

Ky Loyalists Under Attack In Da Nang

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SAIGON.

At least 22 civilian South Vietnamese loyal to the government have been taken political prisoners in Da Nang by the Buddhist-backed self-styled struggle committees. In the last week, they were intimidated. Some were beaten. One was wounded in the leg. They included a province chief, a district chief, and a number of civil servants.

And yesterday, in a town outside Da Nang, eight pro-government civilians were reported murdered by the Viet Cong.

The Communist Viet Cong apparently were seeking to exploit an opportunity to irritate further the current political crisis.

But the Da Nang anti-government action groups are ostensibly anti-Communists with grievances only against the military junta headed by Premier Nguyen Cao Ky.

Vietnamese government officials in Saigon believe the new wave of political intimidation by the struggle committees is Communist-influenced, if not actually directed by the Reds. These officials contend that even though any number of non-Communists have joined the demonstrations, they are tools of the Reds.

The last vestiges of anti-Communist, pro-Saigon strength among government administrators, civil servants, and military officers in the northern provinces are being eroded by this wave of persuasion and terror, the Saigon sources say. The result is a power vacuum in the support areas behind some 50,000 U. S. Marines who are based near Da Nang and behind a key rural pacification program.

"The whole American community in Da Nang is in a state of distress," an American official said.

"They don't know where this is going to lead—and certainly the political turbulence is not going to stop. This last month of disorder has set back by six months the pacification program in the northern provinces," he asserted.

Responsible diplomatic sources believe the nuclei of the struggle committees comprise the same group that led the so-called national salvation committees in August and September, 1964, when violent demonstrations reduced a number of South Vietnamese cities to anarchy.

In the northern provinces, those committees burned houses and shops of Catholic merchants and publicly hanged a Vietnamese anti-Communist from

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a tree. American officials then privately called the national salvation committees Communist-inspired, but thus far they have not so condemned the current demonstrators.

Da Nang, 380 miles north of Saigon, with a population of about 165,000, is the second largest city in South Viet Nam and a center of Buddhist strength and fervor for independence. Two weeks ago, Premier Ky said it was "in Communist hands" and began to move Vietnamese Marines against the dissidents there, but later pulled them back and apologized for the slur.

But among Western and Vietnamese officials concerned with the nation's stability, "the terror of the saffron robes" in Da Nang—named after the traditional habit of Buddhist monks—is considered as destructive as the wave of political assassinations and terrorism by the Viet Cong.

Yesterday, about 3,000 chanting, shouting anti-government demonstrators marched through the streets of Da Nang demanding the immediate ouster of Premier Ky and the nine other members of the junta. A speaker at the protest rally burned a copy of a decree issued by the government Thursday promising election of a civilian government within three to five months. Lt. Gen. Nguyen Chanh Thi and Da Nang Mayor Nguyen Van Man, prestigious leaders in the dissident northern provinces of which Da Nang is the largest city, stood on the rally's sidelines, giving tacit approval. Many of the demonstrators were civil servants.

Another 3,000 demonstrators—3,000 Catholic refugees—snarled traffic on a highway 15 miles north of Saigon to express their opposition to Buddhist rallies.

"We are not opposed to Ky," said Nguyen Quoc Binh, a leader of the central committee of the Greater Union Force, a Catholic group which organized the demonstration on the Bien Hoa highway. "But we are opposed to his inability to keep order in the city. Of course we are for an elected government, but not one infiltrated by the Communists."

In Saigon yesterday, Chu Van Binh, editor and publisher of the newspaper Song, was shot and critically wounded. Although his assailant escaped, a high-ranking police official said "it was a natural for the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong had two reasons for striking—they could get rid of a nationalist and at the same time keep the situation agitated."

Mr. Binh had editorially denounced the anti-government and anti-American demonstrators in Saigon last week as hooligans. His paper subsequently was sacked and looted by demonstrators.

The effect of such incidents, and the campaigns they constitute, can be seen in the north.

In the 300 square miles protected by U. S. Marines around Da Nang, some of the pro-Saigon village chiefs fled when they heard about the seizure by the struggle committees of a neighboring district chief.

"While the pro-Buddhist committees are seizing Saigon-oriented officials from within the government ranks," an American official said, "the Communist guerrillas—step up their terrorism right outside Da Nang."