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Monday, August 14, 1967

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Military Control Organization

Today's situation report on Viet-Nam politics noted a report that the generals have written a "Charter" for their planned Supreme Military Committee. The purpose of the committee is clear: to maintain military control over the government after the election.

It is, in effect, a scheme for "guided democracy" in which a half dozen generals would decide finally what was good and bad for the country.

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(a)(4) Our text of the alleged "Charter" (22 pages) came from a usually reliable source in the Vietnamese military. [redacted] checking on the authenticity of the document. They are also checking on whether it is merely a draft, or whether it has actually been adopted by the generals (including Thieu and Ky).

Ambassador Bunker notes that this plan is "completely at variance with Ky's statement to me on August 11 that any report of an intention to set up an inner military group to run the government could be flatly denied."

The Ambassador is clearly riled. He has said that if the report is verified, "I will plan to take this matter up in an appropriate way with Ky, since we cannot continue a relationship of confidence with him in such circumstances."

It is understandable that the military leaders should want a continuing role of importance in the affairs of their government and their country. It is quite another for them to plan to send down the drain much of the patient and constructive work of the past year and a half in the development of representative government. It is also shocking, if true, for the Prime Minister to lie to our Ambassador in this fashion.

I believe Bunker is in a mood to meet this one head-on and that he will do so in an appropriate way. We shall be following this closely.

W. W. Rostow

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