

# Saigon Presidential Hopefuls Are Busy

## Ky-Minh Alliance Blooms at Tennis Net—Thieu Repeats 'Four No's'

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SAIGON, South Vietnam May 23 — The South Vietnamese presidential election is still more than four months away, but three men have already started their unofficial campaigning.

Some of the political news last week came after two potential candidates, Gen. Duong Van Minh and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky met on the tennis courts (Big Minh, as he is called, won). It was another demonstration of a developing political alliance against President Nguyen Van Thieu, who prefers fishing.

Vice President Ky has said he would run, but many think he will quit before the finish, and General Minh has said he may run if the elections look honest, but many think he will run no matter what.

### Agree to Attack Thieu

And so their meetings at the net are usually followed closely by political observers rather than by sports fans. According to Mr. Ky's aides, the two men agreed at one recent game not to attack each other politically, but to focus on President Thieu. The Vice President, said one of his aides, told General Minh that "he would take care of the attacks on Thieu."

While speculation about the latest tennis match circulated around town and Mr. Ky was calling for "social justice" at a meeting of the Association of Engineers and Technicians, President Thieu was again declaring his "four no's" at a meeting of local officials at the beach resort of Vungtau. Decrying the "vote-thirsty engaged in dishonest campaigns," Mr. Thieu said he still stood for no coalition Government, no neutralism, no Communist party and no concessions of land to the Communists.



Associated Press

Gen. Duong Van Minh



Associated Press

Nguyen Cao Ky

With the full powers of an incumbent, an air force at his disposal, generals and local officials in his debt, and with his picture now on lottery tickets, President Thieu is well off the mark. There are those who think he can be beaten, assuming fair elections, but there are not many.

The American Embassy here is already going through all possible motions to show that it will take a "hands-off" position during the elections, with officials proclaiming neither word nor deed that could be interpreted as favoritism. But it is clear that the leading officials here would prefer to see Mr. Thieu emerge victorious in the hopes of leaving behind a politically stable Government as United States troops withdraw.

With General Minh living up to his reputation for reticence,

the political focus remains on the flamboyant Vice President, who dropped out of the 1967 race against President Thieu to join the President's ticket. Now Mr. Ky is engaged in trying to switch from being an advocate of invading North Vietnam to a more conciliatory stand in an effort to occupy political territory somewhere between the total victory candidacy of President Thieu and the peace candidacy of General Minh.

Mr. Ky's aides say that the Vice President is serious about challenging the President. And they insist that his break with Mr. Thieu, whom Mr. Ky accuses of running a corrupt and inefficient Government, is as irrevocable as anything is in South Vietnamese politics.

There are still some, though declining in numbers, who believe a Thieu-Ky ticket is still a possibility. But some of Mr. Ky's supporters are now saying that a more likely possibility is that sometime before election day on Oct. 3, Mr. Ky will ask his supporters to vote for General Minh, a Buddhist.

"Ky thinks he could get

along well with Minh if the general is elected," said one of the Vice President's close aides. "The general will have much of the Buddhist vote and Ky will have some northern Catholics and others. If Ky does decide to drop out he thinks he could help Minh by calling on his supporters to vote for the general."

General Minh continues to receive visitors seeking elaboration on his plans to form a government of "national reconciliation." He is also putting together a campaign staff and tending to his orchids.

While General Minh says that he, too, is opposed to a coalition government that includes Communists, the enemy has been giving him some unusual prominence in its propaganda recently, confirming the general view here that the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam will be secretly throwing its support behind his candidacy. On two days this month, the front's press agency mentioned General Minh by name as having been present at a Buddhist peace meeting.