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Ho Thong Minh, GVN Minister of Defense in 1954-55
now the self proclaimed representative of the third force
in Vietnam.

MINH SAYS THAT HE RESIGNED AS DEFENSE MINISTER IN PROTEST WHEN NGO DINH DIEM DECLARED WAR ON THE SECTS. JOSEPH BUTTINGER IN "VIETNAM: A DRAGON EMBATTLED" BEARS MINH OUT ON THIS CONTENTION, AND MAKES COMPLIMENTARY REFERENCES TO MINH.

MINH'S MAIN THESIS IS THAT ALTHOUGH NORTH VIETNAM HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR 70 TO 80 PERCENT OF THE MILITARY VIOLATIONS OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS, PRESIDENT THIEU HAS BEEN GUILTY OF 70 PERCENT OF THE POLITICAL VIOLATIONS. MINH CONTENDED THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARE SENDING TROOPS DOWN THE TRAIL AS A MILITARY COUNTER TO THE POLITICAL IMBALANCE IN THE SOUTH. MINH SEEMS PARTICULARLY DISTURBED THAT THIEU HAS NOT YET PERMITTED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE THIRD FORCE.

MINH ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIEU WAS NECESSARY DURING THE APRIL 1972 OFFENSIVE, AND DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS LEADING UP TO THE PARIS AGREEMENTS. HE QUESTIONED WHETHER HE WAS STILL INDISPENSABLE. MINH SAID THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE HE HAD TALKED TO IN PARIS INDICATED THAT THIEU WAS LOSING GROUND BECAUSE OF HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO BROADEN HIS REGIME. MINH ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE CREATION OF THE THIRD FORCE. THE REPLY WAS THAT THERE SEEMED LITTLE CHANCE FOR SUCH AN EVENT. TAKING THE OFFENSIVE, WE ASKED MINH WHEN HE THOUGHT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WERE GOING TO BROADEN THEIR GOVERNMENT. MINH ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE WOULD HAVE TO SET THE EXAMPLE

MINH ASKED THAT ON HIS FINAL DAY IN THAILAND, JANUARY 3, HE BE ALLOWED TO COME TO THE EMBASSY TO PRESENT A FORMAL APPROACH ON BEHALF OF THE THIRD FORCE. WE TOLD HIM THAT THE MOMENT WAS NOT PROPITIOUS IN VIEW OF NORTH VIETNAMESE SABRE RATTLING. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT WE WERE RIGHT. HE PLANS TO LEAVE FOR PARIS AT MIDNIGHT, AND HOPES TO SEE PRATT SHORTLY AFTER HIS RETURN.