

Tuesday, Aug. 22, 1967
9:30 a.m.

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MR. PRESIDENT:

I don't know how to rate the Chinese betting man in Saigon against our Embassy reporters, but these odds may interest you.

They show Thien and Huong neck-and-neck.

W. W. R.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)

White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983

By rg, NARA, Date 9-4-91

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TO: Ambassador Locke DATE: August 11, 1967

FROM: Ed Lansdale

SUBJECT: Election Odds

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NEJ 94-299

By lip, NARA, Date 2-7-96

Some days ago, you asked for any information that SLO could pick up about betting odds on the September 3 election, particularly in the local Chinese community. I tasked Cal Mehlert with this. He checked with friends in the community immediately, but was told that no betting was taking place. However, on August 10, his friends tipped him off that informal betting had started, mainly among Chinese who were associates in banking and brokerage houses. The more formal gambling on the election isn't expected to start until about August 25.

The information we now have is that, in the local financial center, among Chinese business associates (not far from the Embassy itself), the following are the going odds:

Thieu v. Huong	even money
Thieu v. Suu	10/8
Huong v. Suu	10/8
Thieu v. Dzu	10/5

Apparently, no other candidates are being considered in the betting at present. The inclusion of Dzu (whom some local political observers feel is a real dark horse possibility), is significant.

Mr. Mehlert's Chinese friends also said that Tran van Huong's organization is active in Cholon. Huong sent a representative, also of the Tran surname, to the Tran Family Association of Cholon to pray before the shrine of the Family Ancestors. Chinese who witnessed the ceremony, said that the gesture was highly appreciated by the clan. In addition, a lot of little old ladies of the Buddhist persuasion are out working for Huong among their lady and family friends.

Huong is also said to have told persons who had had properties expropriated by post-Diem governments that he would restore their properties. (Comment: It was inferred that help from MA Tuyen, former Congregation Chief, had been solicited with this approach.) The Hung Men (or Red Brotherhood), a Chinese fraternal

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association of many strata of society with roots far back in Chinese history, is said to be supporting Huong.

While there may appear to be little surface excitement over the elections in Cholon, there is in fact strong interest revealed when friends meet and families come together. Trieu-sen-Hoach is a Chinese-origin Vietnamese, member of the National Assembly, and candidate for the Senate on List 29. Hoach's father, aged and dim of sight, has set himself a program of visiting one street in Cholon each day. He makes his way slowly from shop to shop, greeting old friends, and lecturing them on the virtues of his son's List, and urging them to get out and vote for his boy.

No matter how much electioneering there may be, certain very simple non-political factors will influence voting among the uneducated in Cholon. The simplicity of the symbol will be important in the Presidential election. Truong-dinh-Dzu's White Dove is highly effective, for the old lady casting her ballot can merely be told to "Vote for the blind ticket." Huong's symbol is not so effective. The voter has to be told to look for a sun, and a man sowing rice, which doesn't really distinguish the ticket sufficiently from Suu's man plowing silhouetted against the sun. When it comes to voting for the Senate, many simple folks will merely take the first six ballots from the top of the pile.

Much political talk among these Chinese, however, is on something else. They are talking about the "boo-boo" made by Mme. Ky. She, as a means to help her husband's candidacy, recently visited two of the hospitals in the Chinese community, playing the role of a gracious "Lady Bountiful." While this visit was appreciated, it actually insulted -- by slight -- half of the community. There are four Chinese community hospitals, each representing an important Chinese congregation. She ignored two of them.

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

SLO:EGLansdale:rm

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