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Fourth Candidate Enters Race in Saigon

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Aug. 2 — A fourth candidate for South Vietnam's presidential elections has appeared without fanfare here, and some political sources speculate that he is a token rival promoted and helped by President Nguyen Van Thieu.

The candidate, virtually unknown in politics until now, is Dr. Tran Tam, a 54-year-old professor of Roman Catholic theology. In two weeks, he has surreptitiously collected about 30 of the 40 endorsements of National Assembly senators and deputies needed to get on the ballot. He has not yet publicly announced his candidacy.

The United States Embassy here was surprised by Dr. Tam's sudden appearance on the political scene, and is reliably reported to be conducting discreet inquiries into his background and the nature of his support. It is known that he was a director of press affairs in the Government of the late President Ngo Dinh Diem.

Thieu's Approval Indicated

Given President Thieu's influence in the National Assembly, except with the opposition legislators who have already thrown their support to Gen. Duong Van Minh, some politicians consider it unlikely that Dr. Tam could have obtained the signatures he has without President Thieu's approval.

Dr. Tam denies that he has President Thieu's backing. He said in an interview today that he was critical of certain aspects of the President's administration that caused the people "not to cooperate with the present government." He added that if he were part of a puppet ticket, "I would not dare criticize the Government so strongly, and would not dare to present a political platform

so superior to President Thieu's."

Dr. Tam's platform, he said, is based on "a philosophy that will solve the basic problems of humanity simultaneously with the basic problems of war and peace." He declined to give specific examples, noting that the official beginning of the campaign is not until Sept. 2.

Dr. Tam was born in what is now North Vietnam. He said that as a Northerner, he could expect the support of the 600,000 refugees from the north. He added that as the only civilian candidate—President Thieu and Vice President Ky retain their military ranks—he could count on civilian support.