

PLAYING FOR TIME

On December 26, 1974, for the third time the trial of the papers *Chinh Luan*, *Tia Sang*, *Dien Tin*, and *Dong Phuong* was put off until February 20, 1975, when two other papers, the *Song Than* and *Dai Dan Toc* would be facing prosecution too, all the six under charge of "disrespect to the President."

Why such a series of adjournments? Because during that December 26 sitting, the defence of the first four papers forced with crushing argument the Thieu men to comply with the demand of the "Lawyers' Forces Militating for Freedom and Democracy" that Thieu and his deputy Tran Van Huong appear as witnesses before the tribunal.

Naturally the whole of Saigon was gratified at Thieu's position between the devil and the deep sea. He would like to strike at these hostile papers to discourage the opposition which has been clamouring for his resignation and stamp out the mass movement. But the firmness of the latter, added to the stormy protest of the people made him think twice. Clearance of the accused papers would be tantamount to a tacit admission of the charges they had made public and other accusations levelled at his fascist, bellicist and corrupt dictatorship. Convicting them would sound like a denial of his oft-repeated professions of "freedom" and "demo-

Here and There

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 cracy" and pour oil on the fire... Playing for time remained then the only option to maintain the threat, save face and temporarily dodge universal fire.

THE BEST SOLUTION

But the trick after all is but a makeshift, and no solution. As a matter of fact, on the same December 26, hundreds of demonstrators clamoured for Thieu's appearance in court, many leaders of antagonistic sects for his resignation and nearly all Saigonese newspapers suspended publication in protest.

As far as it was concerned, Saigon gave only another proof of its craftiness, cruelty, recalcitrance and weak posture as well.

Put its foot down or throw up the sponge? His Yankee advisers can show him a way out, can't they?

I knew of a charitable soul ready to provide him with a free bit of advice, which could be sealed into a little bag of brocade like in the ancient times, bearing this terse sentence:

RESIGN BEFORE FEBRUARY 20, 1975.

A BIT OF HISTORY

It is feared that the piece of advice will not be any use to Thieu who cannot bring himself to take

it. Wisdom may come very late to some but to this thick head. Moreover his Yankee bosses continue to back him.

By sending to Saigon on January 7 the US Under Secretary of State on a fact-finding tour with a view to increasing US aid to Thieu, by dispatching the aircraft carrier *Enterprise* and other warships from the Philippines to South Viet Nam high seas, to reinforce the Coral Sea already on duty there. The next day, Gaylor, US commander in the Pacific declared that US intervention in all and any situations was not ruled out and that every material aid should be available to Thieu (AP).

Those moves and the continual shuttle to and from Saigon of a string of high CIA, Joint Chiefs of Staff, State Department officials as well as the recent statements and charges of the State and Defence Departments against Viet Nam only betray the Ford Administration's scheme to prepare public opinion for a stepped-up intervention, for greater aid to Thieu to push up the war and undermine the Paris Agreement.

The South Vietnamese people and armed forces will not stand idle while their revolutionary gains are threatened with obliteration. The severe punishment they have inflicted on the wreckers of the Agreement is proof enough of their state of mind.

Is it necessary to remind Thieu and his American protectors of what happened quite a long time ago to a Vietnamese Benedict Arnold, Tran Ich Tac and to Richard W. Nixon and his predecessors only recently?

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