetic administrator who made numerous enemies by his aggressive, sometimes arrogant style of leadership, the President may now find the Opposition shifting to other targets, notably military ones.

Various Roman Catholic opponents of the Government have repeatedly mentioned Lieut. Gen. Dang Van Quang, Mr. Thieu's security adviser, as worth sacking for alleged corruption.

Last week in the Mekong delta city of Can Tho, the Rev. Tran Huu Thanh publicly accused the delta corps commander, Lieut. Gen. Nguyen Vinh Nghi, of corruption. Others have aimed similar accusations at the commander of Military Region II, Lieut. Gen. Nguyen Van Toan.

But no one of such high ranks was among the officers dismissed on corruption charges today.