

A PROMPT ANSWER

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Vietcong's Statement, Read by Telephone, Denounces U. S.

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Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Tuesday, April 29—Gen. Duong Minh assumed the Presidency of South Vietnam yesterday to seek peace with the Communists, but they rejected his initial declaration. Attacks continued around Saigon, and an air raid heavily damaged the capital's airport.

A 24-hour curfew was immediately imposed on Saigon, and by 11 P.M. last night, the city was in fear of imminent danger, but it was not clear whether

Transcript of Minh's speech is printed on Page 14.

the danger was from the Communists or from South Vietnamese opposed to a settlement with them.

Because of difficulties in communications, the absence of many primary sources and a general mistrust of Americans, the United States embassy felt out of touch with events.

Military Backlash Feared

A few hours after President Minh had spoken, Vietcong representatives at Tan Son Nhut Airport read a statement by telephone denouncing United States policies and rejecting the President's appeal.

[In Hanoi, North Vietnamese officials said General Minh's return to power in Saigon had come too late. They indicated that a military solution was now in prospect, Agence France-Presse reported.]

It was understood that President Minh, with the help of aides, was working around the clock to stave off an attack and reach a peaceful settlement with the Communists.

He is known to fear a possible military backlash from parts

of the armed forces, and for this apparent reason, phrased his speech in such a way that it could encourage some military men to fight on. He called on them to defend the territory remaining under Government control.

This is thought by some analysts to have annoyed the Communist side, possibly enough to go ahead with a general attack.

The 59-year-old former general assumed office in a reception room of the Presidential Palace in the presence of most of the 146 members of the National Assembly and about

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Associated Press

A South Vietnamese soldier assisting a boy who was badly wounded yesterday north of Saigon.

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100 journalists and photographers. The proceedings were broadcast by live television.

The ceremony began as the first monsoon storm of the season struck the city, and the speeches of participants were punctuated by the flash of lightning and crash of thunder, while rain and wind swept through open patio doors.

The outgoing President, Tran Van Huong, who had held office only one week following the resignation of President Nguyen Van Thieu, walked slowly to the podium, leaning on his cane. He wished General Minh good luck in carrying out his mandate.

After Mr. Huong had stepped down, the Presidential seal was removed from the podium and replaced with the personal emblem of General Minh bearing Confucian symbols, including Yang and Yin, the two complementary opposites, which supporters said symbolized his will to achieve peace and reconciliation.

In his 15-minute speech, the new President referred to the Vietcong as "the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam," and addressed himself "to our friends of the other side."

Appeal to Vietcong

Referring to the cease-fire agreement signed in Paris in 1973, he said:

"We sincerely want reconciliation. You know that. Reconciliation requires that each element of the nation respect the other's right to live. This is the spirit of the Paris agreement."

He added that the Communists had always called for implementation of that agreement.

President Minh appointed only two Government leaders. He named Nguyen Van Huyen, a lawyer, as Vice President "to help me in the negotiations," and Vu Van Mau, a prominent Buddhist and former Foreign Minister, as Premier.

General Minh described his Government as one of reconciliation and concord and said it was designed "to obtain a cease-fire accord, the sooner the better."

Press Freedom Pledged

He promised a democratic government, freedom of the press, the freeing of political prisoners, and unity of all religious and political groups in the task of making peace.

In remarks addressed to officers and soldiers, he said:

"Today an old page of history

will be turned. You have a new duty: This is to defend the territory that is left and to defend peace. Keep your spirit high, your ranks intact, and your positions firm to accomplish that duty.

"When the cease-fire order is given, your mission will be rigorously to execute that order in accordance with the clauses of the Paris agreement and maintain order and security in your areas.

"You will not abandon your arms nor your ranks, and in any circumstances, you will strictly obey your officers. All undisciplined action will be immediately punished."

Although the Communists did not say so, this portion of the speech may have been the basis for their objection.

Reply by Vietcong

The Vietcong statement, read by telephone to The New York Times after the air raid, denounced the United States as still intervening in Vietnam. The statement called on the United States "to annul the Saigon Administration of war and repression," and said the aspirations of the Vietnamese people embodied in the Paris cease-fire accord must be met.

The declaration by General Minh did "not conform to these objectives," they said.

General Minh, besides calling for peace, warned that the situation was grim.

"The coming days will be very difficult," he said. "I cannot promise you much."

While the installation of General Minh as President evidently failed to satisfy the Vietcong, it represented a long step toward meeting their demands. Some Vietnamese had objected to General Minh on the ground that his appointment was tantamount to surrender.

Minh Too Late, Hanoi Says

HANOI, North Vietnam, April 28 (Agence France-Presse) — North Vietnam officials said today that the return to power in Saigon of Gen. Duong Van Minh had come too late.

The revolutionary forces are determined to finish the job, the officials said.

The rockets that started falling on the city yesterday and today amounted to a sign of rejection of the overture that General Minh's return was meant to signify.

Continued infiltration of revolutionary forces around Saigon provided further evidence that a military solution was now in prospect.