

By CRAIG R. WHITNEY
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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Dec. 7—Despite daily assertions by the Communists that the Saigon Government is planning a campaign of mass arrests and assassination of political prisoners, a series of interviews with sources in close touch with the national police as well as with Vietnamese opposition political figures has disclosed no evidence to support the charges.

The accusations, made recently by both the Vietcong and by the North Vietnamese, have been aimed at demanding the immediate release of what they claim are hundreds of thousands of political prisoners held by the Government.

The number of persons detained in South Vietnamese jails, according to police sources, is 35,000. Independent authorities vouched for the accuracy of that figure.

According to the draft agreement made public by Hanoi in October, the release of "all people of all sides who have been captured and detained" would be carried out parallel to the withdrawal of United States troops within 60 days of a cease-fire. Henry A. Kissinger's discussion of it two days later said, however, that the fate of civilian prisoners in South Vietnam would be a matter for negotiation between the Vietnamese sides.

Hanoi Stresses Release

The Hanoi radio has been saying—most recently, for example, in an editorial from the Communist party newspaper, Nhan Dan, broadcast on Tuesday—that "the release of prisoners of all sides and the guarantee of the people's democratic liberties are important conditions to end the U.S. war of aggression and resolve the internal problems of South Vietnam."

"The agreement already reached clearly guarantees the release of all those arrested and detained by all sides, parallel to the withdrawal of the U.S. troops," the editorial added.

Both Hanoi and the Provisional Revolutionary Government proclaimed in the South have recently broadcast claims that the Government of President Nguyen Van Thieu has "drawn up lists of several thousand political detainees considered the most dangerous to be urgently assassinated before the cease-fire."

An independent source close to the national police said that he knew of no such plan and categorically denied that any such killings had taken place. Vietnamese opposition elements in touch with prisoners have also professed ignorance of such activities, although no one denies that there is brutality in the prisons.

Military prisoners are held in prison camps. Civilians are detained in five major national prisons near Saigon and on the island of Con Son, which has 8,500, and in 35 small correction centers in the provinces.

The least rigorous of these prisons, Chihoa, in Saigon, houses the best-known political prisoners — men like Trung Dinh Dzu, who ran unsuccessfully against Mr. Thieu on a "peace" platform in 1967, and Tran Ngoc Chau, who was accused of being a Communist agent while he was a prominent legislator. Mr. Chau is being even though the Supreme Court declared his trial unconstitutional two years ago and annulled his sentence.

A reporter for the Associated

No Signs Found of Plans for Killings or Mass Arrests

Press, Edith Lederer, who visited Chihoa without official approval last month, said that she saw Mr. Dzu and heard from other prisoners that Mr. Chau was well. Both get extra food from their families and have comfortable quarters and freedom of movement within the prison.

The Communists have been charging that the Government has initiated "a campaign of white terror," indiscriminately arresting political suspects before a cease-fire and holding other prisoners longer than their sentences.

The South Vietnamese police, which numbers 119,000, of whom 15,000 to 20,000 are in the "special," or secret, branch, have been carrying out numerous arrests since the beginning of the Communist offensive last April, but, according to police sources, most of the detentions have been short-term.

The sources say that the prisons are fuller now than they have ever been — the current figure of 35,000 is 5,000 more than the peak last year—and that overcrowding has forced the authorities to transfer some from one facility to another. But they say that despite the tens of thousands of arrests since spring, the total held for long periods has gone up by only a few thousand.

Service on Repression

Discussing the future, an independent police expert said: "The police realize that after a cease-fire they will be the Government's main weapon in the political struggle. They could be an instrument of service to the people or an instrument of repression. Their tradition was colonialist and oppressive, but they are trying to change that."

The source said that those—presumably suspected Vietcong—who were picked up under the martial-law measures decreed by President Thieu since the offensive began are categorized separately. They apparently number 5,000, and, the source said, "logically the Government would probably have to release some of them at least in the event of a cease-fire."

Arrests have been much more numerous in recent months because the police have been on special alert since April and have been detaining draft-dodgers, common criminals and people without just the right identity papers.

"I am sure many of those

arrests have not been done exactly according to law," the source said. Most of the thousands arrested have been released within a few days, it is said.

An opposition Deputy, Ho Ngoc Nhuan, recently complained in a letter to Premier Tran Thien Khiem that prisoners received only 40 piasters, a day for food, or about a dime, and that many were ill and mistreated. He said his niece was arrested recently for buying some blue cloth because the police suspected that she wanted to make a Communist flag.

"Her hamlet chief is a relative of hers, and even he could not get the police to let her out for several days," Mr. Nhuan said in an interview. "He said he had not posted a notice warning people not to buy cloth. It was the day after President Thieu had spoken on the television warning about Communist plots."

Rumors About Arrests

Some opposition figures have circulated rumors that the police will arrest them, too, as soon as a cease-fire is announced. They have said there is a secret plan for arrests under the name X-18. "I have never heard of X-18 and have never heard of plans for a purge from the Vietnamese police," an informed source said. Some American officials have said that they had heard of such a plan, but its existence seems to be almost impossible to authenticate.

Prisoners often relate stories of torture and mistreatment during interrogation. The truth of such allegations does not seem to be in doubt, and it may be one of the factors contributing to the Communist propaganda campaign on prisoners.

An independent Vietnamese investigator of prison conditions, Prof. Nguyen Van Trung, said in a recent interview, "We have heard the rumors about killings, but really, I do not think it is true. The prisoners say they must be very careful though, but I do not believe the Americans want it to happen and the National Liberation Front would have no interest in having it happen either."

Vietnamese sources informed about the secret negotiations between Mr. Kissinger, President Nixon's adviser on national security, and the North Vietnamese in Paris said last week that the Vietcong had asked for unconditional release of civilian prisoners as part of the cease-fire accord but that the final agreement would probably take neither their nor most of Saigon's demands into account.

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Saigon Reign of Terror Doubted