

NYTimes

THIEU FOES SEEK A ONE-MAN RACE

They Hope to Embarrass
Him Before Americans

By CRAIG R. WHITNEY

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Aug. 10—The political opposition in South Vietnam is trying hard while Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker is in Washington to bring about a situation that the Americans regard as the worst possible: A one-man presidential campaign with only Nguyen Van Thieu on the ballot.

Ever since Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky was disqualified as a candidate last week, important opposition elements have been exerting pressure on the only other challenger, General Duong Van Minh, to give up and let President Thieu run embarrassingly alone.

To the South Vietnamese who believe that President Thieu is trying to rig the election for his own benefit, General Minh's participation in a contest in which he could only lose face would be pointless and immoral. The best way for General Minh to show that the elections are rigged but not to lose face, they tell him, is for him to withdraw.

The most optimistic estimate of the situation now, from the American point of view, is that General Minh has not made up his mind. According to sources in General Minh's camp, Ambassador Bunker and other Americans keep trying to get him to stay in.

The general's chief political adviser described him last weekend as "70 per cent decided not to run." He himself has not said a word publicly since Thursday, when the Supreme Court Electoral Council decided that Mr. Ky could not qualify under the new Government-sponsored electoral law.

General Minh said then he was reconsidering in view of the "dishonest tricks" that he said President Thieu was using to get re-elected.

Inreathen to End Support

Today, Thich Huyen Quang, a spokesman for some of General Minh's most important supporters, the An Quang Buddhists, said that if evidence of election-rigging continued to arise, they would withdraw their support to dramatize the futility of the elections.

The United States Embassy, according to sources there, believes that General Minh will decide to run, and certainly it wants him to do so for a legitimate election. But no one expects General Minh to make a decision one way or the other until after the lower-house elections Aug. 29.

Mr. Ky has added to the uncertainty in the last few days by maintaining silence after his disqualification. He has not even appealed yet, although he has only until Thursday to do so.

Saigon's rumor mills are busily producing reports that he is plotting a coup d'etat at his villa in Tansonnhut Airport, where his aides say he is suffering from conjunctivitis. President Thieu, according to his closest aides, believes that Mr. Ky's chances of staging a coup are nil.

Mr. Ky's campaign aides say that he will not throw his support to General Minh, or encourage him to go on running now that the Vice President has been disqualified. "We see no way that we can help General Minh if the elections are rigged," Mr. Ky's campaign manager, Le Van Thai, said.

A Withdrawal Rumored

During the earlier maneuvering, Mr. Thai and others had spread the word that it was possible Mr. Ky might withdraw from the campaign at the last minute in favor of General Minh in the interests of defeating President Thieu. But they have maintained that the two men had agreed that neither would run if Mr. Ky were disqualified, as he has been.

One of General Minh's closest assistants, Prof. Ton Thai Thien, said last weekend, "Why should General Minh run if the elections are already rigged? What point would there be to that?"

That logic is clearly appealing to the opposition, which perhaps had no special sympathy for Mr. Ky but felt that President Thieu had stifled his candidacy.

Another important opposition figure, a Roman Catholic Deputy from the Mekong Delta, said today that he and his group of more than a dozen politicians were urging their followers to boycott the presidential election, to put pressure on General Minh not to run. "Without our support, General Minh could not win, so if we say we will not vote, that will make him decide to withdraw," he said.

The An Quang spokesman, Thich Huyen Quang, said that as of now the militant Buddhist faction still supported General Minh. "But we are considering the mounting evidence of rigging the elections and may conclude that support of General Minh would be of no use," he said. "We suspect the results are already foreordained."