

Our Man Hoppe**Can Thieu
Lick Nobody****Arthur Hoppe**

IN SAIGON, President Thieu has now agreed to step down if he receives less than half the vote in the upcoming elections.

Thieu's concession was seen as a victory for U. S. diplomats who have striven mightily in recent weeks to inject some "suspense and drama" into the campaign—in order to convince the world democracy flourishes in South Vietnam.

The following short-wave broadcast, monitored here, should thus surprise no one. It was believed transmitted by the American Embassy in Saigon.

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SAIGON—With the presidential elections less than three weeks away, excitement here is mounting to a fever pitch. Nobody is, of course, running against President Thieu. Experts are predicting an extremely close race.

Thousands turned out today for the gala opening of the newly erected "Nobody for President" Headquarters on Whar Dhat street. It was a scene of frenzied enthusiasm as Nobody's partisans cheered for their candidate.

"Who will end corruption?" cried Nobody's top strategist, What Pho, from the bunting-bedecked rostrum.

"Nobody!" shouted the crowd.

"Who will lick the enemy?" yelled What Pho.

"Nobody!" roared the crowd with a growing fervor.

"And who will bring us peace and prosperity?"

And, oh, how the name of the challenger echoed to the heavens!

Nobody, as is customary, made a brief

speech. Nobody said it would be an honest election. Nobody said President Thieu would insure an accurate vote count. Nobody said President Thieu would put the good of the country ahead of his own self interest.

This evidence of Nobody's good sportsmanship moved the crowd deeply. There were cries of "I'm for Nobody!" "Nobody's for Me!" and "Nobody Will Be a Great Leader!"

A group of plump middle-aged matrons, known as "Nobody's Sweethearts," then sang the theme song, "Nobody Ruvs Me" as the throng went wild. Observers agreed that the campaign thus far had captured the mood of the electorate.

At a press conference afterward, the candidate's manager, Dat Sma Boi, generally referred to as "the brains behind Nobody," flatly denied the campaign was being financed by the U. S. Embassy in a last-ditch effort to give the election validity.

"Nobody denies it!" he said flatly.

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AMERICAN officials, meanwhile, said they were "highly pleased" by President Thieu's democratic move in allowing Nobody to run against him.

Moreover, they said, Thieu had conferred complete freedom of speech on his opponent. "Nobody can criticize me," they quoted him as promising, "and get away with it."

Thieu's confidence apparently stemmed from the old political adage: "You can't beat somebody with Nobody."

But as an Embassy official privately told the press here the other day: "This looks like one election Nobody can win."