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NEW YORK TIMES - 7 FEBRUARY 1975 Pg. 2

Communist Agents in Press Saigon Tells of Exposing

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Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 6—The Saigon Government held a long news conference today in which it presented what it called "live evidence" that it had cracked a ring of Communist agents who had infiltrated the press here.

The two-and-a-half-hour conference, presided over by the commander of the national police, the Interior Minister and the Information Minister, featured two men who said they were former Communist agents who had specialized in subverting Saigon's press.

Vietnamese and foreign reporters were not permitted to question the two after they had spoken. After the news conference, an editor of Dien Tin, one of five opposition newspapers closed by the Government earlier this week, denounced one of the two men as a police agent.

The crackdown on the press followed the publication Sunday by nine dailies of a political "indictment" of President Nguyen Van Thieu by the Roman Catholic-led People's Anti-corruption Movement. Arrests of journalists began over the weekend and continued into early this week.

Information Minister Ho Van Cham vehemently denied that there was any connection between the political attack on Mr. Thieu and the arrests and newspaper closures. "There is no — absolutely no — relationship," he asserted.

Major Gen. Nguyen Khac Binh, commander of the national police, said that 18 "confirmed Communist agents" had been arrested in the cracking of the ring. A list of 18 names supplied to the press did not include that of Vo Trong Luong. See SAIGON, Pg. 2

who told today's gathering that he had infiltrated Dien Tin on Communist orders.

The list included some well-known and some relatively obscure figures on the Saigon press and intellectual scene.

Death of Work Cited

At least two persons on the list — a well-known writer named Nguyen Duc Dung, who uses the pen name Vu Hanh, and a former editor named Ky Ninh—have been jailed before.

Mr. Dung was arrested in 1967 and held for three years after he had written articles arguing that Vietnam's national culture should be preserved against Americanization. Mr. Dung was quoted by name in an article published in The New York Times last August as having said that he had been subjected to torture by the police. Two of his teen-age children, he said, were also arrested.

Mr. Ninh was quoted in a Times series on political prisoners in South Vietnam as having said that, because of police pressure, he had been unable to find steady editorial work since his release from jail four years ago.

Another journalist on the list is Nguyen The Phi, who writes for several Saigon newspapers under the pen name Diep Lien Anh. He is also on the staff here of the Kyodo news service of Japan.

Two well-known writers and poets—Kien Giang and Phan Minh Tai, who writes under the name Son Nam were also reported arrested as members of the ring.

Though several Vietnamese and foreign informants insisted privately that there were Communist agents among those arrested, the Government furnished no proof today beyond the testimony of Mr. Luong, who did not implicate anyone but himself.

Mr. Luong, speaking without notes, said that he had infiltrated Dien Tin in 1972 on orders of the Vietcong. He said that in his editorial position he had distorted stories about suicides to give an impression of economic desperation in the country, exaggerated labor-management conflicts and played down stories that would be harmful to the Communists, such as the shelling of civilian areas.

But Ly Chanh Trung, an editor of Dien Tin, said later that Mr. Luong had held only a minor position at the paper and had long been suspected of being a police agent.

The Government's other "live evidence" was a balding man who gave his name as Minh Trung. He said he had been on the staff of the Vietnam—the Communist agents in South French from 1946 to 1954—and had been "regrouped" to North Vietnam in 1954 after the end of that war.

Mr. Trung gave an account of Communist agents in South Vietnam, to which he said he had returned in 1972, cultivating and planting journalists in

the Saigon press to stir dissension against the Government. Mr. Trung said he "rallied" to the Government in 1973.