

= Xá L?i Pagoda raids =

The Xá L?i Pagoda raids were a series of synchronized attacks on various Buddhist pagodas in the major cities of South Vietnam shortly after midnight on 21 August 1963 . The raids were executed by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam Special Forces under Colonel Lê Quang Tung , and combat police , both of which took their orders directly from Ngô ?nh Nhu , younger brother of the Roman Catholic President Ngô ?nh Di?m . Xá L?i Pagoda , the largest pagoda in the South Vietnamese capital , Saigon , was the most prominent of the raided temples . Over 1 @, @ 400 Buddhists were arrested , and estimates of the death toll and missing ranged up to the hundreds . In response to the Hu? Vesak shootings and a ban on the Buddhist flag in early May , South Vietnam 's Buddhist majority rose in widespread civil disobedience and protest against the religious bias and discrimination of the Catholic @-@ dominated Di?m government . Buddhist temples in major cities , most prominently the Xá L?i pagoda , became focal points for protesters and assembly points for Buddhist monks from rural areas .

In August , several Army of the Republic of Vietnam ( ARVN ) generals proposed the imposition of martial law , ostensibly to break up the demonstrations , but in reality to prepare for a military coup . However , Nhu , already looking to arrest Buddhist leaders and crush the protest movement , used the opportunity to preempt the generals and embarrass them . He disguised Tung 's Special Forces in army uniforms and used them to attack the Buddhists , thereby causing the general public and South Vietnam 's U.S. allies to blame the army , diminishing the generals ' reputations and ability to act as future national leaders .

Soon after midnight on 21 August , Nhu 's men attacked the pagodas using automatic firearms , grenades , battering rams and explosives , causing widespread damage . Some religious objects were destroyed , including a statue of Gautama Buddha in the T? ?âm Pagoda in Hu? , which was partially leveled by explosives . Temples were looted and vandalized , with the remains of venerated monks confiscated . In Hu? , violent street battles erupted between government forces and rioting pro @-@ Buddhist , anti @-@ government civilians .

Initially , the Ngô family claimed that the army had carried out the raids , something their U.S. allies initially believed . However , this was later debunked , and the incident prompted the United States to turn against the regime and begin exploring alternative leadership options , eventually leading to Di?m 's overthrow in a coup . In South Vietnam itself , the raids stoked widespread anger . Several high @-@ ranking public servants resigned , and university and high school students boycotted classes and staged riotous demonstrations , resulting in further mass incarcerations . As most of the students were from middle @-@ class public service and military families , the arrests caused further upset among the Ngô family 's power base .

= = Background = =

In South Vietnam , where the Buddhist majority was estimated to comprise between 70 and 90 percent of the population in 1963 , President Ngô ?nh Di?m 's pro @-@ Catholic policies antagonized many Buddhists . A member of the Catholic minority , his government was biased towards Catholics in public service and military promotions , as well as in the allocation of land , business favors and tax concessions . Di?m once told a high @-@ ranking officer , forgetting the man was from a Buddhist background , " Put your Catholic officers in sensitive places . They can be trusted . " Many officers in the ARVN had converted to Catholicism in the belief that their career prospects depended on it , and many were refused promotion if they did not do so . Additionally , the distribution of firearms to village self @-@ defense militias intended to repel Vi?t C?ng guerrillas was done so that weapons were only given to Catholics . Some Catholic priests ran private armies , and in some areas forced conversions ; looting , shelling and demolition of pagodas occurred . Some Buddhist villages converted en masse to receive aid or avoid being forcibly resettled by Diem 's regime .

A rarely enforced 1958 law ? known as Decree Number 10 ? was invoked in May 1963 to prohibit the display of religious flags . This disallowed the flying of the Buddhist flag on Vesak , the birthday

of Gautama Buddha . The application of the law caused indignation among Buddhists on the eve of the most important religious festival of the year , as a week earlier Catholics had been encouraged to display Vatican flags at a government @-@ sponsored celebration for Diem 's brother , Archbishop Pierre Martin Ngô ?inh Th?c , the most senior Catholic cleric in the country . On 8 May in Hu? , a crowd of Buddhists protested against the ban on the Buddhist flag . The police and army broke up the demonstration by firing guns at and throwing grenades into the gathering , leaving nine people dead .

Di?m 's denial of governmental responsibility for the incident ? he instead blamed the Vi?t C?ng ? added to the anger and discontent of the Buddhist majority . The incident spurred a protest movement against the religious discrimination of the Roman Catholic ? dominated Di?m regime , resulting in widespread large @-@ scale civil disobedience among the South Vietnamese public , persisting throughout May and June . This period of political instability was known as the " Buddhist crisis " . The objectives of the protests was to have Decree Number 10 repealed and to force to implement religious equality .

On 11 June , a Buddhist monk , Thích Qu?ng ??c , self @-@ immolated in downtown Saigon . Images were shown by news outlets across the world , embarrassing Di?m 's government and bringing negative global attention . A few days later , under mounting American pressure , Di?m signed the Joint Communique with senior Buddhist leaders , making various concessions to the Buddhists , who in turn agreed to stop the civil unrest and return to normal life .

Neither the Ngô family nor the Buddhists were happy with the agreement , however , and it failed to solve the dispute . Both sides accused the other of failing to uphold their obligations ; the government accused the Buddhists of continuing to vilify them in demonstrations , while the Buddhists accused Di?m of stalling and not acting on his commitments to religious reform , and continuing to detain arrested Buddhist dissidents . The demonstrations and tension continued throughout July and August , with more self @-@ immolations and an altercation ( known as the Double Seven Day scuffle ) between secret police and American journalists reporting on a Buddhist protest .

= = Xá L?i = =

The hub of Buddhist activism in Saigon was the Xá L?i Pagoda . Built in the late 1950s , it was the largest Buddhist temple in the capital and was located in the city center . Many monks from outside Saigon ? including prominent Buddhist leaders ? had congregated at Xá L?i since the dispute began and it was used as a venue for press conferences , media interviews , publication of pamphlets and to plan and organize mass demonstrations .

At the time , Ngô ?inh Nhu was known to favor an even harder line against the Buddhists . Nhu was the younger brother of President Di?m and his main confidant , and was regarded as the real power behind the Ngô family 's rule . Nhu had made statements calling for the suppression of the protests through his English @-@ language newspaper , the Times of Vietnam . There were persistent reports that Nhu was seeking to usurp power from his elder brother and to attack the Buddhists . Nick Turner of Reuters approached Nhu and interviewed him about these rumors . Nhu said that if the Buddhist crisis were not resolved , he would stage a coup , demolish Xá L?i in two hours , and head a new anti @-@ Buddhist government . The news was promptly published , which the American embassy largely disregarded , purportedly unconvinced as to Nhu 's seriousness .

In the meantime , Nhu prepared the Army of the Republic of Vietnam Special Forces commanded by Colonel Lê Quang Tung ? who took his orders directly from Nhu and not the senior generals ? for the raids . An American @-@ trained outfit created to fight the Vi?t C?ng , the Special Forces were better @-@ equipped , better @-@ trained and better @-@ paid than the regular army , but were used by the Ngô family as a private army for repressing dissidents and protecting their rule , rather than fighting for the national interest . As such , they spent the majority of their time in Saigon warding off coup attempts . Tung brought more Special Forces into Saigon , bringing the total from two to four battalions in the capital .

On Sunday , 18 August , the Buddhists staged a mass protest at Xá L?i , attracting around 15 @,@@

000 people , undeterred by rain . The attendance was approximately three times higher than that at the previous Sunday 's rally . The event lasted for several hours , as speeches by the monks interspersed religious ceremonies . A Vietnamese journalist said that it was the only emotional public gathering in South Vietnam since Di?m 's rise to power almost a decade earlier . David Halberstam of The New York Times speculated that by not exploiting the large crowd by staging a protest march towards Gia Long Palace or other government buildings , the Buddhists were saving their biggest demonstration for the scheduled arrival of new U.S. ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge , Jr. the following week . As a government attack on Xá L?i was anticipated , Halberstam concluded that the Buddhists were playing " a fast and dangerous game " . He wrote that " the Buddhists themselves appeared to be at least as much aware of all the developments , and their protest seemed to have a mounting intensity " .

= = Planning = =

On the evening of 18 August , ten senior ARVN generals met to discuss the situation regarding the Buddhist unrest and decided martial law was needed . They wanted to disperse the monks who had gathered in Saigon and other regional cities and return them to their original pagodas in the rural areas .

Nhu summoned 7 of the 10 generals to Gia Long Palace on August 20 for consultations . They presented their request for martial law and discussed how to disband the groups of monks and their supporters from the temples in Saigon . Nhu sent the generals to see Diem . The president listened to the group of seven , led by General Tr?n V?n ?ôn . The group also included Army Chief General Tr?n Thi?n Khiêm and General Nguy?n Khánh , commander of the II Corps in the Central Highlands . Khiêm and Khánh were two of the officers who were responsible for helping to put down the attempted coup against Di?m in 1960 . Also present was ?ôn 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , General ?? Cao Trí , commander of I Corps , which oversaw the northernmost region around Hu? , and General Lê V?n Kim , head of the military academy . Trí and Kim were favorites of the Di?m regime . General Tôn Th?t ?ính , a brash paratrooper , who was also South Vietnam 's youngest @-@ ever general , commanded the III Corps surrounding Saigon . General Hu?nh V?n Cao was the commander of the IV Corps in the Mekong Delta and the only one of the septet who would prove not to have been involved in the later plotting against Di?m . ?ính and Cao controlled the two corps regions closest to Saigon and therefore the two areas most crucial in the success or failure of a coup . Cao had used the Seventh Division of his IV Corps to storm the capital in 1960 to save Di?m .

Tr?n V?n ?ôn claimed communists had infiltrated the monks at Xá L?i and warned that ARVN morale was deteriorating because of the civil unrest and consequent disruption of the war effort . He claimed it was possible that the Buddhists could assemble a crowd to march on Gia Long Palace . Hearing this , Di?m agreed to declare martial law effective on the next day , without consulting his cabinet , and troops were ordered into Saigon to occupy strategic points . Don was appointed as the acting Chief of the Armed Forces in place of General Lê V?n T? , who was terminally ill with cancer and receiving medical treatment abroad . ?ôn claimed Di?m was concerned for the welfare of the monks , allegedly telling the generals that he did not want any of them hurt . The martial law orders were then signed and authorized by ?ôn .

The real purpose of ?ôn asking for martial law was to maneuver troops in readiness for a coup , and he had no concrete plans to send the regular army into the pagodas . Nhu sidestepped him and took the opportunity to discredit the army by using Tung 's Special Forces and the combat police to attack the pagodas . ?ính , the officer most trusted by the Ngô family , was the only general who was given advance notice of the raids .

With the approval of Di?m , Nhu used the declaration of martial law to order armed men into the Buddhist pagodas . Nhu chose a time when he knew the American Embassy was leaderless . Frederick Nolting had returned to the United States and his successor Lodge was yet to arrive . As the high command of the ARVN worked closely with American military advisers deployed in the country , Nhu used the combat police and Tung 's Special Forces , who took their orders directly

from him . The men were dressed in standard army uniforms , such as paratroop attire , to frame the regulars for the raids . Nhu 's motive was to avoid responsibility for a violent operation ? which would anger the Vietnamese public and the American leadership . In falsely implicating the army in the attacks , Nhu intended to dent the confidence of the Vietnamese populace and the Americans in the senior officers who were plotting against him . Nhu evidently hoped the Buddhist majority and the Americans would blame the army for the raids and become less inclined to support a coup by the generals . In the past , Nhu 's tactics in playing the generals against one another had kept conspirators off @-@ balance and thwarted coup attempts . The raids were not unexpected , as the Buddhists had prepared themselves for the attacks , as had journalists , who were watching military installations for signs of movement .

= = Raids = =

= = = Saigon = = =

The Buddhists in Saigon were aware that a raid on the pagodas was imminent . Buddhist relatives of Special Forces and combat police personnel had tipped off the monks , and Buddhists who lived near pagodas had observed them move into the region in the lead @-@ up . American journalists were tipped off and traveled through Saigon to visit the pagodas ahead of the raids . The pagodas had been locked by the monks in preparation for the attacks and the doors were barricaded with furniture and reinforced by nailing wooden planks across them . The monks told members of the U.S. press corps in Saigon that the raids were coming , allowing them to be more prepared for the event than the U.S. embassy .

In the afternoon before the raids , trucks filled with soldiers headed past the offices of media outlets ? from where the journalists saw them ? destined for the ?n Quang Pagoda . More troops were seen congregating at police headquarters , ready to board trucks moving towards Xá L?i . The American @-@ made trucks had been provided as part of the U.S. military aid program for South Vietnam . Late at night , the convoys arrived and surrounded Xá L?i from several sides , causing a traffic jam in the city center . Several thousand personnel were estimated to have been present . Journalists were informed as soon as the attacks began , even as Nhu 's men cut communications lines , and rushed to Xá L?i .

Squads of Special Forces and combat police flattened the gates and smashed their way into the pagoda at around 00 : 20 on 21 August as Xá L?i 's brass gong was struck to signal the attack . Nhu 's men were armed with pistols , submachine guns , carbines , shotguns , grenades and tear gas . The red @-@ bereted Special Forces were joined by truckloads of steel @-@ helmeted combat police in army camouflage uniforms . Two of Nhu 's senior aides were seen outside Xá L?i directing the operation , while Nhu and his wife , Madame Nhu , watched the action from a nearby tank . Monks and nuns who barricaded themselves behind wooden shields were attacked with rifle butts and bayonets . The sound of the pagoda 's gong was largely masked by that of automatic weapons fire , exploding grenades , battering rams , shattering glass and human screaming . The military personnel shouted as they attacked , as did the occupants , in fear .

Tung 's men charged forward in a V @-@ shaped riot formation . According to Halberstam , " they pranced into the pagoda , looking something like a smart football team coming up to the line of scrimmage " . In the end , it took around two hours to complete the raids because many of the occupants had entrenched themselves inside the various rooms in anticipation of the attacks and doors had to be unhinged to reach them . According to journalist Neil Sheehan , who was at the scene , " The raid on Xá L?i , like those on the pagodas elsewhere in South Vietnam , was flawlessly executed . It reminded me of a scene from a movie of the French Resistance ? the scene when the Gestapo arrive at the Resistance hideout in Paris . " William Prochnau said that " Using the elite guard against the Buddhists was analogous to using Green Berets to put down Negro protests at home . It was outrageous . "

One monk was thrown from a balcony down to the courtyard six meters below . Nhu 's men

vandalized the main altar and confiscated the intact charred heart of Thích Quảng Đức, which had failed to burn during his re-cremation. However, some of the Buddhists were able to flee the pagoda with a receptacle containing his ashes. Two monks jumped the back wall of Xá Lợi to enter the grounds of the adjoining United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mission, where they were given asylum, despite the presence of troops behind the pagoda walls who opened fire with automatic weapons on any monks who tried to flee by jumping the fence.

Thích Thiện Khiết, the 80-year-old Buddhist patriarch, was seized and taken to a military hospital on the outskirts of Saigon. As commander of the III Corps, General Viên soon announced military control over Saigon, canceling all commercial flights into the city and instituting press censorship. Later, Thích Quảng Đức, one of the leading arrested monks, who later would become a leader of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, explained the protest strategy. After being released following the deposal of Diệm, he was asked why the Buddhist leaders had not fled to avoid arrest. He said that "We had done nothing wrong; therefore we could not flee. If we had, it would have been an admission that we were guilty."

== Hu? ==

The violence was worse in Huế, where the approach of government forces was met by the beating of Buddhist drums and cymbals to alert the populace. The townsfolk left their homes in the middle of the night in an attempt to defend the city's pagodas. At Tà Am, the temple of Buddhist protest leader Thích Trí Quang, monks attempted to burn the coffin of a monk who had self-immolated recently. Government soldiers, firing M1 rifles, overran the pagoda and confiscated the coffin. They demolished a statue of Gautama Buddha and looted and vandalized the pagoda. They then set off an explosion, leveling much of the pagoda. Many Buddhists were shot, beheaded, confiscated, and clubbed to death.

The most determined resistance to the Diệm regime occurred outside the Diêu Trì Pagoda. As troops attempted to stretch a barbed wire barricade across a bridge leading to the pagoda, the crowd tore it down with their bare hands. The protesters fought the heavily armed military personnel with rocks, sticks and their bare fists, throwing back the tear gas grenades that were fired at them. After a five-hour battle, the military finally won control of the bridge by driving armored cars through the angry crowd at sunrise. The defense of the bridge and Diêu Trì left an estimated 30 dead and 200 wounded.

Ten truckloads of bridge defenders were taken to jail and an estimated 500 people were arrested in the city. Seventeen of the 47 professors at Huế University, who had resigned earlier in the week in protest against the dismissal of the rector Cao Văn Luận, a Catholic priest and opponent of Archbishop Thích (elder brother of Diệm and Nhu) were also arrested. The raids were repeated in cities and towns across the country. The total number of dead and disappeared was never confirmed, but estimates range up to several hundred. At least 1,400 were arrested.

= U.S. reaction and sanctuary for monks =

The United States became immediately embroiled in the attacks following the escape of the two monks over the back wall of the Xá Lợi pagoda into the adjacent USAID compound. Saigon's police chief, disguised as a member of Nhu's Republican Youth, cordoned off the building. He ordered all Vietnamese inside to leave the area and threatened to storm the building when the Americans denied him entry. Foreign Minister Võ Văn Kiệt rushed to the scene to stop any physical confrontation, but demanded the Americans turn over the monks. William Trueheart, the deputy of the recently relieved U.S. Ambassador Nolting, arrived at the building. As the leading American diplomat in Vietnam in the transition period between ambassadors, Trueheart refused to take action until he received instructions from Washington, but warned Kiệt against violating the diplomatic immunity of the USAID offices. Trueheart knew that handing over the monks would imply American approval of the regime's action. The confrontation soon died down, and the U.S. State Department ordered Trueheart not to release the two monks and to regard the USAID building as being

equivalent to the embassy . More monks went on to find sanctuary in the U.S. embassy , which became known as the " Buddhist Hilton " .

Lodge was in Honolulu for last minute briefings with Nolting when news filtered through of the pagoda raids . He was given directions to proceed directly to Saigon , and arrived after sunset on 22 August . In the meantime , the State Department denounced the raids as a " direct violation by the Vietnamese government of assurances that it was pursuing a policy of reconciliation with the Buddhists " . On 23 August , Lodge 's first full day in Saigon , he visited the two monks who had taken refuge in the USAID building , and ordered that vegetarian food be made available for them . The meeting was a means of showing where American government policy stood on the attacks against the Buddhists .

= = Di?m reaction = =

At 06 : 00 on 21 August 1963 , President Di?m broadcast a statement on Radio Saigon in which he said : " under Article 44 of the constitution , I declare a state of siege throughout the national territory . I confer upon the Army of the Republic of Vietnam the responsibility to restore security and public order so that the state may be protected , Communism defeated , freedom secured , and democracy achieved . " Under martial law , the army was given blanket search @-@ and @-@ arrest powers and was empowered to ban all public gatherings , enforce a curfew , restrict press freedom and stop the circulation of all " printed material and other documents harmful to public order and security " . The military were given orders to shoot anybody who violated the curfew on sight , and the secret police used the increased powers to raid and vandalize the premises of anyone thought to be unfriendly to the regime .

Government sources claimed that in Xá L?i , ?n Quang , and various Theravada pagodas , soldiers had found machine guns , ammunition , plastic explosives , homemade mines , daggers , and Vi?t C?ng documents . It was later discovered that they had been planted there by Nhu 's men . A few days later , Madame Nhu , a Catholic convert from Buddhism , said in an interview that the raids were " the happiest day in my life since we crushed the Binh Xuy?n in 1955 " , and assailed the Buddhists as " communists " . On 29 August , General ?nh held a press conference in which he accused the Americans of trying to launch a coup in South Vietnam and took credit for the raids , despite Tung having been the chief military officer in charge .

= = Confusion over culpability and army denials = =

The driving force behind the government assault on the Buddhists appeared to have come from senior military commanders acting without consulting the civilian government . Immediately after the attacks , posters were erected across Saigon under the aegis of ARVN , but the language was recognized as that of Nhu .

The Secretary of State Nguy?n ?nh Thuan and Interior Minister B?i V?n L??ng were caught off guard by the attacks . The initial perception was that the military establishment had suddenly cracked down on the Buddhists because they were deemed to be a threat to the war effort . The government propagated a theory which held that the military felt compelled to take action after pro @-@ Buddhist student unrest on 17 ? 18 August . In Hu? , student protestors had turned on an ARVN officer after he fired in their direction . The attacks were preceded by a large rally at Xá L?i during which some monks had called for the overthrow of the Di?m regime and denounced the anti @-@ Buddhist statements of the de facto first lady Madame Nhu . However , observers dismissed government claims that the raids were spontaneous .

Di?m had long distrusted his generals and frequently played them against each other in a divide and conquer strategy to weaken any chance of a coup attempt . The army also contained substantial numbers of soldiers of Buddhist backgrounds , thus heightening skepticism that they would have attacked the pagodas and monks in such a violent manner . The synchronized military operations throughout the country , the speed at which banners were erected declaring the ARVN resolve to defeat communism , and doctored propaganda photos purporting to show Vi?t C?ng

infiltration of the Buddhists suggested that the actions were long premeditated . In an attempt to maintain secrecy , special printing presses had produced propaganda materials only hours before the raids .

The initial government line was that the regular army had taken the actions . ARVN radio broadcasts bore the influence of Nhu 's abrasive tone in directing the Republican Youth to cooperate with the government . Nhu accused the Buddhists of turning their pagodas into headquarters for plotting anti @-@ government insurrections . He claimed the Buddhist Intersect Committee operated under the control of " political speculators who exploited religion and terrorism " . Lodge believed Di?m remained in control but that Nhu 's influence had risen to unprecedented levels . He thought that Nhu 's divide and conquer tactics had split the military into three factions , respectively led by Generals ?ôn and ?ính , and Colonel Tung . ?ôn was believed not to have the allegiance of ?ính and Tung , who took their orders directly from Gia Long Palace . The two loyalists had support from various pro @-@ Di?m elements . Lodge predicted that if the army deposed Di?m , fighting could break out within the ARVN .

Initially , the American embassy believed the Ngô family 's claims that the regular army was responsible for the raids . The Voice of America , which was widely listened to in South Vietnam as the only non @-@ Di?mist news source , initially aired Nhu 's version of events , much to the dismay of the generals . The American media thought otherwise and began to debunk this theory , pointing out that the Ngô family constantly sought to undermine the army , and that Madame Nhu 's joy over the events suggested the family had neither ceded power nor had their hands forced by the military . Furthermore , they identified Nhu 's aides at the site , his idiosyncratic style in the announcements supposedly made by the ARVN , and the fact that the army had little motive to attack the Buddhists .

The New York Times printed two versions of the raids on its front page , one by David Halberstam implicating Nhu for the attacks , and another with the official government version . Sheehan of United Press International also claimed Nhu was responsible for the attacks , and foreign journalists had to smuggle their stories out by asking people leaving the country at the airport to carry documents for them . At the time , Sheehan and Halberstam were on a Ngô family hit list along with political dissidents because of their exposes of the regime 's human rights abuses , and following the raids , they slept at the home of John Mecklin , a U.S. official . They also received information that the Ngos were going to plant bombs in their offices and blame the deaths on the communists .

The Central Intelligence Agency ( CIA ) went on to report that ARVN officers resolutely denied any involvement in the pagoda raids . They held that Tung 's Special Forces had disguised themselves in ARVN uniforms before attacking the pagodas . Further unsubstantiated rumors had spread within the army that the Americans , who trained the Special Forces , had helped to plan the attack . The ARVN leaders were unsure of how to proceed and Don called a staff meeting on the morning of 23 August to discuss impending demonstrations against the raids by university students and the anger of junior ARVN officers about the pagoda attacks . General D??ng V?n Minh noted that the ongoing presence of armed military personnel had alienated society by creating an " aura of suppression " .

Later in the day , ?ôn privately met with CIA agent Lucien Conein and reiterated that the Americans were mistaken in believing that the ARVN was responsible . ?ôn insisted that Diem remained in control although Nhu had to approve all of the generals ' meetings with Di?m . ?ôn insisted Nhu had orchestrated the raids , fearing that the generals had too much power . He asserted that Nhu used the cover of martial law to discredit the generals by dressing the Special Forces in ARVN uniforms . ?ôn insisted that he was unaware of the plans and was at Joint General Staff headquarters with Khiêm when he received a radio message informing him of the assaults . Police Commissioner Tr?n V?n Tu , supported by Tung 's men , were in charge of the operation at ground level , and by the time Don arrived , the mission had been completed .

Khiêm had his own meeting with Rufus Phillips at the U.S. Embassy . He bitterly confided that Nhu had tricked the army into imposing martial law and becoming his " puppet " . Khiêm asserted that ?ính , ?ôn and the other generals were not aware of the raids in advance and revealed that the arms and explosives that Nhu claimed were found in the pagodas had been planted . As a result , the Vietnamese people expressed anger at the army and their U.S. backers , strengthening Nhu 's

position .

= = Martial law and riots = =

Following the raids , tensions were high in the streets of the cities . Police were ordered to shoot those who defied the 21 : 00 to 05 : 00 curfew , and troops in full camouflage battle dress guarded every major intersection and bridge with automatic weapons bearing fixed bayonets . The empty pagodas were ringed by troops and armored cars . All outgoing news was censored , forcing reporters to smuggle their copy out with travelers flying to foreign countries . The telephone lines in the homes and offices of all U.S. military and embassy staff were disconnected . The head of the USAID mission , Joe Brant , was stopped and searched while commuting to work , and other American officials had their meetings with Vietnamese officials and applications for permits to travel after the curfew hours delayed . The 14 @, @ 000 U.S. military advisers in the country were given orders to stay in their homes , and all leave was canceled .

The pagoda raids provoked widespread disquiet among the Saigonese . At midnight on 22 August , Generals ?ôn , ?ính and Khiêm informed Nhu that student demonstrations were planned for three consecutive days . They recommended that schools be closed , but when Nhu took them to see Di?m , the president refused to close the educational institutions . Di?m decided the students , not usually known for political activism , should be allowed to voice their opinions . Students at Saigon University boycotted classes and rioted , which was met with arrests , imprisonment , and the closure of the campus . These events were repeated at Hu? University , which was likewise shut down .

When high school students followed the lead of their elders and demonstrated , Di?m had them arrested as well . Two of the detained students were paraded at a press conference in which they falsely admitted to being communists who had brainwashed their entire school , having been tortured to force their confession . At Trung Vuong , an elite girls ' high school , the students hung up banners attacking Di?m and the Nhus , while students from the corresponding boys ' schools became violent , smashing school windows and erecting banners that insulted Madame Nhu in explicit language . More than 1000 students from Saigon 's leading high school , most of them children of public servants and military officers , were sent to re @-@ education camps . The result was that many army officers and senior civil servants had to lobby to have their children or younger siblings released from jail , causing a further drop in morale among government and military officials . In more extreme cases , brawls broke out between police officers arresting students , and the students ' parents , many of whom were military officers and / or public servants .

Foreign Minister V? V?n M?u resigned , shaving his head like a Buddhist monk in protest . M?u had decided to leave the country for a religious pilgrimage to India and the diplomatic and press corps assembled at the airport to see him off . He never arrived , as the Ngô family had him arrested . General ?ính softened the punishment at the behest of a fellow officer , and put the former diplomat under house arrest instead of placing him in jail .

Tr?n V?n Ch??ng , the ambassador to the United States and father of the de facto first lady Madame Nhu , resigned in protest , along with all but one of the staff members at the embassy . Ch??ng charged Di?m with having " copied the tactics of totalitarian regimes " , and said that as long as Di?m and the Nhus were in power , there was " not once chance in a hundred for victory " against the communists . Madame Ch??ng ? who was South Vietnam 's observer at the United Nations ? resigned and spoke of mass executions and a reign of terror under Di?m and Nhu . She predicted that if Di?m and the Nhus did not leave Vietnam then they would be killed in some sort of uprising .

Voice of America announced that Ch??ng had resigned in protest against the Ngô family 's policies , but this was denied by the Saigon government , which asserted the Ch??ngs had been sacked . Di?m bureaucrats claimed Ch??ng 's last telegram had been so critical of the regime that it was determined to be " inadmissible in form and substance " and that after years of privately complaining about his ambassador , Di?m dismissed him . In the meantime , the brothers made selective payments to some generals , hoping to cause resentment and division within the army . Vietnamese



civil servants also became more reluctant to do their jobs , especially in conjunction with American advisers . They reasoned that as the Americans were funding Tung 's men , they must have been involved in the attacks .

= = Change in U.S. policy = =

Once the U.S. government realized the truth about who was behind the raids , they reacted with disapproval towards the Di?m regime . The Americans had pursued a policy of quietly and privately advising the Ng?s to reconcile with the Buddhists while publicly supporting the partnership , but following the attacks , this route was regarded as untenable . Furthermore , the attacks were carried out by American @-@ trained Special Forces personnel funded by the CIA , and presented Lodge with a fait accompli . One Western ambassador thought that the raids signaled " the end of the gallant American effort here " . The U.S. State Department issued a statement declaring that the raids were a " direct violation " of the promise to pursue " a policy of reconciliation " .

On 24 August , the Kennedy administration sent Cable 243 to Lodge at the embassy in Saigon , marking a change in American policy . The message advised Lodge to seek the removal of the Nhus from power , and to look for alternative leadership options if Di?m refused to heed American pressure for reform . As the probability of Di?m sidelining the Nhus was seen as virtually nil , the message effectively meant the fomenting of a coup . The Voice of America broadcast a statement blaming Nhu for the raids and absolving the army of responsibility . Aware that the Americans would neither oppose a coup nor respond with aid cuts or sanctions , the generals deposed the Ng? brothers , who were arrested and assassinated the next day , 2 November 1963 .