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In the composing room of the pro-Government newspaper Tin Song, Mrs. Phung Thi Hanh, the publisher, checks the work of a proofreader. Tin Song means "live news."

## Small Saigon Paper Only Key to Thieu Views

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Jan. 15—Rare is the Vietnamese in Saigon who buys Tin Song, the small pro-Government afternoon newspaper. But at 4 P.M. every day, when Tin Song rolls off its antiquated presses, all the foreign embassies and news organizations in town rush to get copies.

In a time of increasing official penchant for secrecy, Tin Song has become virtually the only source of information about what President Nguyen Van Thieu and his Government are thinking and doing.

Quoting what it variously describes as "observers in the Presidential Palace" or "authoritative sources," Tin Song has repeatedly scooped the rest of the Saigon press corps and surprised the United States Embassy in recent weeks with a series of exclusive reports, including the first disclosure of Mr. Thieu's stringent new law restricting political parties.

Today Tin Song reported that Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. was bringing the text of a revised peace plan to Saigon to discuss with President Thieu. Although Tin Song's record for accuracy has not been perfect—it is sometimes suspected of serving as an outlet for Government-inspired rumors—the article was instantly picked up by all the American news services and newspapers represented in Saigon.

### Denies Receiving Help

Tin Song's success is believed to come from the close tie between its youthful American-educated publisher, Mrs. Phung Thi Hanh, and Hoang Duc Nha, Mr. Thieu's cousin and closest confidant, who has just been named Commissioner General of State for Information.

Mrs. Hanh, who is 29 years old and from a former Mandarin family, began the newspaper in February, 1971, after reportedly receiving 10 million piasters, or \$40,000, in financing from Mr. Nha.

Mrs. Hanh denies that Mr.

Nha or others in the Presidential Palace provided the money. "You can believe it if you want, I say it's not so," she remarked in a recent interview.

She does acknowledge that Mr. Nha, who is a personal friend, often telephones her to give her the latest news on the peace talks or to check on whether she should print a particular story about Saigon politics.

The name Tin Song means "live news," and Mrs. Hanh is thought to have adopted it in imitation of the newspaper Tin Sang, or Morning News. Tin Sang was Saigon's most popular opposition paper until forced to close last year when its publisher, Ngo Cong Duc, fled the country after failing to win re-election to the National Assembly and lost his immunity to arrest.

### Grandfather a Journalist

Vietnamese are usually antipathetic toward pro-Government newspapers, which do not sell well. Tin Song's paid circulation is thought to be only a thousand copies a day, but many Government offices subscribe, raising circulation to the point where it can make money, Mrs. Hanh says.

Elegantly dressed in a soft purple and blue silk ao dai, the traditional costume, her appearance is incongruous in

her cramped office surrounded by dozens of shirtless and ink-smearing teen-age boys setting type by hand.

She originally became interested in journalism, she said, because her grandfather was a prominent anti-French journalist in Hanoi in the early part of the 20th century. She graduated from Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in journalism in 1962, and, on returning to Saigon, worked for a variety of American news organizations before founding Tin Song.

Mrs. Hanh said her reason for supporting President Thieu was simple: "Either you are for the Communists or against them, and we like Mr. Thieu because he is against them."

"This is a difficult time for Vietnam, and we must be united to face the Communists," she continued. "If Mr. Thieu does some personal things that are wrong, we don't care. We will stand behind him because he is the Government and because his basic policies are correct."

Despite her outspoken support, Mrs. Hanh says she has not seen the secretive Mr. Thieu since 1965. "But that doesn't matter," she explained. "I don't need to see him. We know where he stands."