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By C6, NARA, Date 4-21-95

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JULY 4, 1967

FOLLOWING IS AN INTERESTING ACCOUNT OF THE ARMED FORCES  
MEETING THAT PICKED THE THIEU-KY SLATE.

1.3(a)(4)

ON JUNE 27 GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN, MINISTER OF DEFENSE, CONVENED A MEETING OF THE ARMED FORCES COUNCIL. THE MILITARY LEADERS HAD WANTED ONLY ONE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE REPRESENTING THE ARMED FORCES IN THE SEPTEMBER ELECTIONS. THE MILITARY LEADERS HAD BEEN UNABLE TO PREVENT CHIEF OF STATE NGUYEN VAN THIEU AND PREMIER NGUYEN CAO KY FROM RUNNING INDEPENDENTLY. NOR COULD THEY DECIDE BETWEEN THEM, AND THEREFORE DECIDED TO ENDORSE NEITHER CANDIDATE IN THE BELIEF THAT THIS WOULD PREVENT ANY SPLIT IN THE ARMED FORCES. HOWEVER, IT WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT FRICTIONS WERE DEVELOPING, PARTICULARLY IN I CORPS. THIS DISSENSION WAS ESPECIALLY DISCONCERTING BECAUSE THE CONTROVERSY DEVELOPING OVER THE RETURN OF GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH FROM THAILAND MADE IT IMPERATIVE THAT THE ARMED FORCES BE UNIFIED. VIEN SAID THAT HE HAD THEREFORE CONVENED THE ARMED FORCES COUNCIL TO SEE IF IT COULD NOT FIND SOME PRACTICAL SOLUTION TO THE KY - THIEU IMPASSE.

THE ARMED FORCES COUNCIL FAILED TO PRODUCE A SOLUTION, SO GENERAL VIEN AND THE FOUR CORPS COMMANDERS BEGAN A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH THIEU AND KY WHICH LASTED FOR TWO DAYS AND TWO NIGHTS. THE MEETINGS WERE VERY EMOTIONAL AND BOTH KY AND THIEU OFFERED TO RESIGN. HOWEVER, GENERAL VIEN AND THE CORPS COMMANDERS FELT THAT THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE WAY FOR THE ARMED FORCES TO SHOW THEIR UNITY WOULD BE TO HAVE BOTH CANDIDATES ON THE SAME TICKET. THEY POINTED OUT THAT SINCE GENERAL THIEU WAS SENIOR TO GENERAL KY IN THE MILITARY HIERARCHY IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE FORMER TO TAKE SECOND PLACE ON A JOINT TICKET. MUCH OF THE TIME, THEREFORE, WAS SPENT CONVINCING KY TO RUN ON THE SAME TICKET WITH THIEU. KY WAS WILLING TO WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE ENTIRELY, BUT HE WAS MOST RELUCTANT TO BE THIEU'S RUNNING MATE.

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1.3(a)(4)

[REDACTED] ON JUNE 30, GENERAL VIEN AGAIN CONVENED THE ARMED FORCES COUNCIL. GENERAL THIEU ADDRESSED THE COUNCIL MEMBERS AND TOLD THEM THAT A DECISION HAD BEEN MADE THAT HE AND KY WOULD RUN TOGETHER ON A JOINT TICKET WITH HIMSELF IN THE TOP POST. THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS GREETED WITH APPLAUSE. THIEU TOLD THE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL THAT IF HE WERE ELECTED PRESIDENT IT WAS THE ARMED FORCES THAT WOULD RULE AND THAT HE WOULD EXECUTE THEIR POLICY.

1.3(a)(4)

[REDACTED] IT WAS ALSO DECIDED AT THIS MEETING THAT A COMMITTEE OF COLONELS AND LIEUTENANT COLONELS WOULD BE ESTABLISHED IMMEDIATELY TO INSURE A STRONG REPRESENTATION OF ARMED FORCES OFFICERS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS IN THE UPPER AND LOWER HOUSES.

1.3(a)(4)

AFTER THIS JUNE 30 MEETING, MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PRIVATELY EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT A VERY CRITICAL PERIOD LAY AHEAD AND SAID THEY EXPECTED INCREASING DIFFICULTIES FROM CIVILIANS. [REDACTED] SO LONG AS THERE WAS A CHANCE THAT A CIVILIAN CANDIDATE COULD WIN THE ELECTIONS, PARTICIPATION BY THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE POPULACE IN THE ELECTIONS WAS ASSURED. IT IS NOW POSSIBLE THAT LARGE GROUPS OF VOTERS MAY ABSTAIN OR BOYCOTT THE ELECTIONS OR THAT KEY CIVILIAN CANDIDATES WILL WITHDRAW IN PROTEST. THERE WILL ALSO BE AN INCREASING DEMAND BY MANY CIVILIANS FOR THE RETURN OF GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH. LEAFLETS DEMANDING HIS RETURN HAVE RECENTLY BEEN SCATTERED AROUND SAIGON.)

1.3(a)(4)

[REDACTED] IN ADDITION TO THIEU'S PROFFER OF RESIGNATION AND THE CONCERN OVER THE POSSIBLE RETURN OF GENERAL MINH, THE SENIOR GENERALS WERE DISTURBED BY THE STEAMROLLER TACTICS OF DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NATIONAL POLICE BRIGADIER GENERAL NGUYEN NGOC LOAN ON BEHALF OF GENERAL KY. THE SENIOR GENERAL UNDOUBTEDLY WERE CONCERNED THAT A KY-LOAN TEAM MIGHT BECOME SO POWERFUL THAT THEIR OWN INTERESTS WOULD BE THREATENED. IN CONTRAST, A THIEU-KY TEAM REPRESENTING THE COLLECTIVE WILL OF THE MILITARY PRESENTS AN ATTENUATED THREAT TO THE GENERALS.)

DTG 04/1521Z JULY 67

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