

# Viet: 'New' Junta and Death in the Saigon Streets

## CATHOLICS VS. BUDDHISTS

By Beverly Deepe  
A Special Correspondent

SAIGON.

South Viet Nam's ruling Military Revolutionary Council yesterday named three generals to run the country for 60 days, evidently in the hope of damping down the fires of religious animosity that sent Roman Catholics and Buddhists into the streets of Saigon yesterday to fight each other.

First place in the new triumvirate went to Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh. Named third was Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khanh, who seized power from Gen. Minh last January. In between was Lt. Gen. Tran Thien Khiem, Gen. Khanh's Defense Minister.

The news that Gen. "Big" Minh, a Buddhist favorite, was to become head of the triumvirate apparently set off the most

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## VIET NAM'S RULING TRIUMVIRATE



Dynamic, outgoing Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khanh, 36, fought against the Japanese late in World War II . . . joined the Communist Viet Minh fighting the French . . . became staunch supporter of the late President Ngo Dinh Diem, but ardor for Diem cooled . . . after military coup last November, was sent to an obscure command . . . then in January, staged his own coup.



Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh, top figure in the overthrow of Diem last November, is most popular man in the South Vietnamese Armed Forces . . . was temporarily ousted in the January uprising, then made nominal chief of state . . . a 200-pound six-footer, he's known as big Minh . . . a professional soldier for half his 48 years . . . speaks fluent French, fair English.



Lt. Gen. Tran Thien Khiem, 39, is shy and soft-spoken, but has had a formidable career . . . like Khanh, fought the Japanese in World War II and the French later, then became a Diem supporter . . . played key role in the November coup against Diem and in the January coup . . . Khiem then became Defense Minister and head of the Armed Forces.

## . . . AND THE DIM FUTURE

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South Viet Nam today faced the possibility of having a pro-Communist or pro-Neutralist Chief of State in two months.

This unhappy prospect is the result of a decision made by the Military Revolutionary Council yesterday to place the election of a new Chief of State in the hands of a national congress. The congress is to be chosen by the new ruling triumvirate of Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khanh, Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh and Lt. Gen. Tran Thien Khiem.

Both Gen. Minh and Gen. Khiem are said to be easily pressured by pro-Neutralists or pro-Communists. It appears that they have formed an alliance which would overrule the staunchly anti-Communist Gen. Khanh.

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# 'New' Junta; Death in Streets

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militant Catholic factions, which include many refugees from Communist North Viet Nam.

When a mob of 5,000 Catholics tried to storm the Joint General Staff headquarters where the Revolutionary Council had been wrangling for two days over what to do about the opposition to Gen. Khanh, guards fired into the crowd, killing at least eight people.

## THE SLAUGHTER

Scores more were wounded as groups of Buddhists and Catholics roamed the city with machetes, hatchets, iron bars and wooden clubs for weapons. When Catholics demonstrated outside a predominantly Buddhist school, five were reportedly taken inside and beaten. The Catholics allegedly retaliated by beheading two Buddhists boys.

The mobs were still in the streets at dusk when a lone helicopter swooped low over the capital, dropping leaflets announcing the new triumvirate. The 57-man Revolutionary Council also dissolved itself and voided the new constitution that was supposed to give Gen. Khanh broad Presidential powers when it was promulgated less than two weeks ago. Gen. Khanh resigned as President on Tuesday.

## THE QUESTIONS

The triumvirate will serve only until a provisional National Assembly can be named and choose a new Chief of State and Cabinet. Its main tasks will be to restore order after the latest flare-up of rioting between Catholics and Buddhists and to prosecute the war against the Communist Viet Cong guerrillas as actively as possible.

The announcement did not specify how the provisional assembly—which it called a "people's congress"—would be named. Gen. Khanh, who was under fire from militant Buddhists as a "dictator" when he quit as President, had said earlier that free elections are out of the question until the war against the Viet Cong is won.

The Catholic demonstrators against Gen. Minh marched in two directions: one toward the general staff headquarters on the edge of the city near the airport and one toward the government radio station in the center of Saigon. The latter group was halted before it could get anywhere, but the former—featuring banners urging "Down With Gen. Minh"—reached its destination and began pushing forward

toward the gates of the headquarters building.

Combat police in steel helmets and green battle uniforms dragged a fire engine up to the gates and turned on the hoses to drive off the crowd. But the water was only a trickle. The police had their bayonets fixed.

"Suddenly," said an eyewitness, "a shot was fired. Then there was shooting everywhere." Some witnesses said the police were shooting directly into the crowd as well as in the air and at the ground. At any rate—whether the bullets ricocheted off the gates or were aimed at the mob—eight people were killed, including two women.

The crowd stopped shoving forward but refused to disperse. Although perhaps 250 police opposed them with fixed bayonets, they stood their ground and hurled stones, sticks and shoes, smashing the windows of the gatehouse.

## KHANH APPEARS

A Catholic officer emerged from the junta meeting, leaped a barbed-wire barricade and waded into the crowd.

"It is against your religion to kill," the officer shouted. "Do not try to kill these soldiers." By this time the crowd was soaked from the monsoon rain, but it would not leave even when Gen. Khanh himself came out and climbed up on the hood of a truck to address his Catholic supporters.

Gen. Khanh was greeted first with a hush, then with a roar. He told the demonstrators those who had done the shooting would be punished, and said the junta was trying to reach an acceptable solution to complaints about the government.

## PLEASE GO BACK

"I appreciate your support," Gen. Khanh said, "but please go back to your homes. This is a matter of state."

Most of the demonstrators remained long after dark as a priest led prayers over the body of one of the shooting victims. His body, draped in the red and yellow flag of South Viet Nam, was raised before the crowd, and the victim's mother placed a crucifix around her son's neck.

One officer who is known to favor Gen. Khanh said he had won a place in the triumvirate only because of the Catholic demonstration on his behalf. Both Gen. Minh and Gen. Kham had opposed him, but agreed to a coalition with the demonstrators shouting at the gate. "They would have died," the officer said, "if they had not."