

# Thieu Says Election Is On Despite Ky's Withdrawal

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Aug. 23—President Nguyen Van Thieu met with his closest advisers at the palace this evening and one participant said they discussed Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky's refusal to run in the presidential elections.

"The President was firm," one of Mr. Thieu's aides said. "He considered that nothing has been changed in the elections, which will be organized as scheduled. He noted that Mr. Ky has purposely created the crisis." In withdrawing, Mr. Ky had denounced what he called the President's "dishonest tricks aimed at organizing a rigged election."

Although President Thieu publicly ignored Mr. Ky's action, an aide said Mr. Thieu considered "absurd" the Vice

President's proposal that they both resign while new elections be organized.

[In Washington, the Nixon Administration expressed its official regret over Mr. Ky's withdrawal and said it was "studying the implications" of the Vietnamese election.]

"It is absolutely out of the question that he should embark on that political adventure, especially at this moment of crisis," the aide said. "That would be irresponsible."

Mr. Ky's decision not to run leaves the President as the only candidate for the election Oct. 3.

Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker met with Mr. Thieu for an hour this evening. The Ambassador has been engaged in a strenu-

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ous round of discussions with President Thieu, Vice President Ky and other leading political figures for the last week, in an effort to keep Mr. Ky in the race, to avoid the spectacle of a one man election.

A spokesman for the Ambassador said he did not know what this evening's discussion was about, but it can be assumed that it dealt with the Ky withdrawal.

Meanwhile, the Premier, Gen. Tran Thien Khiem, who is Mr. Thieu's alternate running mate, announced that he would take a leave of absence without pay starting Wednesday and lasting through Oct. 3. The election law requires nonelected officials and army officers running in the elections to relinquish their offices during the campaign.

## Ky Informs Bunker

Mr. Ky said after his announcement this morning that the Ambassador had tried for the last time yesterday afternoon to keep him in the race. He said he reached his decision to withdraw late last night and notified Mr. Bunker this morning, before making his announcement.

Mr. Ky's withdrawal came after the Supreme Court, in a reversal, put him back in the race and then closed the deadline for pulling out, so his name will appear on the ballot unless he is able to bring a suit to have it removed.

Western observers here, as well as Mr. Ky, apparently, believe that with the Vice President's name officially in the running, Mr. Thieu will be able to dismiss Mr. Ky's withdrawal and maintain that there are still two candidates for President.

Mr. Ky was put back on the ballot by the court after the other candidate, Gen. Duong Van Minh, pulled out of the race on ground that was rigged.

Mr. Ky said in response to questions this morning that if his name was printed on the ballots despite his withdrawal, "then the farce is reaching the outer limits."

## Election Called Farce

He referred to the elections as "a farce" throughout a one-hour news conference, and called President Thieu "the principal actor in the farce."

The Vice President said that if he could get back his campaign deposit of two million piasters (about \$7,000) he would give it to the widow of the veteran who burned himself to death last week in protest against Mr. Ky's initial exclusion from the race.

The offer appeared calculated to win support among the country's 200,000 disabled war veterans, who are growing increasingly anti-Thieu as war benefits and veterans housing programs continue to lag.

Mr. Ky, in his resignation appeal to Mr. Thieu, said it would be "a small sacrifice before history."

He cited the South Vietnamese Constitution as empowering the President of the Senate to run the Government in the absence of the President and Vice President for three months while new elections are organized.

He said he would run in such new elections, but added that he would want all Thieu-appointed province chiefs and other subordinates removed first, so as to loosen the President's grip on the election machinery.

## Court's Action Reviewed

In his statement of withdrawal, Mr. Ky noted that on Aug. 12 his slate was rejected by the Supreme Court because it lacked the requisite number of official endorsements. At the time, Mr. Ky did not appeal the decision, but he called it illegal. Mr. Ky quoted the chief justice as having said later that the Ky slate would have to appeal in order to be considered for reinstatement.

Then, on Aug. 20, General Minh withdrew from the race, leaving Mr. Thieu alone in the field. The next day the Supreme Court reversed itself and validated Mr. Ky's signatures and put him back on the ballots.

"Once again," Mr. Ky said today, "the law has been bent to service the political needs of one individual. It has become evident that the forthcoming October elections will simply be conducted within the predetermined limits of a dark effort."