

### THE "MASS UPRISINGS" OF QUI NHON

SAIGON—Qui Nhon is a lasy provincial capital of 50,000 population—mostly people connected with fishing—suti situated on a beautiful beach along the South China Sea 200 miles north of Saigon and 200 miles south of the old imperial capital of Hue.

The city was quiet and peaceful until Communist agitation began during the last days of August and continued for a month. The agitation took two forms: revolt" of the Qui Nhon people; bloody demonstrations by peasants from Communist-controlled parts of the province.

This is the story of the transformation of this quiet city into a wild state of confusion and mass mob rule. It serves as an illustration of Communist agitation in the past—and it is likely to happen time and time again in cities like Qui Nhon.

This story is based on a four-hour conversation with a resident from Qui Nhon, who can not be identified. The verbal dairy: Aug. 23, Sunday. It all started with a pro~~th~~ pro-Khanh demonstration for General Khanh (premier of South Vietna, backed by the Americans). It began with a parade through the streets right past my house, lasting about an hour.

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It was a demonstration of several thousand yelling, screaming students and many adults like fishermen and cycle drivers. Suddenly this demonstration turned anti-Catholic and they rioted in the marketplace and then proceeded to the city square where they beat up several youngsters. I know one boy was about 12 years old and one girl was also about 12--and there may have been more.

The chief of police was there at the beginning, when the demonstration was pro-Khanh, and gave a speech. He was rather courageous to do this because later it turned anti-government and he left for his life.

These demonstrations continued to about noon; then everyone went home for noists. I drove around town about 3 O.m. and the town was so quiet it was like no one was in the city. But an hour later they congregated in front of the Cuong De high school and had speeches against American foreign policy in Viet Nam and anti-Khanh speeches.

All this trouble started when some strangers came in from Hue, the old imperial capital, center of University of Hue. It's also the center of Buddhist movement and the headquarters of the National Salvation Councils. Everyone thinks these two movements are Communist exploited.

I know some students came from Hue and enrolled in the normal school when classes opened the middle of August; others came about a week later. No one knows how many students came from Hue; it's all invisible.

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Also some new teachers came in; one of them at the normal school is a young man and a rabble rouser. When the demonstrations began, the students at the technical and normal schools wanted to continue studying but the Hue students forced them to join. Maybe the Hue students worked on one or two and these worked on the others. Everyone followed the crowd--sort of like gang warfare in New York. Their psychology was if my friends join I don't want to be left out.

While the Hue students were agitating the Qui Nhon students, the school directors and teachers also began meeting for "educational conferences" but were really political discussions and debates. Ordinarily the teachers, professors and directors of the high school, the normal school and the technical school never have anything to do with each other.

The Cuong De high school director, it seems, started calling the educational conferences. He's short in stature, in his early thirties, and evidently rather dynamic. He directs the <sup>one and only</sup> government high school in town. There is also a Buddhist school with high school grades but this has been having classes most of the time when the others were not.

Some of the teachers from Cuong De said they were not in favor of going along with their director, but they couldn't get out of it. As these demonstrations developed, the more important teachers with prestige positions--like English and French teachers--had to go along with it.

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I know they elected representatives to serve on the National Salvation Committee, which everyone thinks is Communist exploited. One key member is a medical doctor who's head of the malaria eradication office, along with the high school director. But we don't know how many.

At one of their meetings "educational conferences" one American advisor was requested to submit several papers on educational topics, but he was not invited to attend the conference. He threatened to resign. The people ~~xxxxxx~~ are behind the high school director--the teachers say this--some of the high school teachers say he gets orders directly from the National Salvation Committee in Hue. This Hue group is headed by Dr. Le Khas Guyen, who's dean of the Medical Faculty. He was a communist long ago and some people think he still is.

During one of their first meetings, this qui nhon National Salvation Committee chose Mr. Ai, director of the ~~xxx~~ technical school, to be chairman. He's about 29 and the most pro-American one in Qui Nhon; he has B. S. and M. S. from Los Angeles State University. He was five years in Los Angeles. It was an insult to ~~xxxx~~ ask him to head this anti-American committee; he refused.

I saw Mr. Ai when he returned from the United States 18 months ago; he looked like a young man. Now he's an old man with a worn face and sad eyes. Before ~~xxxx~~ they had a lot of ~~xxxx~~ sparkle; he so much wants to help his people; he's very dedicated and you don't find that too often.



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Aug. 25 Monday. At 9 a.m., students marched on the normal and technical schools, were shouting alot, but were non-violent. Suddenly Suddenly, a truckload of adults--evidently cyclo-drivers hired by someone--arrived and threw rocks breaking about 100 windows.

All the ~~more~~ 600 stud students in the normal school and the 500 students were the technical school plus a couple of hundred high school students were in all these demonstrations. Both the normal and ~~techin~~ technical schools were built with and furnished with USAID (Agency for International Development) funds and each school has an American educational advisor. ~~Both~~ were finished in 1961 and were still getting new equipment and supplies from USAID. <sup>they are</sup>

~~Then~~ early monday afternoon--after scista, of course, they proceeded to burn houses. Before all this happened the students went from door- door to door to all the shopkeepers in the city and asked for donations for financing the demonstrations, for transportation, for gas for vehicles and food. I know of one demonstration they bouth b bought bread for 700 demonstrators. Maybe each shopkeeped paid 1000 piastres (US\$30). Most businesses are Chinese and are not really Buddhist in the true sense of the word, but they donate for fear of losing customers or their property.



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But the Catholic shopkeepers were not asked for donations by the Buddhists. The demonstrators burned two Catholic places--one was a tailor shop and the other on Gia Long street was an Oriental five-and-ten selling everything from plastic, jewelry and cosmetics. A friend of mine has a fabulous color shot of the fire; the debris lay in the middle of the street for two days--never cleaned up.

Finally, at 3 p.m. the province chief declared martial law and a strict curfew. No one was on the streets.

That evening about 9 p.m., the Communist shelled mortars into the city from one of their mountain ranges only half mile from the city.

The mortar attack continued for two hours; the sky was red like the Fourth of July, abis ablaze with red tracers going out and the mortars coming in. The Viet Cong did no damage; the Vietnamese army didn't go fight them; the American helicopters, fired eight rockets and all was quiet.

The mountain ranges surround Qui Nhon on three sides; on the fourth side is the sea. The Viet Cong control every mountain some of the time and control some of them all the time--they live only three miles from the city. One one of these mountains is a leprosarium two miles outside the city. Since ~~1953~~ at least 1954--for ten years--it has never been touched by the Viet Cong. But two months ago, they began entering it--in the daytime, no less--demanding medical supplies. Of course, they get them.



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AUGUST 25, Tuesday. The market was completely closed; the next day there was a little food but food prices began to double and this mad everyone mad--at the government. But the city was quiet for almost two weeks.

Sept. 20, Sunday. "Always on Sunday," I've learned to say in Qui Nhon. Another demonstration. I got in my car, but then the demonstration came by my house I could not leave. I was going to drive out in front of it, but several leaders in the group said I could not. They didn't look vicious, but they didn't look very amiable either. This crowd ~~numbered~~ of about 500 plus fishermen. Their signs read down with the Can Lao Party, the party of former president Ngo Dinh Diem. Some of the party members were evidently Catholic.

The American nuns at the Holy Family hospital got on their scooter to see the demonstration. They said that Communist propaganda--no doubt--suggested that sick people should not go to their hospital for medicines because the nuns give them injections which kill them and then the nuns dump them off the pier into the Qui Nhon harbor.

Between 10-11 a.m., several students--plus adult advisors--went to the homes of two supposed Can Lao members and forced them to go to the Cuong De high school. The people turned ~~them~~ the two men over to the province chief demanding investigation. The province chief released them within half an our. hour.

Noontime--~~exists~~. They don't do a damn thing--even during demonstrations.



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About 3:30, it started in again. The crowd grew to about 5000 people by then--students and fishermen armed with sharpened spikes, metal-pointed spears, machetes, knives, but no guns. They began broadcasting over loudspeaks at the high school shouting down w with the Can Lao pa rty and air criticizing American foreign policy in Viet Nam. All day the students were riding us busses with loudspeakers throughout the town rabbleroosing people. They'd cover every street in town every half hour.

By 6 p.m., they had captured the radio station and were broadcasting. Two hours later, a mass demonstration came up the street--with students in busses, trucks, cars, anything but cycles. You couldn't see a cycle on the street for two days so evidently they were paid to join the demonstration.

Sept. 21, Monday. People again rallied in front of the radio station and by 10 things reached a peak as 5,000 milled around. The province chief tried to enter the radio station, but he was refused admittance. Finally they admitted him,--and then wouldn't let him out. Then at 11:30, the crowd brought two Can Lao members into the radio station accusing them of crimes. There was constant cheering and yelling among the crowds--a blood-curdling noise.

Slowly ~~the atmosphere~~ tension mounted. An hour later, there was a mad rush of people towards the radio station and a very hysterical voice came over the loudspeaker. It was one of the can lao who had been arrested defending himself. He sounded hysterical.



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I thought they were going to lynch them and I was terrified. I was prepared for beheading or beating them to death. I didn't expect anything gentle like shooting. About about 12 :30 it began to settle down a little because many people left to round up more San Leo members. They spent the rest of the day doing this and by the end of the afternoon had rounded up more than 17. Finally, the province chief agreed to put these prisoners under arrest and within three weeks give them a trial with a jury chosen from the Qui Nhon population. You can imagine what that will be!

The mobs had taken over the authority of the government.!

Sept. 22, Tuesday. No school because the teachers and directors went to another "educational conference" but life returned to normal.

I know that wouldn't last long, but I didn't expect the "parade of the peasants" the next day.

Sept. 23, Wednesday. Exactly 49 sampans filled with about 700 people came from Tuy Phuoc and Phu My, both district headquarters on the South China Sea. These people marched on the provincial headquarters, accusing the government of burning their villages, the Americans of bombing their homes and accused the Viet Cong also. It was all very confused. They were poor village peasants with scroungy faded clothes. About noon, the provincial officials brought food to pacify them.



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I thought they are buying food for them only to restore their energy to start in again. About 4 p.m. they certainly did.

Then the mass movement marched by. The 700 villagers were in groups of 50 to 100 each with what looked like a student leader in each group walking alongside directing them what to shout. The student would shout a phrase and then the people would return it in unison.

Well, I fled to the American helicopter company, but they didn't know a thing. They called the American advisers to the same province, but they didn't know a thing either. Their colonel had restricted them to their quarters 24 hours a day. All the American provincial advisers --about 100 of them--went to their compound and locked themselves in. All the streets to the compound were blockaded.

The next day my maid returned from market saying people were again gathering in front of the high school; there was supposedly a curfew on the city, but it was never enforced. I couldn't take any more and I left for Saigon.

The problem was the mobs. Students and teachers I knew smiled at me during the demonstrations. They are not anti-American as far as personalities go, but they are anti-American in foreign policy. In a mass mob, no matter how many friends you have, they would be in the minority and wouldn't stop hurting Americans.



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this whole story is just a page out of the communist manual, they are jumping from one faction to another, causing utter confusion, unrest and demoralization. They say it's a popular demonstration, but only a small group are controlling it. And the Communists are always behind the scene. You never see the leaders and the people do not know who the leaders are.

But now the teachers and professional people are becoming concerned realizing this is Communist tactics, but they can not see any solution to counteract them. They also fear for their families and their lives if they attempt to rebel. Some families are already leaving for Saigon--Air Viet Nam has been backed up for two solid weeks.

Then too the fishermen and cycle-drivers were being paid for their participation.

The Viet Cong do not control Qui Nhon physically or militarily, but I think they control the minds of the leaders--and they may as well control it all. If this trend is not reversed, we'll lose the whole city eventually. And we'll lose other cities because of the same tactics. It's the same thing that happened with the French Indo-China War--with variations. Only the name is different. They're called Viet Cong instead of Viet Minh; we're called Americans instead of French. But we are still white.

The funny thing is that the word Qui Nhon in English means "A place to Assemble," and it sure is.