

Big Minh's Peace Flight Over Saigon

Saigon

General Duong Van (Big) Minh reinforced his image as a peace candidate yesterday by releasing doves at a ceremony consecrating prayers for peace at the An Quang Pagoda in Saigon.

The ceremony, on the eve of Buddha's enlightenment anniversary today, saw the enunciation of a peace plan by Buddhists, who were joined by moderate and radical Catholics.

"I come to pray for peace because it is the aspiration of all the Vietnamese people," Big Minh told a reporter.

Asked if he still intends to be a candidate in Next October's presidential election, the retired general replied, "Yes, I will be a candidate."

Later, in company with Thich Thien Hoa, president of the Buddhist Institute for the Propagation of the Faith, Minh released the doves.

After the ceremony, Minh was surrounded by the audience as he tried to reach his car. There were cries of "Long live General Minh."

The ceremony was the Buddhist counterpart of a religious meeting for peace organized last Thursday by Catholics at the Saigon Cathedral. The An Quang Pagoda, in an unusual gesture of solidarity with Catholics, sent four representatives to the cathedral ceremony.

Enunciating the Buddhist peace plan, Thien Hoa made the following points which, he said, would bring peace to Vietnam:

- An extended cease-fire at Tet, the Vietnamese new year, which falls this year on Jan. 27.

- An unconditional (permanent) cease-fire.

- Such a cease-fire, once accepted, will lead to serious political negotiations to reach a peace agreement ac-

ceptable to all the belligerent parties of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

- Withdrawal of all foreign troops under international supervision.

- An appeal to the "war makers in both South and North Vietnam: to put aside their personal and ideological ambitions.

- A clean government in South Vietnam having popular support and able to solve the problem of ending the war and rebuilding the country without exercising dictatorial or militaristic powers.

- An appeal to the United States to "give back to the South Vietnamese people their sovereignty."

Yesterday's ceremony reinforced the view that Big Minh will be able to rely on the support of the militant Buddhists in his campaign for the presidency.

Times-Post Service