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TO: Ambassador Bunker DATE: July 2, 1967
FROM: Ed Lansdale
SUBJECT: Political Atmosphere

I asked Cal Mehlert to visit SCA during the closing moments of the registration for candidates. His attached report gives a little flavor of the scene that I believe you will find of interest.

cc: Ambassador Locke
General Westmoreland
Ambassador Komer
Mr. Calhoun
Mr. Hart
Mr. Jacobson

SLO:EGLansdale:rm

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
NIJ 92-224
By pw, NARA, Date 8-13-92

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TO: General Lansdale
FROM: Calvin E. Mehlert
SUBJECT: Some Late Evening Comments at SCA

DATE: July 1, 1967

I dropped by candidate registration headquarters at the Special Commissariat for Administration last night at 11.30 just one half-hour before the close of registration. About 30 Senatorial candidates and their friends were there, some filling out forms and presenting required documents, but most gathered in small groups discussing election plans, and the newly-emerged Thieu/Ky Duong van Minh slates. By this time, over 60 lists had registered for the Senate race and 17 for the Presidency and there was considerable animation and excitement.

I note below some of the comments I heard during the minutes before midnight:

A former Diem government official: "Very interesting news about Thieu and Ky this afternoon ... well, you know, it's always possible for someone to die. An accident can always happen. I'm sure that an accident will happen. He won't settle for second place, be sure of that ..."

Another former official: "I tell you, for just one million dollars, you Americans can have anyone you want elected. It would be easy. You don't have to let anyone know. But if you back some good men, the people will vote for them, and the other candidates will all drop out. No, the people won't resent it. They'll thank you for it. Just a million dollars . . ."

Friend of a candidate: "Want to know why there are so many candidates for President? Because we have so many divergencies, especially in these last years. Each one has to be represented."

SCA official: "We have many Presidential candidates because of the importance of 'amour propre' to us Vietnamese. X sees that his friend has signed up as Vice-Presidential candidate on someone else's ticket, so X has to one-up Y and make at least a gesture of running for the Presidency. Some candidates consider running for the Senate beneath their dignity and want to show the

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world how much they think of themselves by running for the Presidency or Vice-Presidency.

"Many running for the Senate are thinking primarily of the prestige the position will give them. Satisfaction of the ego...?"

Senatorial candidate: (glances hastily about and whispers)
"You all did good work today. We all think you did a good job. You know, the U. S. troop movements ... Clever... Well-timed. (Press of the hand, warmly). Got just the right results. Never mind, of course you cannot say anything."

Unidentified observer: "Beaucoup listes? C'est la democracie, monsieur, mais a la francaise!"

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