

## The Agnew Doctrine

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President Thieu's latest crackdown on neutralist students and critical newspapers in Saigon, his move to purge three members of the House of Representatives and his increasing reliance on a narrow political base directly contradict Vice President Agnew's assertion at Guam the other day that the South Vietnamese leader has made progress in broadening his government.

Most Saigon observers agree that Mr. Thieu has strengthened his own position, but at the cost of further alienating a broad spectrum of the non-Communist opposition. Whatever short-run advantages this strategy may offer, it courts the kind of ultimate disaster that befell the late President Diem. It also frustrates efforts to obtain a compromise political settlement of the sort Washington says it has been seeking in Paris.

Mr. Agnew argues that pressure on President Thieu to move faster toward broadening his political base would violate President Nixon's doctrine of Asia for Asians. But that doctrine is designed to guard against future Vietnams. As long as the United States maintains substantial fighting forces in South Vietnam, Washington has both a right and a duty to press Saigon on all steps that could speed the way to peace.

President Nixon has stressed his own conviction that the United States has an obligation to insure the right of free choice for the people of South Vietnam. The Thieu regime's repressive actions are moves away from this objective.