

NYTimes (LND) OCT 31 1974
Thieu Ousts 3 Army Aides
In Seeming Bow to Protests

But Police Move to Halt
March by Opposition—
A Deputy Is Arrested

By JAMES M. MARKHAM
 Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Thursday, Oct. 31—On the eve of a planned antigovernment demonstration, President Nguyen Van Thieu made an apparent bow to opposition pressure yesterday in announcing the transfer of three military corps commanders.

But early this morning the police cracked down on a staging point for the demonstration and beat and arrested an opposition Deputy and some dissident journalists.

The announcement of the military shake-up, made over the national radio, was a victory for a broadening opposition coalition, led by a Roman Catholic anticorruption group. All three of the generals had been accused of corruption.

Other Officers Dismissed

The transfer of the generals followed the dismissal on Friday of 377 army officers on charges of corruption and the resignation on Thursday of four Cabinet ministers, including Information Minister Hoang Duc Nha, a cousin and adviser of President Thieu. The dismissals were viewed as efforts by the President to ease public criticism of the Government.

But any impression of government softness toward the opposition given by last night's announcement was offset by a police raid on the National

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Pham Quoc Thuan



Nguyen Vinh Nghi



Nguyen Van Toan

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Press Club in downtown Saigon, where more than 50 journalists had assembled to march in today's demonstration.

Shortly before 1 o'clock in the morning plainclothes police began taking flash pictures of a score of journalists who were lounging in a small park in front of the club in defiance of a midnight curfew.

The plainclothesmen managed to herd most of the journalists closer to the press club, which is located on Le Loi Street.

Shouting and scuffling erupted as the police ring tightened, and Dinh Xuan Dung, an opposition Deputy, was dragged toward a police jeep. As he protested his arrest — his position theoretically makes him immune — he was thrown from the jeep onto the street. Then he was dragged into the jeep, pummeled and driven away, as were about a half dozen others.

Ho Ngoc Nhuan, an opposition leader, led with a Deputy to the sanctuary of the nearby National Assembly building, shouting to bystanders that 40 journalists had been seized. But witnesses contradicted this figure.

The police then locked the remaining journalists into the press club, probably to prevent them from participating in the march.

The three generals who lost their jobs are Lieut. Gen. Nguyen Vinh Nghi, commander of the Fourth Corps in the Mekong delta; Lieut. Gen. Pham Quoc Thuan, commander of the Third Corps around Saigon, and Lieut. Gen. Nguyen Van Toan, commander of the Second Corps in the central highlands.

Targets of Priests

General Nghi and General Toan had been particular targets of the Rev. Tran Huu Thanh, the Catholic priest who heads the anticorruption front. General Thuan, whose reputation was less marred by corruption charges, had suffered reverses on the battlefield. The three were transferred to teaching posts in military schools.

The only corps commander to keep his post, Lieut. Gen. Ngo Quang Truong, leads the northernmost First Corps.

The boldness of the move surprised many South Vietnamese, who have come to expect a more cautious style of leadership from Mr. Thieu.

The removal of the three generals appeared to redeem at least part of a pledge Mr. Thieu made in a speech on Oct. 1.

I have ordered the Chief of the Joint General Staff," the President said, "to solve by Nov. 1—that is, in one month—all the evils that plague the armed forces: phantom soldiers, imaginary soldiers, trafficking in power. He will report to me

for punitive measures."

The announcement of the removal of the generals did not appear to dampen the ardor of 2,500 people gathered in the courtyard of the Tan Sa Chau Church to hear Father Thanh lash out at the Government.

Gathering under flickering torches, the crowd, in a festive mood, shouted, "Down with the palace servants!" "Down with dictatorship!" and "Down with corruption!"

Dangling from a gibbetlike structure at the tail end of a sound truck was an unidentified effigy that resembled Mr. Thieu. In one hand he held a burglar's bag marked "the people's money."

Father Thanh was cheered when he declared that the removal of the three corps commanders was not enough.

"When a few province chiefs were transferred," he said, "I was asked whether the movement was satisfied. I answered, 'never.' And when four cabinet ministers resigned, I was asked the same question and also answered, 'never.'"

"Now, after three corps commanders have been transferred, I was asked the same question. I still have the same answer, 'never.'"

Speaking in the heavily Catholic and anti-Communist Tan Sa Chau neighborhood, the stocky, 59-year-old priest insisted on "a clean government from top to bottom, a clean society, so that the Communists cannot despise us any more and have to accept to come and live with us as a minority."

Protest March Due

Much of the crowd planned to spend the night in the churchyard and then, after a dawn mass, march to a Saigon court where a newspaper trial was scheduled to begin tomorrow.

The newspaper, Song Than, was charged with libeling President Thieu by printing Father Thanh's accusations of corruption. Today the Government announced that the trial had been postponed, so the March on the courthouse has been turned into a protest against the postponement.

Father Thanh's marchers are scheduled to be joined by a group of protesting journalists and a team of lawyers who volunteered to defend three newspapers charged with libeling the President.

Police reinforcements have been moved into the city to cope with demonstrations expected this week. Opposition leaders have been put under surveillance. Some have been spending nights away from their homes.

In the military shuffle, the command of the Fourth Corps will be assumed by Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khoa Nam, commander of the Seventh Division in the Mekong delta.