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Situation Report on Viet-Nam

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NUJ 92-224

By pal, NARA, Date 8-13-92

New Developments

Ky has told an American observer that he will be considering campaign tactics over the next several days. He saw two courses of action open to him: (a) to reactivate his own campaign organization in full support of the Thieu-Ky ticket; or (b) to do as little as possible in support of the ticket. Ky said that he favored the first course of action but that he could not exclude the second until he works out a definite agreement with Thieu on sharing of responsibilities. Ky appeared flatly to rule out his accepting the post of prime minister in any civilian government if the military slate were defeated. Ky told the American observer that he needed to know the American attitude before deciding which course of action to follow.

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We have a [REDACTED] report from a source close to Ky that Thieu has informed Ky that he (Thieu) would be wholly dependent on Ky's campaign apparatus, since he was without funds, workers, and campaign manager.

Ky's remarks imply clearly that he still has no precise understanding with Thieu and that the organization he was

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creating behind his own candidacy has virtually ceased functioning. These facts are apparently generally evident in political circles in Saigon: (1) both presidential candidate Huong and Suu's vice presidential candidate, Dan, have noted privately that the Thieu-Ky slate was weaker than the previous Ky ticket; (2) Huong and Dan have said privately that the emergence of the Thieu-Ky slate may serve to improve the honesty of the elections; Huong told an Embassy officer that Ky's pressures and unfair tactics have been greatly reduced in recent weeks, and Dr. Dan recently acknowledged that "Ky might be inclined just now to appoint General Thang to oversee the conduct of the election and make it truly honest." Dan noted, however, that the Thieu-Ky coalition could permit the province chiefs to "cheat for the military ticket".

Both Huong and Dan commented that Big Minh could not justifiably be barred from being a candidate. However, they both expressed the view that Minh could not win. Dan felt that if Minh remained in the race he would reduce the chances of "a decisive election". Meanwhile, Minh is quoted in the Bangkok press as saying that if the Generals in Saigon eliminate his candidacy, "the election will be 100% unfair".

He was also quoted as saying that he could campaign even though he were not in South Viet-Nam.

Huong was very outspoken against "peace candidate" Thanh, stating flatly his belief that Thanh is working for the Viet Cong. He states that Thanh has connections with the communists through his wife.

Comment

We believe that when Bunker replies to Ky's request for an indication of the American attitude, he should state that: (a) Ky should work out his relationships with Thieu to continue to preserve military unity; (b) the Thieu-Ky slate should campaign vigorously as should all slates; and (c) the campaign and the elections should be openly and honestly conducted.

We intend to raise the Thanh case again with Ambassador Bunker. We will cite the views of Huong and certain Assembly members against Thanh's candidacy and ask for the Embassy's careful judgment, as a matter of urgency, on Thanh and his connections. We will renew our request that Ambassador Bunker discuss this issue frankly with Thieu and Ky, unless the Embassy has new information clearly and closely linking Thanh to the Viet Cong.