

# Reagan Meets Thieu in Saigon And Defends One-Man Race

By FOX BUTTERFIELD  
Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, Oct. 15—Gov. Ronald Reagan of California, on a three-hour visit to South Vietnam today, delivered a message from President Nixon congratulating President Nguyen Van Thieu on his re-election.

Mr. Reagan linked the vote for Mr. Thieu, who won 94 per cent of the ballots running unopposed, to the "fantastic progress" that he said South Vietnam had made in the last 15 years. Governor Reagan is making a 16-day, six-nation Asian tour as a special Presidential representative.

Speaking at a news conference at Tansonnhut Airport after a luncheon meeting with Mr. Thieu, the California Republican said he had delivered the letter from President Nixon to the South Vietnamese leader and had conveyed Mr. Nixon's assurances "that there will be no change in the course of our policies with other nations."

"I am unable to understand why so many people in our country, especially the communications media, are so charged up by this one-man election," Governor Reagan told newsmen.

Mr. Reagan referred to Mr. Thieu's election as a "referendum." He said that if Americans wanted to criticize the one man ballot, "we should start with a whole list of nations like the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and North Vietnam." In the North, "they had a street corner election, without even secret ballots," he added.

Mr. Reagan said he thought President Thieu's victory was much like that of George Washington's, who had also run unopposed in his first Presidential campaign.

In response to a question, Governor Reagan said he did not think that the one-man election invalidated America's goals in fighting in Vietnam. "From all I've seen and heard, the reasons Americans have died here are still valid," he said. "On our side we are fighting for freedom and the dignity of man, not totalitarianism."

Security precautions for Governor Reagan and his 22-member party, which included his wife, Nancy, and their 14-year-old son, Ronald, were unusually

tight. White House Secret Service agents, assigned by President Nixon to the Governor's trip, originally insisted that Mr. Reagan go everywhere by helicopter, including the four-block distance from the American Embassy to the Presidential palace.

HOWEVER, according to officials, after the Governor flew by helicopter from the airport to the Embassy, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker persuaded him to drive to the palace.

There was a moment of confusion when the Governor discovered upon his arrival at the palace that he had brought the wrong gift from the airplane for President Thieu.

An Army helicopter was sent back for the proper gift, a pale green piece of California jade shaped like a tree. But when the returning helicopter tried to land at the palace, it was forced away by Vietnamese security guards, who had not been warned of its arrival. It then landed at the Embassy.

After lunch with Mr. Thieu, Governor Reagan, who was accompanied by Ambassador Bunker, flew back to the airport for the news conference. When the Governor stepped out of the helicopter he took films of G. I.'s who had lined up to greet him.

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**CONGRATULATIONS FOR THIEU: President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam with Gov. Ronald Reagan of California in Saigon. Mr. Reagan, in Asia for President Nixon, delivered congratulations on Mr. Thieu's recent re-election. Mr. Reagan is making a six-nation tour.**

"In such a referendum," he said, "the Thieu slate can get any percentage of votes of confidence it wishes. It can claim it has 50 or 60 or 70 or even [garbled], who will believe these claims? There is a chance President Nixon alone will believe in them."

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