

He Meets With Nixon Tomorrow President Thieu of South

by Lloyd Shearer

Several weeks ago when Vice President Spiro Agnew was vacationing in Palm Springs, sunning himself in Frank Sinatra's sumptuous desert compound, he took time out to address the Lincoln Club of Orange County.

This little-known club consists of 124 carefully screened members who have raised millions of dollars for President Nixon's political campaign. Among them are Arnold O. Beckman, head of Beckman Instruments; C. Arnholt Smith, the San Diego financier who owns the United States National Bank, the San Diego Padres baseball team, a fleet of taxi companies, insurance corporations, and much more; Clement Hirsch, the food processor and racehorse-owner, and other multimillionaires.

The Lincoln Club's headquarters consists of a post office box in Fullerton, Calif., and its titular president is Arnold Beckman, the philanthropist who has contributed millions to the California Institute of Technology, but its actual director is Herbert Kalmbach, President Nixon's personal lawyer and one of his chief political fund-raisers.

Kalmbach, 51, who heads the law firm of Kalmbach, Demarco, Knapp & Chillingworth, with offices in Newport and Los Angeles, hides from the press these days, because he was involved in financing the political sabotage ventures of the 1972 Presidential campaign. And he avoids reporters as one does leprosy.

Agnew's view of Thieu

On Feb. 12, Vice President Agnew addressed the Lincoln Club in what "The Los Angeles Times" described as a "secrecy-shrouded speech."

In this speech, Agnew heaped praise on South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu and described him as "a distinguished man, he is a decent man, he is a man of tremendous patriotism for



Thieu, wife and son at dedication of hospital wing. Boy is on vacation from school in Switzerland where most rich South Vietnamese send sons.



President Nguyen Van Thieu and Mrs. Thieu at recent wedding of their daughter at Saigon cathedral. Archbishop officiates at Catholic ceremony.

1947. Reportedly he is a good judge of character, and his opinion of 50-year-old Thieu is worthy of consideration.

On the other hand, there are veteran journalists, diplomats and students who insist that Thieu's scholarship could fit into the eye of a needle—apparently Thieu was never graduated from high school—and that Thieu is a ruthless, ambitious, cunning military dictator who will never again want for a dollar. They hold that the major reason the U.S. supports him is because he is anti-Communist and not the "tremendous" patriot Agnew describes.

Youngest of five sons

The truth about Nguyen Van Thieu (his name means "one who ascends") is that in the Vietnamese melange he has fought at various times on all sides. The youngest of five sons of a poverty-stricken fisherman, he fought in 1945 for Ho Chi Minh, leader of the Vietminh, a national liberation force, determined to extricate Vietnam from French colonial domination. As a member of the Vietminh, Thieu rose rapidly to become a district chief, until a year later he decided that the Vietminh were Communists, and that he should switch sides and go over to the French.

This he did, enrolling in the Vietnamese National Military Academy at Dalat which the French had established to train officers to fight the Vietminh. Thieu was a member of the first graduating class, obtaining his second lieutenant's commission in 1949. Many of his classmates later became officers in the Vietminh, determined to win independence for Vietnam from France. But not Thieu. He decided to remain with and fight for the French.

As an infantry platoon commander, he was known most for his caution, his smoothness, his ability to survive. In 1951 he married Nguyen Thi Mai Anh, daughter of the most prosperous physician in My Tho, a city in the Mekong Delta, then converted from Buddhism to his wife's Catholic religion.

When Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh defeated the French in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu, Thieu remained with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam in the South, maneuvered himself into the superintendency of the National Military Academy at Dalat for four years, gaining the loyalty of the cadets, many of whom are now the top-ranking officers

his country; he is a scholar."

The Vice President pointed out that Thieu is scheduled to fly into San Clemente to meet [tomorrow] with President Nixon. "I hope," he added, "you'll have a chance to find out how absolutely outrageous the stories that have been passed about him as a callous dictator really are."

The Vice President has been to Saigon several times. He is a lawyer, having attended night classes at Baltimore Law School, and earned his law degree in

Vietnam—Patriot or Dictator?_

in the South Vietnamese army and Thieu's most avid supporters.

Not many Americans know it, but Thieu was sent twice to the United States for military training, first in 1957 to the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kans., and again in 1960 for modern weapons training at Fort Bliss, Tex.

In 1962, convinced that he could trust Thieu, Diem, then leader of South Vietnam, appointed Thieu commander of the Fifth Infantry Division at Bien-hoa, just north of Saigon, to put down any attempt to overthrow the Diem regime.

One year later when Thieu learned that the U.S. backers of Diem, including the CIA, had become disenchanted with Diem's repressive policies, Thieu, along with several other military leaders, plotted Diem's overthrow. On Nov. 1, 1963, Thieu personally led the attack on the barracks of the Presidential bodyguard and President Diem was killed.

Convinces U.S. he's best

In the ten governments which followed the assassination of Diem, Thieu not only survived, he convinced the American authorities in Saigon that he was the best candidate to run South Vietnam.

For years it has been a basic tenet of U.S. foreign policy that given the choice between a Communist leader, however benign, nationalist or Tito-like, and an anti-Communist, however Fascist, dictatorial, or murderous, the U.S. traditionally chooses the anti-Communist.

In the American lexicon, a Communist is still equated with the devil, and Communism remains the most sinful, heinous form of government devised by man.

By negotiating with Leonid Brezhnev of the Soviet Union and Mao Tse-tung of China, President Nixon is gradually changing that image, but it is so deeply

rooted in the American psyche that it will persist for years.

Banks on U.S. support

Nguyen Van Thieu is aware of this and regularly takes advantage of the fact. He feels certain that no matter how great his excesses, how corrupt his regime, the U.S. will support him, indefinitely, if not with men, then surely with money and material. For how many times has President Nixon declared that our reason for spending 55,000 American lives, 300,000 wounded and \$200

billion in Vietnam was to prevent a Communist takeover of South Vietnam?

If one wants some indication of Thieu's true character, one need not go beyond his handling of the Dzu case.

In 1967 Truong Dinh Dzu, a prominent Saigon lawyer, ran against General Thieu in the Presidential election in South Vietnam. Dzu ran on a peace ticket and advocated an eventual coalition government. He polled about 17 percent of the vote and in many provinces did better than Thieu.

Arrests his rival

When Thieu won the Presidency, he promptly had his rival candidate arrested, tried by a military court and thrown into jail for five years on a charge that Dzu advocated a coalition and therefore undermined the security of the nation.

On May 1, 1972, when Truong Dinh Dzu was scheduled for release, the director of the Chi Hoa Prison in Saigon took him out of his cell, had him sign his release papers, and said to Dzu, "You will be free within a few hours. All that is necessary is for President Thieu to okay these papers."

Since May 1, Thieu has refused to do anything of the sort. He knows that Dzu is capable of heading a neutralist block, that Dzu has a wide following throughout the country, that Dzu is a potential political rival. He therefore keeps him in jail.

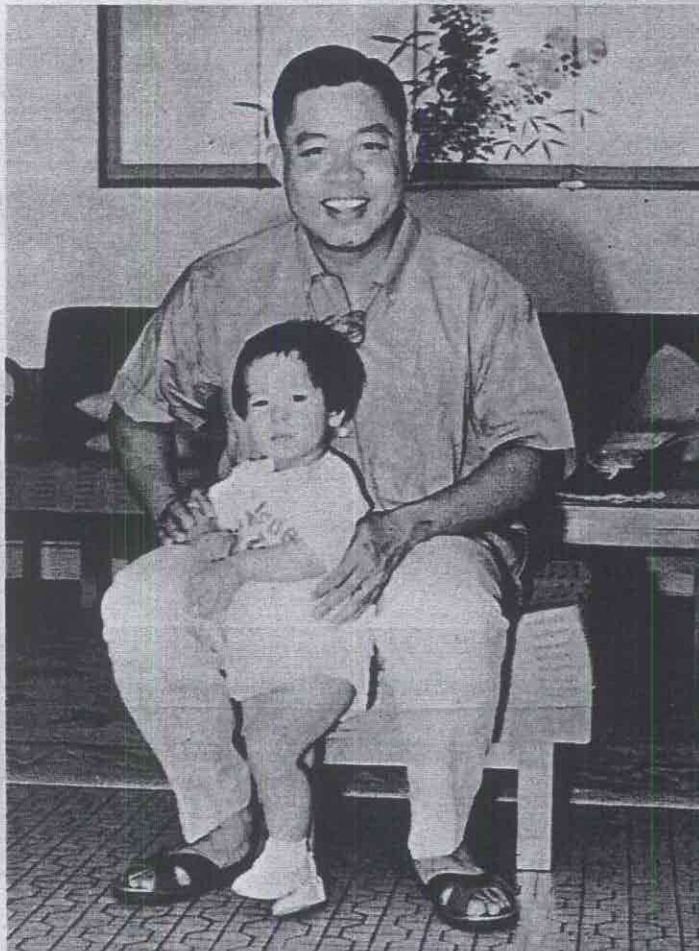
He does the same thing to Tran Ngoc Chau, who used to work for the CIA, and was imprisoned by Thieu because Chau met with his brother who happens to be a member of the NLF, the National Liberation Front. A similar situation obtains in the case of Madame Ngo Ba Thanh, a well-known Saigonese lawyer imprisoned for so-called activism inimical to the state.

Is a Hitler necessary?

Marshal Ky who was once top dog in South Vietnam said several years ago that what his country needed was another Adolf Hitler.

Nguyen Van Thieu certainly does not fall into that category, but his endless incarceration of his political rivals is surely Hitlerian and reveals a telling facet of his character.

In truth he is not the "distinguished man . . . of tremendous patriotism" or "the scholar" Agnew portrays, nor is he the corrupt, venal, treacherous, military dictator his enemies depict. He is a "survivor" who depends for survival on



Truong Dinh Dzu with his daughter Brigitte in 1967 when he ran against Thieu for President. Dzu was promptly thrown into prison, is still there.

open-ended American donations of money and material, which is why he is coming to the United States.

If we do not continue to charmel these through him, to support him against both the Communist and the non-Communist opposition in his country, so that he can win a resounding victory when the time comes for the election of a postwar government, Thieu will surely put out the word that the U.S. is abandoning his small nation to the Communists in the hour of its most dire need.

Nguyen Van Thieu believes he has us over a barrel. And in a way he does, for however we help the South Vietnamese, invariably our intervention will favor one political faction over another. Understandably, Thieu wants us to favor him, to lay the money in his hands. In South Vietnam he will take care of the rest.



Dzu's daughter Monique is wed to Los Angeles lawyer Dan Miller and teaches French in Fullerton, Calif. Her South Vietnamese passport has been revoked.