

66
Wednesday, July 12, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. President:

Attached is the daily situation report
on Vietnamese politics.

W. W. Rostow

Att.

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Situation Report on Viet-Nam

July 12, 1967

New Developments

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NLJ 92-224

By mu, NARA, Date 8-13-92

Another prominent presidential candidate, Ha Thuc Ky, has privately expressed his opposition to Big Minh's return to Viet-Nam as a serious threat to military unity and an opportunity for the militant Buddhists to foment disorder. Ky doubted that Minh would be a serious threat at the polls. He said neither the Directorate nor the Assembly wanted to bear responsibility for rejecting Minh's candidacy, and foresaw the possibility that the Assembly would accept Minh's candidacy leaving the question of his return up to the Directorate. In another conversation with an Embassy officer, IV Corps commander Manh reiterated his opposition to Minh's return, but clearly implied concern for Minh's popular support in the Delta.

Presidential candidate Ha Thuc Ky also expressed to an Embassy officer the belief that peace candidate Thanh had extreme leftist connections. However, he felt that Thanh's candidacy would further split the Southern vote, a favorable development for him. Ky also echoed the view of other candidates that Ky would not whole-heartedly support Thieu's campaign.

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National Police Chief Loan, a chief organizer of Ky's earlier campaign and chief target of charges of unfair electoral practices, has told a Mission officer that from now on he will have nothing to do with politics. Loan claimed that he was making good progress in persuading Big Minh not to return to Viet-Nam prior to the elections until two additional generals arrived in Bangkok and "completely messed up the situation". Loan also asserted that the Thieu-Ky ticket would not succeed and that Ky had made a mistake in joining it. Loan stoutly maintained that he is dedicated to maintaining political stability. The Embassy believes Loan's statements about divorcing himself from politics should be viewed most sceptically.

The Washington Post this morning reports a statement of presidential candidate Huong. The statement is interpreted as a call for peace. In it Huong implied that if elected he would propose to North Viet-Nam that nation-wide elections be held within five to ten years to let the people of Viet-Nam choose between a communist or non-communist government in a unified Viet-Nam. Huong also implied in his statement that the choice in the September elections is between a military government committed to war and a civilian government committed to seeking peace. The Post article noted that Huong's statement was permitted to be published in a local newspaper.

The National Assembly has approved the draft Lower House election law and has shifted the difficult decision of apportioning Lower House seats to the Directorate. The Embassy notes this is an "unusual abdication of responsibility", and suggests that many deputies are anxious to finish their legislative tasks and begin concentrating on their political campaigns. The Assembly has now recessed until July 17, when it will begin examining the Central Election Council's recommendations regarding presidential slates, completing this process by July 19.

Comment

We are awaiting reports on further developments on the Minh and Thanh issues, particularly any discussions that Ambassador Bunker may have had with Thieu and Ky on these matters. We believe that no specific actions are required today.