

Mr. Rostow

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Pres file

Friday, October 20, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. President:

Attached is today's report on the political situation in Viet Nam.

W. W. Rostow

Att.

MWright:hg

SECRET-EXDIS ATTACHMENT

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Viet-Nam Political Situation Report

October 20, 1967

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By kg, NARA, Date 12-23-54

Bunker-Ky Conversation

In a recent conversation with Bunker, Ky was critical of Thieu for taking so long to make decisions on the Cabinet. Ky said it was absolutely necessary that the government be formed and that it move quickly to announce short-term objectives that could be achieved within six months.

Lower-House Elections

The Lower House campaign ends tomorrow and balloting takes place Sunday (5:00 p.m. Saturday to 4:00 a.m. Sunday EDT). The campaign has proceeded entirely on the local level, with few nationally known figures involved. Peace, corruption, and GVN inefficiency have been raised as issues, but less stridently and specifically than in the Presidential race. Voter turnout is expected to be lower than for the September 3 elections.

The elections offer a chance for groups excluded or under-represented in the new Senate to find a voice. Election by local constituency increases their chances somewhat. But the powerful blocs -- mainly Catholics -- may still win a disproportionate number of seats because of the large number of candidates in each constituency. (Earlier plans of a Buddhist election boycott have evidently been dropped, but the Buddhists have not so far organized behind specific candidates.)

The Southern regionalists may find the election hard going. Badly shaken by Huong's poor showing, they will have difficulty even securing as much representation as they had in the Constituent Assembly (about 12). Unless they do, "Southern" sentiment will be under-represented in the Lower House as it is elsewhere (the Upper House, the Cabinet so far).

The GVN has not openly endorsed any candidates. Some may have informal GVN support, but there appears to be no large-scale organized effort on the part of either Thieu or Ky.

Results of the elections are likely to be slow in arriving here. We should begin to have information on election mechanics -- voter turnout, VC incidents, balloting procedure -- by Sunday afternoon. Full election returns will probably not be known before Tuesday, though trends in key places such as Saigon should be clear before that.

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